

Seil and Easdale Community Council

Notes of Public Meeting Tuesday 25th May 2010 – Seil Island Hall

1. Present:

- **Community Councillors:** Seumas Anderson (Chair), Heather Chaplin, Chris Dugdale, Robert Rae, Martin Waddell, Anne-Marie Robin, Alan MacFadyen, Charles Struthers, Mike Shaw.
- **Council members:** Donald MacDonald, Neil MacKay
- **Members of the public:** 17 including Inspector Julie McLeish
Jane Nichols (Sec)

2. Apologies for absence: Chief Inspector Glen Bland, Cllr. Elaine Robertson,
Tina Jordan

3. Minutes of last meeting: Proposed: Martin Waddell
Seconded: Anne-Marie Robin

4. Matters arising:

a) **Community Council Appointment of new secretary:** Jane Nichols has volunteered and been duly appointed.

b) **Police Report:**

- i. Sincere apologies from C.I. Glen Bland.
- ii. 1 crime report, which has been dealt with, and 2 road traffic accidents, outwith the islands.
- iii. Insp. McLeish asked if people coming off Easdale Island after events have caused noise, but those present had no knowledge of any problems..
- iv. Members of the public are urged to contact the police. The mobile police unit is intended to encourage this, although it is not well-used, and there are also regular surgeries.
- v. Questions were asked about the new shift patterns, as the local officer is seen less. Insp. McLeish advised that the patterns are designed to distribute resources where needed, for example in Oban on weekend evenings, although P.C. Moore should still be available most of the time. The local shift pattern is a pilot for other areas which will be reviewed in October. Insp. McLeish will take back Seumas Anderson's suggestion of a public questionnaire as part of the review process. Mike Shaw suggested that a police unit should occasionally

drive down the smallest roads in the area, to establish a police presence.

- vi. Charles Struthers raised the issue of extended road closures due to RTAs, which cause problems for local businesses. Insp. McLeish assured the meeting that the roads are reopened as soon as possible, whilst allowing for the necessary gathering of evidence. Cllr MacKay suggested that as there are a lot of new Community Council members, it may be advisable to ask a police representative to come and explain to members the procedures following an RTA, and that the Local Area Planning Group might be a good forum at which to raise this.
- vii. Robert Rae asked if Oban police station accepts time-expired flares from the public, which Insp. McLeish said they do. She will look into the question of whether the public is allowed to transport flares, as they are essentially explosives.
- viii. Insp. McLeish was asked to note that Easdale and Seil Halls are not one and the same. The public meeting that was held in Easdale Hall saw a significant number of people turning up to Seil Hall instead.

c) Health matters:

Tina was not available but submitted a report, which was discussed at length with the assistance of the four medical professionals present.

As supplement to the report, George Hannah reported that the current TeleHealth pilot on Luing is demonstrating no benefits to the patients. The patient's blood pressure is automatically taken via a sleeve into which the patient places their arm. Problems with calibration can commonly cause false readings. In Dr Hannah's opinion a patient who feels unwell is better off phoning the surgery and reporting it.

d) Planning matters:

The following applications were noted:

10/00743/NMA	Land North And South Of Clachandubh House Balvicar	Raise in floor level of houses 4, 5 and 6
10/00640/PP	Willowburn Hotel Clachan Seil	Change of use of hotel to dwelling house
10/00530/LIB	44 Easdale Island	Alterations and renovations to existing building
10/00444/PP	Land East Of Clachandubh House Balvicar	Erection of dwellinghouse and siting of oil storage tank
10/00346/PP	Seil Island Community Hall	Erection of play area
10/00203/CLAWU	Land South West Of Cruachan Clachan Seil	Certificate of Lawfulness for the use of an access track.

With regard to Land North And South Of Clachandubh House Balvicar, the level is being raised to provide sufficient depth below the floor level to accommodate the drains and other services. The Chair suggested that the raising of the level could affect the visibility of the properties, and asked if this decision would be considered by the Planning Committee. Cllr MacKay advised that non-material changes such as this come under the delegated powers of the planning officers, so would not come to the central Planning Committee. This system is due to come under review in August.

- e) **Proposed Raera Windfarm:** Currently the process is awaiting a response from Scottish Natural Heritage.

Cllr MacKay advised that the number of specific objections, along with the major concerns in this community and Kilmelford, may invoke the necessity for a public hearing. Any objection to the proposal is likely to be appealed.

- f) **Local roads:**

- i. Improvements from Clachan Bridge to Balvicar are still scheduled to be completed by August this year. The worst problem is the pothole on a blind summit by Loch Seil, which causes cars to swerve into unseen oncoming traffic. The council poured tarmac into the hole last week following an approach by Charles Struthers, but the repair was inadequate and still causing damaged tyres. Community encouraged to contact Charles Struthers with any other issues. A&B Council seem to act quickly to problems once reported.
- ii. Kilninver Bridge is being monitored and is considered usable up to 60 tonnes. Clachan Bridge has been safe since repointing, and is freely passable to vehicles up to 40 tonnes, although vehicles with a long wheel base may risk grounding. Permission is required to cross both bridges with heavier than the minimum stated loads.
- iii. Comment was passed on the deplorable state of the Lochgilphead road, considering that it is an important alternative route from Oban and Seil to the south. This is a council-maintained road.

- g) **Scottish water:**

Stuart Reid presented a report on the Waterwatch Scotland meeting he attended with John Wilson. There was only one other interested party who attended the meeting, apart from the representatives of Waterwatch Scotland and members of other official bodies.

Scottish Water (SW) are allowed to discharge raw sewage into the Sound of Seil ten times a year in the event of system breakdown. This limit is set and monitored by SEPA, and SW have to notify SEPA each time they discharge.

A number of issues were raised:

- i. Why are new users of the system receiving bills from SW when Balfour Beatty are still operating the system, and have not handed it over to SW?
- ii. George Hannah asked why Whinbank had not yet been provided by SW with septic tanks as promised, due to not being able to link into the new system. They are still discharging waste directly into Seil Sound.
- iii. John Wilson raised concerns about the advisability of a membrane sewage system in the prevailing conditions, due to the delicate balance of bacteria which is required for the system to work. With the amount of surface run-off and the frequency of ingress of sea water, the effectiveness of the system will be frequently compromised. When this happens, the system has to be discharged and then seeded with raw sewage which is brought in by tanker.
- iv. Members of the community do not have a channel through which to make representations to senior management of SW. It was suggested that correspondence addressed to the Chair, care of SW, should reach its intended recipient.

h) Fairer Oban Lorn & the Isles survey (FOLI) Update:

Anne-Marie Robin presented a letter from Iain McNicol giving the consensual themes of all survey responses:

- a. Community Councils' enthusiasm to represent their communities fairly.
- b. Pride in communities.
- c. Based on the people and core organisations such as churches, schools, health services, shops, police and an awareness of the special environment in which we live.
- d. Communities that lack some of these core services are less confident.
- e. Communities seem very capable of nurturing these community assets and strengths but need larger players eg Argyll & Bute Council, ACHA, Transport Scotland, Community Health Partnership and the Scottish Government to tackle the major concerns which were shared by almost all Community Councils for affordable housing as well as appropriate housing (elderly, starter, etc), better transport links and road improvements.

Thanks were given for all the effort put in to make the exercise worthwhile, and an expectation expressed that the elected Politicians and the appropriate authorities will address the clear messages given.

There was a 'Forward Together' conference held on 15th May. Unfortunately, nobody from the Community Council was available to attend. However Cllr MacDonald was in attendance and reported that there were around 80 other attendees. Feedback will be collated and forwarded.

Other Business

a) School Transport

Seumas Anderson presented an email from Michelle MacFadyen, Chair of Easdale School Board, to Malcolm MacFadyen expressing concerns about the extension of the distance from school for entitlement to free school transport from 1 mile to 2 miles. It means that pupils of Easdale Primary School who live as far away as Balvicar having no free transport. This will result in one or more of the following:

- i. Pupils walking to school along a potentially dangerous stretch of road.
- ii. Parents driving pupils to school. Parking space outside the school is limited, so this could result in serious congestion and risk to pedestrians.
- iii. Parents having to pay for bus fares. As most of the school buses are also service buses that have to operate regardless of the school passengers, it costs no more to allow school pupils on the bus. If a pupil is not entitled to free transport, they are also not guaranteed a place on the bus.

Cllr MacDonald reported that all such routes are in the process of being assessed for safety. In the case where a route is deemed unsafe, it is highly unlikely that the entitlement to free transport would be removed. It is a shame that letters have gone out to parents in advance of these assessments being completed.

b) Clachan Windfarm

Leaflets detailing a proposed wind farm have been delivered by post to every house on Seil and Luing. On Easdale, some leaflets were left in the ferry shed, the rest delivered. An electronic copy of the booklet is available to download at www.westcoastrenewables.co.uk, as is the scoping report. Concerns were discussed as follows:

- i. Many members of the community are in favour of wind turbines but there are serious reservations about the proposed location.
- ii. The leaflet is misleading, as it uses a comparison with the largest possible size of wind turbine to suggest that the ones proposed here would be small, when they are still of considerable size.
- iii. The scoping report shows the turbines all outside the 440m buffer from housing, but 3 houses are reported to be closer than that. Allan Henderson said that the noise levels at that proximity could pose a health risk.
- iv. Power generated in this way cannot be relied on, so conventional power generation still has to be available as a backup.
- v. The requirement to transport the turbines would have serious implications for the local roads, possibly requiring alterations to

bridges, bends and improvements or repairs to road surfaces. The latter could be construed as a benefit.

Cllr MacKay explained that the Planning Committee will take into consideration the routes, changes to roads and bridges, visual and aural impact and health in general, and the effect on wildlife. The Community Council will be consulted as a statutory part of the process, but they also have to take into account the views of bodies such as Scottish Natural Heritage. A majority decision by the community members would not necessarily mean that the planning application would be rejected. A separate planning application would have to be submitted for the line taking away the power generated.

It was suggested that the opinions of the community members could be sought via the next issue of the Seilachan. However Cllr MacKay advised that the community look at the experience of other Community Councils in relation to wind farm installations before consulting the members of the community. It is important to gather as much information as possible before soliciting the community's opinion, including a fair exploration of the benefits; otherwise it could be deemed an ill-informed opinion. Individual members of the community are however free to express their views about the plan at any time.

It was resolved to wait for the response of Luing Community Council before a decision is made on the next step.

c) **Digital UK information event**

Digital UK will be holding an information event in Seil Island Community Hall on Wed 2nd June from 2pm until 6pm. This is a drop-in event to provide local residents with the opportunity to ask any outstanding questions they might have about making the switch to digital television. They will also cover areas such as the Switchover Help Scheme for the elderly and vulnerable and specific consumer protection issues local residents should be aware of.

6. Documents to be tabled:

Mental Health Services newsletter
GRAB Trust newsletter
Fare Choice – community food & health newsletter
Scottish Natural Heritage Spring 2010 report

7.

Date of Next Meeting:

27th July 2010, Seil Island Hall, 7 p.m. This will be the Annual General Meeting.

Signed:

Chairman:

Date:

Signed:

Secretary:

Date: