

SEIL AND EASDALE COMMUNITY COUNCIL
DRAFT MINUTES OF PUBLIC MEETING
HELD ON TUESDAY 25TH SEPTEMBER 2018
Seil Island Hall

PRESENT: Julie Ferris, Seumas Anderson, Yowann Byghan, Guy Knight, Nina MacLean, Steve Patterson, Cllr Elaine Robertson, Cllr Kieron Green, PC Iain MacLeod

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC: 38

APOLOGIES: John Gordon, Rhoda Thomson

The Chair welcomed PC Iain MacLeod, our new community police officer, to the meeting.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Seumas Anderson, as a landowner with a potential interest in the Scottish Water proposals.

MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 24th July 2018 were approved and agreed as an accurate record: proposed by Lisa Robinson, seconded by Guy Knight.

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MEETING HELD ON 24TH JULY 2018

HEALTH

New GP Contract

As reported at the previous meeting, the level of response from our and other communities appears to be bearing fruit. The Chair read an update from Mary Phillips, Easdale Medical Practice Manager:

Easdale Medical Practice met with Prof Sir Lewis Ritchie, Chair of the Short Life Working Group for Remote and Rural and Fiona Duff, Primary Care Senior Advisor for the Scottish Government. We conveyed our concerns and it seemed to be an informative and constructive meeting.

Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP)

The HSCP states that the challenging financial position means they cannot do everything to meet the public's expectations of care. They are seeking feedback from the community on their 3 year strategic plan (2019-22) by means of a short questionnaire on the nhshighland.scot.nhs.uk website. The Community Council will submit a reply, and urged everyone to read the information available as the services covered affect every aspect of our health and wellbeing.

A question was asked about the Planning for the Future group which is looking at sustainable hospital services. It was suggested the CC should invite the Locality Manager to speak to a future meeting to give an update on this group.

SCOTTISH WATER (SW)

The Chair updated the meeting on events since the previous CC meeting (full copies of CC correspondence are available by request to ferrisjef@aol.com):

2nd August 2018 - the CC repeated its invitation of the previous year to SW and requested that a representative with technical expertise attend a public meeting to facilitate a clear, unambiguous response to inform the community of matters pertaining to this major project and help dispel any suggestion of lack of transparency.

9th August 2018 – Ruaridh MacGregor, Corporate Affairs Manager for SW replied, declining the invitation. The response included *“Whilst we are always happy to engage with the community council, at this stage we have no new information to update you with. It would perhaps be appropriate for us to attend one of your community council meetings when the outcome of the EIA (Environmental Impact Assessment) opinion is known and after the next community information event.I will be back in touch in the coming weeks to advise on the EIA Screening opinion and provide information on the pre-planning consultation event.”*

30th August 2018 – the CC responded as follows to correspondence it was copied into, from Save our Seil to the CEO of SW and others:

I can confirm that the Community Council invited Scottish Water to our next public meeting and that our invitation was declined. Whilst we note the points made the CC still feels the best way to address the community’s concerns is to facilitate an open discussion and we repeat our call for such a meeting to take place.

16th September 2018 – The Community Council commented on Planning Ref 18/01871/SCREEN Screening request for proposed wastewater treatment works - a request from SW to A&B Council asking whether an Environmental Impact Assessment is required. *“Seil and Easdale Community Council would support an Environmental Impact Assessment to ensure as much information as possible is available with regard to this contentious issue.”*

24th September 2018 – Ruaridh MacGregor provided a further update to the CC. Extracts as follow:

“We are expecting the decision on the EIA determination in the coming weeks.

We have completed an NVC (National Vegetation Classification) Survey which has identified the importance of the trees close to the site and importance of the wetland area in the valley. In order to minimise the impact on this we are now looking at a minor realignment of a portion of the road route (Plan provided)

The process for Planning for the Sea View Terrace Septic Tank is on-going.

We have completed the Geotechnical Investigation for the site and lab testing of samples taken is underway.

We are planning to hold a pre-planning information event in mid-November. I will be writing to the community in the coming weeks to confirm invite to a pre-planning community information event.”

Following the statement from the local stakeholders which was read at the previous

meeting and which referenced the group “Save our Seil”, the CC had invited the group to respond. First, the Chair read another statement from the local stakeholders, which had been received that day (Appendix A).

Lisa Robinson then read a response on behalf of Save our Seil (Appendix B).

There was some discussion about the process for appointing members to the local stakeholder group. The Chair suggested it would be more useful to discuss a way forward from the current position and asked for views on the suggestion of a public meeting Chaired by Mike Russell. No support was indicated. Yowann Byghan summarised the Community Council’s position, namely that it has a responsibility to reflect the views of the community to all relevant parties. The CC must, therefore, reflect that there is no single view, and that there is a desire for a public meeting with SW. It was agreed that the Community Council would write to Mike Russell to request such a meeting.

ROADS – Balvicar Bus Stop

It was noted with thanks that the trees and scrub obscuring the bus stop had been dealt with. However, major concerns remain about the safety of children (and elderly or disabled users) boarding and alighting from the bus on a 60mph stretch of road. The Roads Department had visited the site, albeit on a very quiet afternoon, and had confirmed that the road does not meet the criteria for signage or a reduced speed limit. Various solutions were discussed, including the community producing its own signs, perhaps like the cut out of a child which had been deployed at Kilniver. PC MacLeod would investigate further and report back accordingly.

POLICE REPORT

PC MacLeod introduced himself to the meeting and summarised the very varied incidents which had occurred since the previous meeting. These were mostly related to traffic incidents, highlighting again the need to drive with care and in a manner appropriate to weather and road conditions. There had also been a number of incidents involving email and phone scams – everyone was reminded to be alert to anyone trying to get bank details or requesting payments. There had also been an incident of a dog worrying sheep locally.

PLANNING

Applications received since the last meeting (full details available on the A&B website).

Seumas Anderson reported as follows:

Alterations and partial re-roofing, formation of vehicular access and rebuilding of entrance wall. Former Highland Arts and Monaveen Lodge, Ellenabeich. Ref 18/01988/PP Pending Consideration.

It was reported by one of the attendees that part of the application was for trees to be removed, but that trees had already been removed and burnt.

Screening request for proposed wastewater treatment works. Land West of Sewage Works Clachan Seil. Ref 18/01871/SCREEN. Pending Consideration.

The CC had commented, as reported above.

Erection of 108m high pole, 2 antennas and associated works. BT Exchange Balvicar. Ref 18/01861/PNTEL. Application Permitted.

This is to enable remote reading of smart meters.

Erection of 1 metre high slate boundary wall, metal gates and fencing, installation of 2 folding parking bollards and formation of tarred area and patio area. 38 Ellenabeich. Ref 18/01695/PP and 18/01667/LIB Pending Consideration.

Seumas Anderson read out the CC's response to this application (posted on the A&B website), about which it had received several verbal expressions of concern from local residents. There was considerable discussion of the need to protect the Conservation Area, and to prevent the erosion of the unique character of the village.

Specific concerns were raised by some of those present. It was suggested that the proposed development would block a Right of Way. Seumas explained that there is a specific legal definition of a Right of Way, that could not be applied in this instance.

It was felt that if permitted the development would set a precedent for building walls and blocking off access. Whilst the CC agrees with the principle of maintaining the open nature of the village, setting a precedent is not a material consideration for planning.

It was stated that A&B Planning are pushing for "fake walls" with slate cladding, rather than the traditional white rendered walls. The CC requested specific details of this policy and would respond accordingly.

Alterations and formation of raised deck (retrospective) The Former Manse, Balvicar Ref 18/01630/PP. Application Permitted.

Erection of dwellinghouse with integral garage, installation of septic tank and formation of vehicular access. Oban Seil Croft, Clachan Seil. Ref 18/01604/PP Pending Consideration.

It was noted that plans are no longer placed in the Post Office. It was suggested that a possible solution might be for the weekly planning list to be emailed to the shop and printed there. Cllr Kieron Green would check on the Council's policy and report back.

Problems using the Planning website were also reported. Cllr Elaine Robertson would take the comments back to the Planning Department.

ELLENABEICH & EASDALE CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL & MANAGEMENT PLAN

There was nothing further to report other than that, as stated in the previous Minutes, a positive meeting had been held with Mark Lodge, who was leading the consultation for A&B. However, it was noted that the previous discussions on planning, and the agenda item on parking in Ellenabeich, were extremely pertinent. It was noted, again, that the Appraisal Report had criticised minor issues such as details on window design, whilst the Community Council continues to fight against major changes such as those discussed above. It was agreed we must remain vigilant and do everything possible to prevent the degradation of the conservation area.

BUS SERVICE ELLENABEICH

The current temporary arrangement whereby buses turn in the former Highland Arts car park will continue until the end of February 2019. Thereafter, an alternative solution will be needed. The meeting was reminded that West Coast Motors have banned the service bus from reversing in Ellenabeich because of the safety risk caused by the congestion and

number of pedestrians. If a solution to turning the buses cannot be found in the long term, the service will terminate at Seaview.

Cllr Kieron Green gave an update on the proposed turning circle, for which A&B Council had drawn up rough plans. The Council is looking to progress potential funding options, but none are available at the moment.

The Chair noted that we need feedback from the community (as requested at previous meetings) to ensure that the Council is not trying to progress an option which would then be opposed by local residents. One person present expressed the view that the creation of a turning circle and provision of coach parking would further degrade the nature of the village.

The CC and all parties will continue to seek a resolution to this issue, as there does appear to be agreement that Ellenabeich must not lose its bus service.

DEFIBRILLATORS

Lisa Robinson was thanked for registering our Public Access Defibrillator with the Scottish Ambulance Service.

AOCB

Parking – Ellenabeich

Concerns had been raised about difficulties parking at Ellenabeich, with suggestions made regarding Resident Parking Permits and a Disabled Parking Space. Guy Knight and Steve Patterson were to attend a meeting with all interested parties on 5th October to seek a potential resolution to problems highlighted. They would report back accordingly.

Armistice Day Commemoration

Charles Struthers, a member of the Great War steering committee which meets under the auspices of A&B Council, had contacted the CC about holding a community bonfire to mark 100 years of the end of WWI. On a previous occasion there had been a community bonfire at Ardmaddy where, as Charles pointed out, there is plenty of fallen timber.

It was suggested that it would be easier for more people to access a site at Ardencaple, or near the Tigh an Truish. The CC would contact A&B Council for guidance.

Community Payback Order – annual consultation

The CC had received a request for feedback on Community Payback Orders, with a call for suggestions for tasks within the community that could be carried out under the Unpaid Work Scheme.

Suggestions raised at the meeting were: picking up plastic from the beaches and clearing roadside litter. The Hall Committee would also consider projects of benefit to the Hall and its grounds.

Date and time of next meeting

6.30pm Tuesday 27th November 2018 in Seil Island Hall.

**REPORT from LOCAL SW STAKEHOLDERS
- SECC MEETING 25.09.2018**

Ruaridh MacGregor, on behalf of Scottish Water, keeps both the Stakeholder Group and Seil and Easdale Community Council informed about progress.

The local stakeholders have kept Mike Russell, as Chair of the Stakeholder Group, in touch with developments on Seil and we understand he would be willing to come and Chair a public meeting to explain why 1A was unanimously supported. Likewise, we have updated Chris Chubb, the Independent Expert, who would also be prepared to attend and explain technical and scientific aspects.

We understand SoS have received replies from Alan Thomson on behalf of the SW CEO, Douglas Millican, from our MSP Mike Russell, as Chair of the Stakeholder Group and from our Argyll and Bute Councillors.

We would like to remind the Community Council that the Stakeholder Group worked hard to find a solution that best meets the needs of the community and minimises disruption and damage to the environment. We chose 1A because it involves a new inland site well away from housing and hidden from the road. It uses a tried and tested technology and a much higher level of treatment of the effluent than Option 3.

However, we repeat, as was acknowledged at the last Community Council meeting, any decisions ultimately rest with SW.

Anne Marie Robin, George MacKenzie, Alex Wright, John Gordon, David Ainsley
25.9.18

I am Lisa Robinson and I have been asked once again to speak on behalf of a group of local people who are extremely concerned about the proposals to site a WWTW in an unspoilt and environmentally valuable area of Seil (site 1a). The formation of this group took place when it became clear that the views of many people in the wider community were being ignored by SW and that the only chance of being heard was by combining our efforts.

The group has, at all times, acknowledged that considerable time and effort has been invested in considering the most suitable option for dealing with our community's waste water and we understand that, having reached what seemed to be an acceptable way forward, the stakeholders would be disappointed to learn of our objections. However, we have always endeavoured to frame our concerns in a positive manner, suggesting what we consider to be viable alternatives to the proposed site 1a, based solely on SW's own appraisal studies and were therefore saddened to hear the comments made by the local stakeholders (who we were told are John Gordon, Alex Wright, Ann Robin, Dave Ainsley and George MacKenzie) at the CC council meeting held in July. As a result of these comments we feel that we must exercise our right to reply in order to ensure that an accurate record of our position is presented.

The stakeholders state that Save Our Seil are opposing the proposals without being familiar with the facts, figures and conclusions which have been made publically available and that in doing so we are responsible for protracting, what we all agree, is an unacceptable situation. Our response is therefore as follows:

In their draft document Island of Seil Waste Water Treatment Options Review, December 2016, SW appraise 12 potential WWTW options against 6 recognised criteria. At Site 3, the old quarry at Seaview, 3 potential options were rated, and these ranked highest of all options, with scores of 26, 25 and 25. SW identified several factors in favour of this site including that the site is located in a brownfield former quarry away from properties and visually well screened with a low visual impact. They stated that intrusion and risk from desludging would be minimal and that resiting the works here would remove a risk of noise nuisance from the existing site. In addition Section 3.7 stated that 'A further driver considered within some of the options...is the potential to support future growth.....options for a combined solution with a treatment system discharging into Easdale Bay could also be sized to accommodate a future connection for Ellenabeich.' In this report SW initially concluded that this site would be their preferred option.

In the same document Option 1a scored 22, as did Option 5 which proposed to transfer flows either north of south of the existing works. SW listed several downsides for site 1a including the need for dual site operation with retention of existing site as a pumping station, a large site footprint with visible elevated treatment units in a more remote location. The need for some security fencing and screening in an otherwise clear area was highlighted and it was pointed out that the access road would increase local impact of the solution on the landscape (the access route has yet to be confirmed). In addition there would be an on-going risk of managing the discharge into Seil Sound Shellfish Waters Protected Area. The 'pros' were that this option would minimise the impact on the Seaview area and the existing site and remove the need to install a pipeline across the island.

However, Option 1a was endorsed by the local stakeholders on the basis was that they 'felt' that this would be the best option because the works would be located 'in an isolated part of the island well away from any houses'. SW subsequently accepted this on the basis that the stakeholders were considered to represent the wider community.

The 'isolated' area described by the stakeholders is shown on the current local plan as 'Countryside Zone' (formerly 'Sensitive Countryside') which according to ABC Planning Authority should only be

considered for small scale development of appropriate infill, rounding off and redevelopment sites and changes of use of existing buildings. The area is frequented by many Red List bird species, of which there are photographs, and in our opinion, forms a section of an important wildlife corridor. SW are currently seeking advice from the Planning Authority as to whether an EIA is required as part of the planning process (although we would hope that SW would choose to undertake such an assessment given the concerns raised by the community).

So it is based upon this information that Save Our Seil are against option 1a.

As we cannot see any reason why SW could not install a works at Seaview which would treat effluent to a standard which would not result in pollution, and with the understanding that SW have dismissed the seemingly sensible option of removing rainwater from the sewerage system, we therefore support proposals for Site 3.

We continue to point out that the stakeholders do not represent the views of the wider community. There are various statements contained with the minutes of the CC and supporting documents which clearly illustrate that the stakeholders neither represented the community, nor reported back to the CC for example, taken from an open letter from the stakeholders dated 14/6/2017 ' The local stakeholders apologise for not being able to give fuller information at an earlier time to the community. SW asked that all discussions be kept confidential until progress was made....Now we are at a position where there is a concrete proposal and we are free to discuss all details....'

Unfortunately SW have failed to answer any direct questions regarding the proposals and they have refused to attend an open meeting despite several invitations by the CC preferring to arrange information meetings which present only their preferred option. They also continue to communicate their updates via the local stakeholders despite the concerns that have been raised regarding transparency. If the stakeholders feel that Save Our Seil have misrepresented any information which is in the public domain we would ask that they encourage SW to attend a CC meeting where any such matters can be clarified.

We do not feel that any of the options which do not involve removing rainwater from the sewerage system are sustainable, however, in dismissing their own preferred option we feel that SW have not considered the bigger picture in terms of overall impacts on the terrestrial as well as marine environment and we would urge them to reconsider.

Save Our Seil encourages discussion on this vital development and can be contacted via www.saveourseil.org