

# Seil and Easdale Community Council

## Notes of Public Meeting

### Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> March – Seil Island Hall

#### 1. Present:

- **Community Councillors:** Seumas Anderson (Chair), Mike Shaw, Martin Waddell, Heather Chaplin, Alan MacFadyen, Anne-Marie Robin, Charles Struthers, Robert Rae, Chris Dugdale.
- **Council members:** Cllr Elaine Robertson, Cllr Duncan MacIntyre
- **Members of the public:** 17 including Jane Nichols (Sec), Police Constable Jeremy Moore, representatives of Scottish Water and Laura MacDonald of Argyll and Bute Council.

#### 2. Apologies for absence:

Cllr Donald MacDonald, Cllr Neil MacKay.

#### 3. Minutes of last meeting:

The minutes were proposed by Jenny Smith and seconded by Ann Reid.

#### 4. Matters arising:

##### a) Roads

Cuan Road has been substantially improved. A new budget is to be approved by Argyll and Bute Council, including a considerable sum for surface dressing throughout the area. All roads on Seil are scheduled to be surfaced dressed, apart from the Arden Caple road. Everyone should continue to report faults such as potholes, to ensure the improved state of the roads is maintained. Scottish Water have been speaking to the roads department to solve drainage problems, and these will hopefully be resolved in the near future.

##### b) Police Report

PC Jeremy Moore reported that the new shift patterns have made his routine less predictable for others, which means his visits to the islands are more likely to be unexpected by others. This could have benefits

There is very little crime at the moment, although the increase in fuel prices has triggered a number of small thefts of fuel, mainly diesel from the tanks of vehicles such as tractors which are left unattended in the open. People should be aware that this could escalate to larger thefts of heating oil, for example, and ensure their storage is as secure as possible.

PC Moore has dealt with a number of calls regarding vulnerable people. He asks that everyone keeps an eye out for neighbours, as the long, hard winter has been difficult for many.

Rib Rendezvous 30<sup>th</sup> April – the marine Police unit will attend, and the Coastguard has been informed.

### c) Planning Matters

There have been 8 planning applications since the last meeting:

11/00260/PP	36 Balvicar Isle Of Seil Oban Argyll And Bute PA34 4TE	Erection of extension to dwellinghouse	Pending Consideration
11/00272/PP	Finlaggan Clachan Seil Isle Of Seil Oban Argyll And Bute PA34 4TL	Erection of two storey rear extension and formation of first floor balcony.	Pending Consideration
11/00357/CPD	Easdale Primary School Ellenabeich Isle Of Seil Oban Argyll And Bute PA34 4RF	Relocation of oil tank	Permitted Development
11/00074/LIB	Harbour Masters Cottage 11B Easdale Island Oban Argyll And Bute PA34 4TB	Alterations and extension to dwellinghouse	Pending Consideration
11/00053/PP	Harbour Masters Cottage 11B Easdale Island Oban Argyll And Bute PA34 4TB	Alterations and extension to dwellinghouse	Pending Consideration
11/00034/PPP	Garden Ground Of Braeview Balvicar Isle Of Seil Oban Argyll And Bute PA34 4RA	Site for the erection of a dwellinghouse	Application Permitted
11/00060/LIB	Studio 15 Easdale Island Oban Argyll And Bute PA34 4TB	Blocking up of door and internal alterations to facilitate separation of studio from dwellinghouse	Application Permitted
10/02154/PP	Land South West Of Cruachan Clachan Seil Isle Of Seil Argyll And Bute	Formation of access track and landing slipway (retrospective).	Pending Consideration

No opposing views were expressed on any of these applications. Henry Tarbatt reported that the revised application for a wind turbine on Easdale Island has been recommended by the planning committee for refusal.

### d) Raera and Clachan Wind Farm update

- i. Npower emailed the chair to say that they have no plans to appeal the Raera wind farm decision, although they are not ruling out some sort of development on the site in the future. They have asked to retain the anemometer for another year, probably to update their statistical database.
- ii. Clachan wind farm – Rory Young has been speaking to Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH). There has been a redistribution of sitings of the turbines, although the same total number of turbines is still in the plan. He has another meeting scheduled with SNH, and the application will probably go live at the end of April.

## e) Health Matters

- i. Tina Jordan has moved to Kilmore, and as she is no longer resident within the Seil and Easdale area, has resigned from the Community Council. Councillors expressed their gratitude to Tina for her diligent hard work on behalf of the community, specifically in relation to health matters, but generally for her commitment to all branches of council business. We are currently without a health representative.
- ii. Henry Tarbatt gave an update on the Easdale Island emergency evacuation situation. He first noted that as Keith Oversby has moved to Kilmore with Tina, Jenny Smith is acting secretary of Easdale Island Residents and Property Owners Association (EIRPOA).

A survey has been carried out of the proposed helicopter landing site and it does not conform to requirements due to its proximity to houses. It can only be used in life-threatening cases, and only in daylight. This means Easdale will have no emergency evacuation available during darkness, as it has previously been confirmed that the ferry cannot be used by the ambulance service. The only option now is the RAF Sea King or the Coastguard helicopter, relying on them being available and having to be recovered via winch.

Robin Saxby of Oban Mountain Rescue Team (OMRT) has said that the team will assist with patient transfers from Easdale Island, using the ferry where appropriate. Cllr Robertson confirmed that this is the case. Robin told Henry that they need to be tasked by the police, so they are covered by the police insurance. Henry suggested a simple procedure whereby the ferryman contacts the police, who contact the team leader of OMRT, who alerts the team but also the ambulance service to be on hand to receive the casualty. He considers this a suitable, cost-effective solution, and asked the Community Council to endorse it.

PC Moore said that all emergency calls have to come via 999, a view which was backed up by Dr Hannah. In order for this system to work, the 999 operators would have to know to alert the police as well as the ambulance service in the case of a call from the island, and there is no such protocol in place. He has checked with the ambulance service and they can call out OMRT, but Henry asserted that this would not comply with the stated need regarding insurance. PC Moore suggested the lifeboat could assist with emergency evacuation, but was told that there is insufficient depth of water in the harbour to accommodate the lifeboat.

The chair reported that one big problem with the current procedure is that of getting someone on to the island in order to assess the condition of the patient, in order to decide the appropriate course of action.

Cllr Robertson expressed concern that a way needs to be found to get sick people off the island. She suggested that perhaps a table top simulation exercise could be carried out with all parties, including the ambulance service, police, mountain rescue, councillors and representatives of the residents, and will look into this.

## 5. Other Business

### a) Laura MacDonald, Community Development Officer

There are 4 Community Development Officers working for the Council, and Laura covers Oban, Lorna and the Isles. She gave a short presentation on her work and the kind of support she provides to the community:

- Local contact for 3<sup>rd</sup> sector grants administered by the Council, providing 50% funding. These are not open to statutory bodies such as the Community Council, but we could work in partnership with other organisations and provide match funding.
- Community planning, linking the Council with other bodies, listening to what communities want in their services and driving it forward. Fire and rescue, police, Scottish Water, Scottish Natural Heritage and Highland and Islands Enterprise are all involved. She sits on the local community planning group for Oban, Lorn and the Isles, which is informed by the community engagement meetings as well as other inputs.
- Support of vulnerable community groups and organisations such as the elderly; rural groups are included in this. She doesn't directly support community councils, although will often support the work they do. For example community action plans can be developed for local areas and Laura will provide help in setting that up. Community groups can come to Laura if they need any help at all and she will at least point them in the right direction.
- Examples of work she has been involved in are play facilities (planning, finding funds, establishing a need via public meetings), community garden projects and fetes. There is a lot of crossover with Argyll Voluntary Action.
- Laura can be contacted at [laura.macdonald@argyll-bute.gov.uk](mailto:laura.macdonald@argyll-bute.gov.uk) or on 01631 562 466.

### b) Scottish Water

- i. In attendance were Sheila Campbell-Lloyd, David Innes, and Jim Clark of Scottish Water Solutions. Sheila started by introducing herself as Wastewater Regional Manager North of Scotland, David Innes being Team Leader Argyll and Jim Clark representing Scottish Water Solutions, in his role as building project manager for the Clachan project. She explained that any new plant would be normally handed over to her once complete apart from minor snagging. In Seil, however, there remained major customer and operational issues at the time that she took over, but she accepts that she is now responsible for this plant and all its issues.
- ii. Sheila met representatives of the Community Council on 16th March, where there was agreement that she would hand over to us an action snagging list. Before that she wanted to phone all customers who had lodged a complaint to check on the latest situation in each case. This she has done, and has found that a number of defects which had been reported to her as being rectified had in fact not been attended to, particularly to the satisfaction of

the complainant. Over the next few weeks she will be working with Charles and individual community members to compile this Scottish Water action plan, and start to resolve the issues. She thinks there are other problems, of which she is not yet aware, and these will hopefully be identified and added to the list in order to get outstanding problems fixed. She stressed that it is vital that any other problems must be reported as soon as possible through Charles. Sheila has removed Balfour Beatty off site and has appointed other contractors in their place. The cost of the defect rectification will be paid initially by Scottish Water Solutions and then claimed back from Balfour Beatty who should have completed the work.

- iii. John Wilson asked how well the plant is now operating, given the major continuing problems with emptying and re-seeding the system. Sheila reported that there is still some infiltration of water into the system, the ingress of which is being checked via cameras in the pipework, and they will continue to work on eradicating the problem over the next few months. Jim Clark assured the meeting that the water has been analysed and is not salt water. The extra water is causing problems with the system's operation, but Sheila is confident that they can get it working properly. Another initial problem has been the operators' lack of experience with this type of membrane system. For example, they were carrying out 2-hour cleans when they actually needed 24-hour cleans. But they have undergone training and are now working well with the system. David Innes added that we have the basis of a good system, which gives the best water quality. Asked if she would install the same system again, Sheila said probably not.
- iv. Sheila agreed that the system is an eyesore, especially the fencing around the large plant on the shore opposite Mutiara. Screening is also needed elsewhere, for example at the pump station in front of Balvicar Stores. Sheila will go back and look at the plans for the original works at Clachan Seil, as it was pointed out that screening had been promised there and never carried out. Scottish Water intends to engage landscape architect Carol Collis to do some work on disguising the fence around the large plant opposite Mutiara and some of the other works. These works will all be for the account of Scottish Water.
- v. Elma Nee pointed out that the fence and barbed wire in any case contravenes the original plans. Sheila said that the barbed wire will be removed, but it then creates a risk of someone climbing the fence and falling into the tanks. In order to prevent this, grids are to be placed over the tanks. Solid lids cannot be used as this prevents oxygenation of the contents, which is required for the bacterial process.
- vi. There was some discussion about the boundaries of the fence for planting purposes. Jim explained that Scottish Water only own the land within the fence, apart from at the road edge where they also own the land up to the tarmac. It is possible that plants could be placed inside the boundary and encouraged to grow through the fence, which would effectively disguise it. The screening will also help to alleviate the noise coming from the plant. When asked about the smell, Sheila said that it could be controlled through the proper operation of the system, but not removed altogether.
- vii. Elma Nee asked the reason for the large number of tankers which have been back and forth over the past couple of weeks, and the large crane that has been on site. David Innes said that some tankers have been holding waste whilst work was carried out, but some have been taking waste to

Pennyfuir to be processed. Jim Clark explained that the large crane has been installing steelwork frames which allow safe access for the operation of the plant. PC Moore suggested that Scottish Water let him and the main coach tour operators know about the movement of heavy vehicles, in case traffic hold-ups leave large numbers of coach passengers stranded on Seil.

- viii. There has been a problem with inappropriate items being flushed down toilets in the Balvicar area. Scottish Water have done a letter drop, but they will speak to Dr Hannah to see if anything else can be done. In general, this area is far better than most at bagging and binning.
- ix. George Hannah asked about the septic tanks which had allegedly been promised at Whinbank. Sheila thought it extremely unlikely that these would have been promised, as it would be outside their remit, but she will go back and check the plans – George will forward correspondence about it. A question was asked about the number of households which are still emitting raw sewage into the Sound of Seil. Sheila said that she will find out from SEPA.
- x. Sheila reported that the total spend on the new system had been £11.7m, which is around £90k per household. Ongoing operation will cost £100k per year. She will be speaking to some specific individuals about possible compensation for the problems they have experienced.
- xi. Charles finished the discussion by stating an opinion that we now have a team in place who should solve the remaining problems, and that the key to this will be continued communication.

### **c) Marine Guidance Note 280**

Tony Hill reported that there are currently 4 codes – red, yellow, brown and blue – and they are trying to amalgamate them into one, at the same time changing some of the wording. According to Tony, one key change is that boats operating when the water temperature is 10 degrees or below, roughly between mid November and June, must carry suitable thermal clothing for all passengers, to be worn in the event of having to abandon to the water. This applies only to boats that carry 12 passengers or less, which includes the Easdale ferry. It would be the ferry operator's responsibility to advise passengers that they are wearing inappropriate clothing for the conditions. Wet weather clothing is not suitable for these purposes, as they don't have the necessary thermal insulation properties.

Concerns include the practicality of passengers getting into thermal clothing in time to make it effective. In other words they would be on the rocks before they managed it. Also there are questions about the availability of clothing in children's sizes. Storage space is not being put forward as a concern, as the solution would be to get a larger boat, which is obviously not practical.

Tony informed the group that this is a Westminster issue, not a Scottish Government one, and the Oban Maritime and Coastguard Agencies are arguing against this new ruling. He also commented that it would be rare for the decision to be made to abandon to the water rather than to the emergency raft, and would like statistics on when this had happened on ferries.

There is a working group meeting in Southampton at the policies unit on 29<sup>th</sup> March, to which representation can be made. Robert Rae will speak to the RYA to establish what they are doing, and Heather will formulate a response from the Community Council and forward it to Seumas.

**d) Core Paths**

The final draft of the plan was circulated. It is open until 4<sup>th</sup> April, so anyone wishing to make comments should do so before that date. In response to a question about getting copies of the map showing the paths, the chair recommended people contact Douglas Greerson at the Council.

**e) Ellenabeich Bus Shelter**

There is not much to report, apart from the fact that progress is being made regarding a design for the shelter.

**6. Documents to be tabled:**

There were no documents to be tabled.

**7. Date of Next Meeting:**

This will be the Annual General Meeting, and will take place on Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> May 2011, Seil Island Hall, 7 p.m.

Signed:

Chairman:

Date:

Signed:

Secretary:

Date: