

SEIL AND EASDALE COMMUNITY COUNCIL

MINUTES OF PUBLIC MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 22nd SEPTEMBER 2015 Seil Island Hall

PRESENT: Seumas Anderson, John Gordon, Graeme Bruce, Anne Marie Robin, Chris Dugdale, Cllr Elaine Robertson, Jane Darby and Fiona Dickie – Kilmore CC, Toni Mitchell – Kilninver & Kilmelford CC, Nicky Archibald – Luing CC, Graeme Forester, Julie Ferris and 30 members of the public

APOLOGIES: Charles Struthers, Alan MacFadyen, PC Jeremy Moore, Cllrs Duncan MacIntyre, Iain MacDonald and Iain MacLean

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Anne Marie Robin and John Gordon as property owners in proximity to the proposed Scottish Water development; Seumas Anderson as a landowner potentially affected by the proposal.

MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting held on 28th July 2015 were agreed as an accurate record; proposed by Ann Reid, seconded by Anne Marie Robin.

BOUNDARY COMMISSION PROPOSALS

The Chair welcomed Mr Graeme Forester of Argyll and Bute Council's Governance & Law Department.

Mr Forester explained that the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC) for Scotland's Review was in two phases: councillor numbers for each council and ward boundaries.

Councillor numbers are determined by population distribution, with some weighting given to areas of deprivation. Every member of the community in Scotland should have access to an elected Councillor as their representative, and each Councillor should represent approximately 2,000 people. Therefore, multi-member wards with either three or four Councillors should have a population of approximately six or eight thousand. Argyll and Bute has a declining population (although Cllr Robertson pointed out that the population in this area is not declining) and so the number of Councillors must diminish. Argyll and Bute would lose one ward, and the number of Councillors in our ward would go down from four to three.

Boundary changes are therefore required to match population numbers to Council representation. Mr Forester said that although this is a number-driven exercise, consideration is given to mitigating circumstances such as traditional community links, transport and access to services.

He circulated copies of a map, entitled "Option 2 – Counter Proposal 1" showing

proposed boundary changes for Wards within Argyll & Bute. Under this proposal, Seil and Easdale and everything south of Kilmore on the A816 would become part of Mid-Argyll, severing links with Oban and covering a massive area running from Lochgilphead in the south to beyond Bridge of Orchy in the north.

There was some confusion as to whether this map was Argyll & Bute Council's proposal and if, by implication, they were in support of the proposed boundary change. Mr Forester clarified that the map had been produced to give a realistic administrative breakdown of the Commission's suggested changes, and did not imply the Council's endorsement of the proposal.

When asked directly whether Argyll & Bute Council were accepting this boundary change, Mr Forester replied that they were not. The Council had already made representations to the Boundary Commission regarding particular issues pertaining to Argyll and Bute. As a consultee, Argyll and Bute Council has a responsibility to reflect the views of the community. They were now seeking the views of Community Councils to bolster their case and to deliver a strong and consistent response.

There was a strong feeling amongst those present that the proposals had not been well-publicised to date, (for example, that this should have been clearly and prominently explained in the Oban Times) and that communities were only being involved in the process at a very late stage. Furthermore, it was felt that information on the Argyll and Bute website is hard to find and confusing. People felt let down by the Council as the deadline for submissions of 22nd October 2015 now gives very little time for members of the community to respond. Cllr Robertson explained that Argyll and Bute Council were trying to engage communities in the process, which is why Mr Forester had been asked to this meeting. It was noted that hard copies of the proposal are available at Council service points and libraries.

A number of issues were then raised, reflecting the overwhelming concern that the proposals would sever existing links with Oban. It was pointed out that residents of Seil & Easdale, as well as of our neighbouring Community Council areas, turn to Oban for health, education, transport links, and as a centre of work. The proposals would break links with the elected representatives of Oban, for no apparent reason other than an arbitrary number-driven exercise.

When questioned about the impact of such a proposal on service delivery, Mr Forester stated that it was likely there would be some effect on all aspects. When asked if the local community would have to go to Lochgilphead rather than Oban for hospital treatment and secondary and further education, Mr Forester said that this was unlikely. All areas access healthcare via NHS Highland based on medical need, although there may be a change in elected representatives on Health Boards, and a different set of Councillors to raise problems with. School catchment areas are not tied to council ward boundaries, so again Mr Forester envisaged no direct change on the provision of education.

Nevertheless, the overwhelming feeling of the meeting was of strong opposition to

the proposals as they would:

- Break service links with Oban, the area's natural centre for health, education, transport, finance, and commerce.
- Break cultural and community links, thereby going against the Scottish Government's policy on strengthening rural communities. Seil and Easdale are part of Lorn, and such a link cannot be changed by a line drawn on a map.
- Sever the local population's link to the elected representatives of Oban, their natural centre for all the above. Surely this would be a retrograde move in terms of local democracy?
- The proposed mid-Argyll ward covers a massive area, with no direct road links to other centres of population. This would not only be virtually impossible for Councillors to travel, say, from Lochgilphead to Bridge of Orchy on a winter evening, but would inevitably diminish the local voice in such a vast area. It makes no sense administratively, culturally, or democratically.

Cllr Robertson and Mr Forester urged Community Councils and individuals to make their views known. This can be done via the "Have your say" button on the LGBC's website www.consultation.lgbc-scotland.gov.uk, by email to lgbc@scottishboundaries.gov.uk, or by writing to Thistle House, 91 Haymarket Terrace, Edinburgh EH12 SHD.

Communities were also urged to contact their MSPs/MPs to make their views known. It was suggested that Community Councils may wish to meet to draw up a joint submission.

Cllr Robertson would check on the suggestion that such changes had been proposed before.

The Chair and Cllr Robertson then thanked Mr Forester for his informative presentation. Mr Forester then left the meeting.

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF 28th JULY 2015

Argyll Sea Kayak Trail

Peter McDonald had indicated that the signage improvements should be completed by the end of September. Cllr Robertson would check on progress..

Scottish Water: New Waste Water Proposals For Seil

The Chair read out the Community Council's response (available on request to ferrisjef@aol.com) to Scottish Water's latest communication, dated 10th July. The Community Council was pressing for information on any alternatives to the scheme proposed, and for further engagement with the community. In particular, the

promised open drop in session during August had never materialised.

John Gordon drew attention to the fact that surveying had taken place at Seaview in August. On 22 September a tracked drilling machine was offloaded from a lowloader at the end of Seaview Terrace and parked on the property of Kilbride Farm.

John Gordon, who had been in touch with Scottish Water, told the meeting that Cllr Robertson would provide an update at the Community Council meeting. Cllr Robertson then read out an email from Joanna Peebles of Scottish Water. This stated that Scottish Water had started their site investigations which would consist of 10 boreholes and 14 trial pits. They would also be carrying out a Geophysical Survey off the coast. They had notified and given notice to the landowners whose land they would be on during these studies. The site investigations were expected to last around two weeks and once these had been assessed they would be in touch with Cllr Robertson and the Community Council.

Roads

Thanks were given for the speedy and effective repair to Clachan Bridge following the recent accident. There had been discussion as to the best way to mitigate against future accidents. It was suggested that a "Blind Summit" sign was the most appropriate, rather than traffic lights or a priority system. It was agreed that foliage should be cut back as far as possible to enhance the lines of sight. However, it was noted that this would require the permission of landowners, as the council was only responsible for a narrow strip from the road edge.

Thanks were also due for the recent jet patching, which seemed to be keeping even the worst of the craters in place for now. Inevitably, new potholes continued to develop, including one opposite the Tin Church. The Community Council will continue to notify the roads department as these are observed.

Nothing has yet happened about the previously-noted logs at the roadside. Cllr Robertson would again check with the roads department.

White lines had been promised to delineate the footpath where the bollards had been taken out on the road to Balvicar. Again, Cllr Robertson offered to check on progress.

It was noted that there is a dangerous loose paving slab on the pavement at Ellenabeich. Graeme Bruce would send a photograph to Argyll & Bute Council and ask that this be rectified as a matter of urgency.

A missing drain cover on the T&T side of the bridge pavement had been reported.

Health

Cllr Robertson reported that the Integration Board for Health and Social Care was now in existence, and the Strategic Plan was out for consultation.

It seems that a dentist is just about to sign up for the Dental Access Centre.

Police Report

PC Moore had sent his apologies and submitted the following report on police activity since the last meeting:

I know you are aware of the ongoing discussions in regards to the bridge (with thanks for the timeous repair) and will await the outcome of your discussions.

I am pleased to say that the theft of property has been resolved in Clachan Seil, with it being mislaid rather than misappropriated.

The unmarked car was also at Clachan Seil with a speed gun, no conditional offers were issued but a warning was given. Kilniver is to be targeted again due to increased complaints – you have been warned!!

Stone skimming – I believe is all in place but if any issues occur in the meeting please let me know.

Planning

New applications since last meeting

1. Non material amendment for minor change to footprint of dwellinghouse approved under planning permission 15/00180/PP
Plot 1 Cnoc Fennaig House Balvicar - Application permitted.

2. Renewal of planning permission reference 12/01630/PP (Erection of two dwellinghouses)
Land at Barnafeochaig Beag Clachan Seil – Pending consideration

3. Alterations and extension
Craobh Dearth Clachan Seil Ref 15/02143/PP – Application permitted

Still pending/decided since last meeting

1. Erection of decking and modifications to windows. Fasgadh Clachan Seil - Application permitted

2. Erection of fence (retrospective) Old Engineering Works – Awaiting decision

3. Site for the erection of 20 dwellinghouses Land South East of Oban Seil Farm – Application refused.

4. Variation of condition 2 of planning permission to remove the requirement for sound attenuating material to be applied to the whole of the interior of the building.
Land West of Am Bruach Balvicar – Decision not available (still pending)

The question was asked whether the boreholes being sunk as part of Scottish Water's investigations needed planning permission. Cllr Robertson would check,

although it was thought not as they were not permanent and were for a Utility.

Street Lights In Ellenabeich

There was very positive feedback on the new street lights, which were now completed. A number of the old lights were stored behind Highland Arts and should be removed before the influx of visitors the following weekend. Graeme Bruce would request their removal.

It was noted that the new LED lights cause less light pollution and make the light on the Pier Shed and on the toilets seem to glare in contrast.

Vodafone Rural Open Sure Signal (ROSS)

John Gordon reported that this was progressing, with Vodafone installing a dedicated line to each of the properties.

John would check with Vodafone in response to a question as to whether they would offer any special deals in this area.

Outside Tap At Ellenabeich Toilets

Argyll & Bute Council had confirmed that the hose connection had been removed to avoid any contamination of the water main.

20mph Flashing Lights At Easdale School

Jim Smith had confirmed in an email dated 27th August that the replacement equipment was to be delivered by the supplier within the next two weeks and would be installed as soon as available. Cllr Robertson would check on the situation and report back.

Bus Shelter

Efforts are ongoing to establish who owns the land and whether they would give permission prior to taking the proposal to Planning.

Parking in Oban

Anne Marie Robin and John Gordon were co-ordinating views to inform the Community Council's response on this topic. They reported that they had consulted both local residents and visitors who strongly shared the concerns previously minuted. Most suggested leaving things as they were, seeing the new proposals as greedy and a false economy, giving Oban a bad reputation. There was also discussion of the legitimacy of the parking tickets issued, and concerns raised about abuse of the blue badge disabled spaces.

The Community Council would submit feedback to Argyll and Bute Council, and would welcome further comments and suggestions.

Again, the view was expressed that Argyll and Bute Council did not do enough to raise public awareness of consultations, and that their website was confusing and difficult to use.

Cllr Robertson would take feedback on this, together with the comments minuted

above on the Boundary Commission proposals, back to the Council.

ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

Contingency Plans – Kilniver and Clachan Bridges

The Community Council had long been pressing for a contingency plan for Kilniver Bridge. It was reported that an exceptionally heavy load (in excess of 48 tonnes) had been seen on the bridge recently, such events making damage to the bridge a very real possibility.

In addition, the recent accident on Clachan Bridge had highlighted the need for a plan in the event of that bridge – the sole access to Seil, Luing and Easdale – being out of action.

Cllr Robertson reported that the draft document on Kilniver Bridge should be ready by the end of the first week in October, and that a contingency for the Clachan Bridge was being added to that document.

Community Council By-elections

The Chair reported that there had been only one nomination for the Community Councillor vacancy, and that Julie Ferris had, therefore, been duly elected with effect from 8th October 2015. Julie was congratulated on her election.

TABLED PAPERS (available from ferrisjef@aol.com on request, but for full understanding of issues affecting you and your community please do come along to the meetings.)

HELP TO ADAPT INFORMATION –

a new pilot scheme aimed at helping older people to live independently at home for longer.

DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 24th November 2015, 19.00, Easdale Island Hall