



KINGUSSIE AND VICINITY COMMUNITY COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 7th JULY 2015 IN TALLA NAN RÒS

Present: Mrs A Schofield (Chair), Mr J Taylor (Treasurer), Mrs V Emmett (Secretary), Mrs M Brown, Ms G Wright.

Apologies: PC A Courts (Police Scotland)

1. Minutes of the Previous Meeting, held on 2nd June 2015

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as a correct record. Prop MB, Sec. JT.

2. Matters Arising

Ruthven Bridge: Mrs Schofield reported on the useful meeting she and Mr Taylor had attended with Mr MacKenzie (Highland Council's structural engineer). They discussed important matters affecting access for residents at Gordon Hall, Ruthven, Tromie, Drumguish and Insh to and from Kingussie during the road closure and replacement of the bridge. Mr MacKenzie reported that the usual protocols for the closure of bridges have been followed. Emergency services are responsible for ensuring necessary measures are put in place.

It was agreed that the **commemorative plaque** on the existing bridge will be carefully removed and that it should be placed on a post beside the road on the south (Ruthven) side of the road just before the new bridge so that it can more easily be seen. This work will be done by Highland Council or the contractors. Work on the stone pillars supporting the bridge has already begun.

Donation for town's floral displays: Mr Taylor reported he received an acknowledgement with thanks from the Ms Boquillon, chair of the business association who are organising this year's displays.

3. Police Matters

PC Courts sent his apologies in advance of the meeting.

Councillors regretted there was no other representative from Police Scotland at the meeting in view of the serious incidents the previous weekend, when the floral displays in Gynack Memorial Gardens and other displays along the High Street paid for by local businesses and the community had been vandalised, and residents' properties had been damaged, especially cars parked along the High Street.

Councillors felt very strongly that there was no longer a Police presence in the town especially in the evenings at weekends, when acts of mindless vandalism were more likely.

Councillors also urged residents to report such acts of vandalism to the Police promptly especially immediately at the time if they are aware of such problems occurring. It is only in that way that the Police may quickly apprehend the culprits.

4. Treasurer's Monthly Financial Report (appended)

Mr Taylor presented his monthly report.

He reported that attempts to close the "empty bank accounts" with Bank of Scotland are proving a bureaucratic nightmare and are turning in quite a saga!

He expressed concern about the funds that KVCC holds in its account on behalf of several community projects should the Community Council no longer be able to function. At present the KVCC accounts hold the funds of the Town Trail, Kingussie Heritage and Station Adopters groups. If the KVCC accounts are frozen and held by THC, then will such groups be able to access their funds? Such an eventuality could be especially important later this year if the elections fail to result in a viable Council.

Mrs Emmett urged the Kingussie Heritage group to make rapid progress in becoming a separate organisation by finalising their draft constitution and then set up separate accounts, which would enable transfer of the Town Trail and Heritage funds from KVCC to the Heritage group. This was agreed unanimously.

Mrs Schofield pointed out the monies in the Station Adopters fund really belong to ScotRail and were given to KVCC to administer in providing floral displays and other materials to enhance the appearance of Kingussie Railway Station.

Mr Taylor undertook to consult Ms Cowie, the Ward Manager about such matters.

5. Planning Matters

(a) Planning applications and permissions

Mrs Schofield reported only one item on the weekly planning lists – replacement of a totem sign at the railway station. She had commented – no objections.

(b) Communication from Dochfour Estate

Mrs Emmett provided copies of a recent email and draft layout plan from the architect on behalf of Dochfour Estates relating to their proposed small housing development along Dunbarry Road. As part of the pre-application consultation, the architect was asking for councillors' views.

Councillors commented on the distinct changes in the revised plan from that provided earlier:

The courtyard development of four houses, which would need only one vehicular access point onto Dunbarry Road, has been changed to a linear layout of the houses and would now require two vehicular accesses onto the road.

The upper access would be very close to the junction with Hillside Avenue, which serves all the houses in Hillside Avenue and Croila Road. This junction is also close to the bend on a fairly steep section of Dunbarry Road. The developers will be required to relocate one of the traffic calming measures.

No provision has been made for garages at the properties; instead the drawing indicates two parking places at each house; i.e. up to eight additional vehicles could be using Dunbarry Road regularly.

The area of amenity land to the north of the proposed houses that has been enjoyed by local people (especially children) until now is to be transferred to the ownership of the residents of the four properties, who will be responsible for its maintenance. There was no indication if this area would

be available to the wider community in the future. A children's play area had been included in the previous plan.

The new layout plan gave no detail about the design and construction of the houses themselves.

Councillors decided they would prefer to defer making detailed comments until they see the actual planning applications when these are submitted to the THC Planning department.

Mrs Emmett undertook to make a brief response along these lines to the architect.

6. Highland Councillor's report

In the absence of Mr Fallows, this item could not be taken.

7. Kingussie Memorial Gardens

Mrs Schofield reported that Highland Council has to make savings up to £46 million from its budget.

They have identified a means of making a considerable saving from the horticultural budget by closing the horticultural (plant propagation) sections at Inverness and Wick. Councillors expressed disappointment at this news since the Inverness unit has provided work experience opportunities for people with learning and physical disabilities and mental health problems.

Mrs Schofield explained that there is a real possibility that the floral arrangements done by THC staff in town and village centres along the Strath in Badenoch and Strathspey and the plantings in the Memorial Gardens in Kingussie will no longer be done by the Highland Council. The total savings on plants will be in the region of £6000 p.a., but it is also likely to mean a loss of jobs too.

It is doubtful the Kingussie community has the wherewithal to raise enough money each year to maintain the Memorial Gardens and the planters to their current high standard.

2015 may be the last year when the Memorial Gardens will provide the highlight in the town and be a tourist attraction for Kingussie.

It was agreed that the British Legion and members of the Business Association are likely to be concerned about developments.

Mrs Schofield reported that Ms Cowie, Ward Manager had consulted her about the state of and future of the children's sandpit in the Memorial Gardens. Councillors agreed that it is in a poor state and could be a health hazard. Few parents allow their children to use it in case it contains broken glass or animal faeces. They agreed that it should be filled in and grassed over. Mrs Schofield suggested it might be used as a site for another picnic seat since there is currently only one in the Gardens and people do like to sit out for their picnic lunches and to rest and enjoy the gardens. She undertook to reply to Ms Cowie.

Councillors have also learned of complaints about the standard of grass cutting again this year and also problems with blocked drains as a result of a lack of drain clearance.

8. AOCB

(a) Pitmain Estate – offer to a community group

Mr Taylor commented that he has been approached by Mr Graham Mabon, Head Keeper at Pitmain Estate about the Estate's offer to make a donation again this year to a local community group or project. Councillors recalled that the Estate has made such donations in the past, the donation being the money raised from the sale of fishing permits. Councillors suggested suitable recipients of such a

donation: the Bowling Club, whose members are raising funds to improve their facilities; the town's Floral fund; the Parish Church Pipe Organ restoration fund.

Mrs Brown commented that she understood the Bowling Club had been the recipients of a donation last year. Mr Taylor undertook to consult groups and then contact Mr Mabon again.

(b) Report of the Monadhliath Deer Management Strategy Group

Mrs Emmett provided a brief oral report of the meeting she had attended about a new red deer management plan agreed by the owners of estates in the Monadhliath range. The area is very large, stretching from Spean Bridge to Strathnairn and covering 150,000 Ha and involves about 40 owners. Amongst its aims, the plan's implementation will result in a more even balance of hinds and stags, the provision of more woodland for wintering deer by re-aligning fences and expanding woodlands, including planting where necessary. At present only 74 full-time equivalent (FTE) keepers in all are employed on the 40 estates, with only 23 directly associated with the management of deer. It is hoped the diversification on some estates will facilitate more rural employment and sustain jobs in the area.

(c) Design of Affordable Homes

Mrs Schofield reported back about a meeting she had attended in Grantown on Spey as part of the town's celebrations. The event included an interesting talk about planned towns, tracing aspects of the history of the development of Grantown. Dr. Gokai Deveci, Professor of Architecture in Aberdeen then gave a stimulating talk about the design of modern housing. He spoke about housing he had been involved with: in the design of the acclaimed house owned by artist Lotte Globb in Sutherland, an affordable six-bedroom house Peterculter built for only £50,000, and passive social housing in Dunoon, which incorporated heat recovery systems and cost very little to run.

(d) Spey Street car park

The matter of the lack of parking at the Spey Street car park for visitors and people who work locally during the day was discussed. Highland Council has been made aware of complaints from local residents, but the problem is as yet unresolved.

At present, the area adjacent to the railway line is still fenced off by a company involved with refurbishment of council owned housing reducing the available area for temporary parking. In addition, owners of several caravans and a commercial "pizza bar" are occupying other areas by permanently parking their vans there. Large commercial vehicles have also taken to parking in the car park overnight. Since large areas of the car park are subject to flooding due to poor drainage the amount of parking available is very small.

Date of Next Meeting: Tuesday 1st September at 7p.m. in Talla Nan Ròs

KVCC Financial Report to the month ending June 2015

Balance £5944.60

Payments

Station Adopters £87.48
Donation to floral displays £400.00
Talla Nan Ròs £48.00
(Hire of room for monthly meetings)

Lodgements

Highland Council Annual Grant £1266.02

Project Funds

Station Adopters £487.69
Town Trail £368.85
Heritage £544.66

KVCC £4543.40

Total £5944.60