

Seil and Easdale Community Council
Draft Minutes Of Public Meeting Via Zoom.
23 November 2020 – 7.30pm

Present: Guy Knight (Chair) Seumas Anderson, Cllr Elaine Robertson, Cllr Kieron Green, Steve Patterson, Willie Munro, Peter Daalman and 15 members of the Public.

Apologies: Rhoda Thomson, Jacqueline Carter-Brown, PC Iain McLeod.

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and to the new members, Willie, Peter and Jakki. Thanks also went to Julie and Anne for all the work and commitment they showed to the CC. The Chair thanked Councillors Elaine Robertson and Kieron Green for their help and support via email in assisting with issues during the year, which were more challenging due to COVID-19.

Declarations of Interest: Seamus Anderson (Scottish Water), Steve Paterson (Seafari) and Peter Dalman (current planning application lodged with A & B council).

Minutes of The Previous Meeting

Minutes of the meeting held on 28th January 2020 have been approved.

Proposed: Guy Knight

Seconded: Seumas Anderson

Matters Arising

Scottish Water (SW)

We have been waiting for the Planning Application to be heard but have recently received an email from Scottish Water saying they were going to defer the current application. SW proposed a Zoom meeting to update the community on why they are deferring, and agreed to have two members each from the CC, the stakeholder group and SOS. We will report back following the meeting.

It is hoped that moving forward a new or potentially extended stakeholder group will continue in some form or another to reflect the views of the entire community.

Lisa Robinson raised concerns about the stakeholder group in the past, and their involvement in the process. LR welcomed the opportunity to take part in the meeting but stressed that it in no way alters their view that the stakeholder group really should be considered defunct. As elected representatives the community council should be the sole arbiters of any future review of sewage provision for the Isle of Seil and Easdale. LR felt that in the interest of openness that transcripts of all meetings with SW are recorded in the future to avoid misunderstandings. Concerns were again raised over the whole SW issue, and she hoped to have a reasoned discussion about what is best for Seil, Easdale and the marine and terrestrial environments. LR felt that it was about time that SW took some responsibility, and said she was extremely glad to hear that they would be reviewing the methodology they are using for genuinely consulting our community. LR thanked the CC for all the work they were doing in taking that forward.

The Chair summarised how this ongoing issue with SW has divided the island and thanked LR for her input. As a Community Council we reflect the views of everyone in the community. If the CC took over the remit of the stakeholder group in its entirety it could potentially leave the CC in an awkward position, as there would always be people who may be unhappy with the outcome. A new stakeholder group would assist in the way forward, and the CC would hope to have one member on the group enabling the CC to receive feedback and updates. SW have not come back with anything to date, but any decision will

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likely be made at the forthcoming zoom meeting. The Chair stated that we are confident we can all work together, and reach a satisfactory conclusion.

John Gordon stated that the letter from Scottish Water is again talking about the cost issue, he referred back to 2015, and the community council minutes of that first public meeting where you will find that cost was a problem. There was no mention of the fact that sewage was pouring into Balvicar since 2008. It was the Seaview stakeholders that had the first private meetings with Scottish Water and SEPA, and discovered the truth that the sewage works at Clachan Seil had never worked. In 2008 a number of people were saying the same thing. JG felt it was a case of “*here we go again*” based on costs. He drew attention to the very first meeting with Scottish Water when SW’s Chief Executive was present, and said that he always uses Seil as the worst example of a project they have done. He promised expense would be no object, and now we learn they are trying to duck out of it due to cost. JG reiterated the history of the stakeholder group, and felt that the original stakeholders must have a say in the future as only they know the background to this. JG urged the CC to look at the reports of proceedings of the planning application for Mornay, and the conclusions of the last paragraph where it states “*All Consultees, with the exception of the Community Council are of the opinion that the current proposals are acceptable, and can be approved. Officers can identify no reasons in this instance to justify why planning permission should not be granted.*”

The Chair noted the points raised by JG, and stated that we hoped to get a more balanced stakeholder group moving forward, which represented the views of the majority of the community. SW has caused disruption and roadworks for years, and just when we thought the end was in sight the planning application stands to be deferred. The Chair felt we should wait until after the zoom meeting when we know the reasons and can re-group and decide how best to proceed.

Julie Ferris agreed with the points made by JG but added in retrospect it seems ludicrous that they were given literally about a week to come up with representatives for this stakeholders group. With the wisdom of hindsight we should have dug our heels in, and said it is impossible to come up with representatives within that time frame. However, it was done with the best of intentions thinking it would move things forward. JF added that the CC did ask SW fairly early on in the process if the stakeholders were going to be a consultative group and propose recommendations which would then be discussed, or if it was going to be a decision-making group. We never received a response from SW, and with hindsight maybe that would have been helpful to define. Two things to bear in mind as we go forward.

Ellenabeich Bus Service

The Chair acknowledged that many of the issues relating to buses turning had largely been resolved, and understood that the normal bus service had now resumed. We have heard that the buses are being monitored to see how often the service is used. The Chair urged the community to use the bus service because if we do not use it we may stand to lose it in the future. Cllr Robertson echoed the Chair’s position to use the bus service or it could lead to a revised timetable. She stressed that this is not something she has heard but based on past experiences in other areas. Cllr Robertson will make enquiries to West Coast Motors as to what their future plans might be, and she will feedback to the CC.

Litter and Bins

The Chair thanked Cllr’s Elaine Robertson and Kieron Green who have been very assisting to try and get the green bin returned by the public toilets, and for bins in the back car park. Tourism is not an issue this time of year but up until very recently Ellenabeich still suffered from overflowing bins down on the sea front causing litter to be blown all around the village.

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The CC intends to keep pushing the council to reach a resolution before spring, and the resumption of tourism. The bin lorry already goes into the back car park to empty residents bins and turn round, and it should not be an additional burden to empty a couple of bins in the car park, and decrease the risk of visitors using bins belonging to the residents, which understandably causes conflict.

Willie Munro suggested it would be useful to have a small bin at the bus shelter at Seaview to minimise litter, and reduce the amount of rubbish picked up on beach cleans.

Cllr Elaine Robertson confirmed she would continue to help with the issues relating to bins, and said it has been a problem with public bins being used irresponsibly by a small minority.

The Chair reported that the issues relating to the glass re-cycling bins had not been repeated but will continue to be monitored.

Phone Directory

There are still a number of residents who are not in the Seil phone directory. Slips can be sent should you wish to fill in your details and be included. The directory is handy and contains lots of local information but we do need your permission before you can be included. We are looking to add as many new people as we can before we get more entries printed off so please spread the word.

Easdale: Harbour

The Chair thanked Cllr's Kieron Green and Elaine Robertson for their help during COVID-19 with the issues faced on Easdale. The first storm at the beginning of the year blocked the harbour entrance so the ferry could not get in or out. There were several issues with different boats being used with residents being stuck on the island. The community came together with everyone helped out enabling us to get through it. However, another storm a couple of weeks ago has undone much of the good work that had just been completed so we need to look at a more long-term solution. That leads us nicely onto the second point, which is a break water. We are aware of a number of surveys that have been carried out on the prospect of potentially putting a breakwater in that would protect the harbour. We know both Mike McKenzie and Robert Paton (Council) have also been pushing for a long term solution, and we will work together to try and find a way forward.

Cllr Elaine Robertson has spoken to Stuart Clark, marine supervisor at the council who said they have looked at a breakwater, and have asked a consultant for a survey of what has to be done. Cllr Robertson also raised the issue of a fixed link, and said the residents could express their views on that to the CC. Cllr Kieron Green said the council has a capital plan, which was approved in February, in which there are dates for replacement of the Easdale ferry in 2025/26, and it was his understanding that they would be looking for something slightly different from the current ferry to make accessibility easier. In the interim they may only commit to a temporary solution. John Gorgon kindly offered to forward the previous surveys he had.

The last issue relates to the ferry timetable. It was changed due to COVID-19 with a view to limiting the number of people visiting, and to comply with COVID-19 regulations. The CC understands that a number of other ferries have gone back to a normal winter timetable, and following a complaint the CC has been asked to undertake a survey to decide which timetable should be implemented. This is a matter for the residents of Easdale, and views are being collated to report back to the Council.

Oban Ward Boundaries.

Many years ago changes were proposed to some of the wards with a proposal we were placed within mid Argyll. New proposals are currently being looked at with Oban as a single Ward in its own right with Easdale, Seil and Kerrera coming under that ward. An alternative is to become part of an Island ward with Mull, Iona, Coll and Tiree. Details have been placed on our Facebook page, and we would encourage everyone to look at these and express your views on the following link. This has to be completed by 26 January.

https://consult.lgbc-scotland.gov.uk/reviews/argyll_and_bute_council_area_public_consultation/

Cllr Kieron Green agreed with Zim that putting Seil and Easdale in with Coll and Tiree is an exercise in trying to balance numbers because the Mull, Coll and Tiree ward is a bit under in terms of population, so if they could put some other islands in with that ward it would make their spreadsheet look a lot better. The option that they are presenting in terms of you going in with Oban is a possibility, and not necessarily a bad possibility by any stretch of the imagination. Another option to consider, is making a case for Seil and Easdale, Luing and Kilmelford to go in with the Lorne ward, with all the other rural areas around Oban which is what currently exists. It is not being suggested as an option but that does not mean that the community cannot suggest it as an option, and make a case for that to happen. There are pros and cons associated with that. A positive is that you would be in with a ward which has rural communities and similar issues to you. A disadvantage is that it is a much larger ward, and it can be quite challenging for counsellors to cover it all. KG said going in with Oban is not a bad option but a lot of focus would be around Oban as it makes up the vast majority of that ward.

Seumas Anderson said he did not realise that as it was never suggested as an option to maintain the current situation, and raised concerns about being overshadowed in the Oban ward. Oban is our centre but goes all the way to Bridge of Orchy so we may have the same issues but it is a heck of an area to cover well. There was not much detail apart from the proposal, and that was basically driven by the formation of the islands bill.

Cllr Elaine Robertson concurred with SA agreeing there was nothing wrong with the way it is now, and there was an argument for the ward to be kept as it is. The islands bill is what has driving the issue. The Boundary Commission were having a meeting with the island representatives and it would be interesting to see what they come back with. The good thing this time is that Seil and Easdale are linked to Oban. The CC, having attended meetings on this, are of the view that the challenges faced by Coll and Tiree do not really apply to us on Seil and Easdale, and we believe we would probably be better suited remaining part of the Lorne Ward (which we need to all propose) or join the new Oban Ward.

Chair Seating Area on the playing field

One of the railway sleepers is rotten and has collapsed requiring replacement. The seating area belongs to the Hall, and funding options for replacement are being explored.

Health

The CC would like to thank the Doctor's Surgery for all their help and support throughout COVID-19. The surgery quickly developed new working practices, and with the community pulling together to ensure those shielding still had access to their prescriptions and care we

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managed to cope really well. The surgery has expressed their thanks to the community. The flu jabs have been going pretty well despite the national shortage. We will revert on the procedures for the COVID-19 vaccine once they are known, and they may well be provided by a drive through system at the Hall.

Roads and Bridges

Zim reported that quite a few potholes have been repaired, and we have no updated information on the bridges. There has been a survey undertaken regarding the “Rest and Be Thankful” and a meeting was held with the Scottish government which Willie Munro attended on behalf of the CC.

Willie reported that the meeting was chaired by Rhoda Grant MSP and Mary Galbraith, originally from Campbelltown who gave a useful and informative presentation. The objective was to consider the eleven options being put forward by Transport Scotland for a solution to the A83 debacle. Anyone who has had to travel to Glasgow recently will know the challenges faced on the A82 and A85 with both the military road and the main road closed. We were encouraged not just to think in the short term but also in terms of longer strategic plans, which provide overall support to the people of Campbelltown, Gigha, Islay and Jura. The community councils in those areas had faced real challenges. It was more or less agreed that option one, which was either a tunnel on the opposite side from the existing road, or some form of viaduct that came from the bottom of the Glen to the top would be the priority, whilst allowing the existing road to be in use during building work.

Regarding Mid- Argyll and Campbelltown there were some reasonably attractive options of building a bridge across from Lochgilphead towards Cowal, which opened up other options for building bridges further down the coastline following the success of the bridges across Loch Creran and at Ballachulish. The consultation finished at the end of October, and we understand that Transport Scotland are going to create a shortlist that will go out for further consultation. Mary Gilbreath's presentation explained the pros and cons of the options, and it was not just about providing a transport link but also about looking at journey times, energy consumption and green issues which many people considered were important issues.

John Gordon raised concerns over speeding on the roads and the risks to pedestrians and animals and detailed these in a letter to the CC also suggesting speed limits be looked at across the island and further signs. The challenges in implementing this were highlighted by Cllr Green.

Concerns were again raised that on Seil there are a lot of pedestrians walking on the roads, which are narrow and do not have footpaths. The CC continue to work with the Police to resolve the issue of speed.

Police Report

PC Macleod sent a report for the Chair to read out and sent his apologies for not being able to take part in the meeting. A number of complaints about lockdown breaches and persons not adhering to the rules were dealt with. A number of scams have been running predominantly around emails purporting to be from the DVLA, TV licencing, PayPal etc. where recipients are told that their account is in arrears or other direct debit has not renewed or similar and by following a link on the email you can enter your bank details and it will all be okay. Police urge people to please, never, ever follow a link from an email or give out any personal banking details. If in doubt about the legitimacy then go to the official site from where the email has supposedly originated, and contact the provider organisation yourself. PC Macleod forwarded the latest updates and guidance on the fraud situation, and these will be circulated to everyone on the Seileachan list.

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- 13th of October 2020 police attended a report of a sheep being worried by a dog near Balvicar. The owner of the dog was identified, and the matters being dealt with in conjunction with the council dog warden. The sheep although injured was treated and survived. Measures have been put in place to prevent the dog involved from doing this again.
- 25th of October 2020 police assisted in having farm machinery moved from the roadside near Balvicar as motorists were concerned it could be a hazard.

Police are mindful of the individuals that have been checking outlying and vulnerable premises during the hours of darkness. If any person can identify someone or they see anyone acting suspiciously, please call the police.

Over the summer PC Macleod has been advised of acts of minor vandalism and annoyance in and around the public car park at the road end in Ellenabeich. PC Macleod finds it disappointing to find our community is not immune to calls of this nature, especially when it appears local persons are involved or at least know who is involved. He would like the acts to stop and appeals to anyone who may have information to get in touch with him.

Emergency Planning

This is an issue that the CC are still looking at in light of recent events.

John Gordon noted that with regards to the contingency plan he had received a phone call from the council, and that he and Janet Scott were the present key holders. He wanted to know whether that would continue. JG was happy to continue in that role but would bring it up at the next hall meeting, and see whether anyone else wanted to be added to the list.

Planning

Seumas Anderson updated everyone. Scottish Water were still awaiting a decision although they just deferred the application at the moment.

1. Erection of a one-metre-high retaining wall to include recess for bin and fuel storage area at 38 Ellenabeich.
2. Site for erection of dwelling house on land west of Oban Seil Croft at Clachan Seil is pending a decision.
3. Erection of agricultural cultural storage shed Oban Seil Croft that application was withdrawn.
4. Renewal of planning permission where alterations extension to a dwelling house Inishmore at Ellenabeich has been permitted, just the usual rollover of an existing planning application.
5. Erection of agricultural shed and formation of access track at Oban Seil Croft, that was refused.
6. Installation of modular galvanised steel access ramp for 4 Whinbank, that has actually gone ahead. Permitted.
7. Non material amendment for reduction in size of an extension at Crove Mhor, Clachan Seil. Permitted.
8. Erection of an agricultural building Oban Seil Farm. Refused.
9. Alterations to dwelling house and erection of decking Tigh Na Ross, permitted.

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Any questions on any of these applications contact Seumas.

John Gordon raised an issue over an application and the CC's response to the application with anonymous people. Seumas responded saying the CC listened to what people were saying, and responded within the rules where people did not want to 'rock the boat' and fall out with the neighbours. He agreed it was better if people came forward and put a name to everything, but it does not always happen.

Julie Ferris said after the report of proceedings were published the applicant had commented again, and was quite scathing of the community council and others. Julie said it would be great if people felt able to write in, and that the CC had always worked closely with the compliance/governance of Argyll and Bute. It was the CC's overriding responsibility to reflect the views of the community, and if some of that community did not wish to be named, it was not for the CC to say 'we will ignore you' or 'if you don't name yourself we won't put this forward' or the CC would not be fulfilling its full remit. It was for the planners to decide whether that was relevant, and whether to accept it.

Cinderella Glow Trail @ An Cala

An Cala has very kindly agreed to the use of the garden to stage a 'Cinderella' themed glow trail for the children of Seil, Easdale and Luing. COVID-19 guidelines will be adhered to, and it is strictly for children from these islands and by appointment.

Dog Fouling

Complaints have been flooding in of dog fouling around the island that is not being picked up. There are complaints on a daily basis, which include incidents at Balvicar on the Balvicar Farm/Chalet road and around the golf course where dog owners are throwing bags over fences, hanging them on trees or leaving them on the verge. Dog owners are again requested to be responsible, and if you own a dog to clean up after it. The majority of dog owners are responsible, but the irresponsible few are spoiling it for everyone. Please pick up or further steps will be taken.

AOB

There have been a number of mink sightings along the road by the golf course and towards the doctor's surgery, if anybody has any information or sightings please contact Lisa Robinson or Kim Rowswell.

Date of Next Meeting Tuesday the 26th of January 2021