

MINUTE OF THE APPLECROSS FORUM

APPLECROSS COMMUNITY HALL

15th JANUARY 2020

Attendance:

KECM Sheriff Katherine EC Mackie (chair)
EG Elaine Glover (Applecross Community forum secretary)
JG Jon Glover (chair community council)
AM (Arthur Macdonald)
RC Roslyn Clarke (community company)
MS Michael Summers (crofter)
PB Phil Buckley
AM Archie Maclellan (Applecross Trust)
SM Sarah McCowan (sports group)
RHJ Rodger Harvey Jaimeson (Chair Applecross Trust)
TM Tery McCowan (sports group)
JW Jess Whistance (Applecross Trust)
OK Owen Kilbride (Chair Applecross Community Company)
BM Barry Marsh
MM Megan Macinnes (woodland group)
RE Roger Evans
GF Gillian Fairweather
GM Gerry McPartlin

KECM prefaced proceedings with a tribute to George Gilroy and expressed on behalf of the whole forum deepest sympathies to the family of George and his many friends in our community.

1. Apologies:

Fiona Mackenzie
Jack Marris
Sara Viitan
Ann Fletcher
Kalie Wilkinson
Lynn Turner
Tom O'halloran
Tom Kilbride
Lesley Kilbride

2. Minutes from meeting 2nd October

proposed by RHJ and seconded by TM

3. Action Tracker

KECM noted that everything on the action tracker is marked as pending. She expressed the hope that the forum could start to make progress on the outstanding projects.

KECM had ascribed tentative target dates for most items and wondered whether the issue regarding the degradation of the road on the north coast (due to the extraction of timber) had been addressed. RHJ explained that the trust had secured donations from Kishorn Port and Scottish Woodland. It was expected that these payments would be made by Monday 20th January to Sheildaig Community Council as this was the community that had been directly inconvenienced by timber movement and degradation.

4. Reports

A) Community council

JG Asked that the community council minutes which are published monthly could take the place of a written report. He undertook to facilitate this by making the minutes available to Gerry for publication to the website every month.

The community council continue to focus on traffic management on the Bealach and are working with the tourism group in this regard.

B) COMMUNITY COMPANY

No questions raised however GM expressed admiration for the amount of funding they had achieved for various projects.

C) SPORTS GROUP

SM explained the gym is now up and running and progressing well. JG acknowledged the great success of the gym and added that the sports group were now waiting on further proposals for the steading/Heartfield etc before proceeding with any other projects.

D) CLACHAN CHURCH

KECM explained that Fiona Mackenzie had reported that we were still waiting for decisions to be taken by Church of Scotland trustees.

E) ALLOTMENT SCHEME

RC explained that an application had been made to the CCF for substantial funding including an allowance for an employee. The outcome is awaited.

Scottish Sea farms had awarded £1000 in November.

RC stated that anyone intested in joining the allotment group should get in touch with Kirsten Mackie.

F) APPLECROSS TRUST

MS asked about the new grants scheme at Aridrisaig with regard to the fence being in a bad state of repair. AM explained that the Trust had two choices, to either pay back grant money due to the failure to produce sufficient regen or roll over to the new scheme and this is the choice that was made. He acknowledged that lots of work was required on the fence and expressed a hope that the new tenant of Aridrisaig would make monitoring the situation easier.

OK expressed concern that the genetic stock of old oak wood at the Allt Mhor might be diluted by the new woodland creation site. AM acknowledged his concern but explained the Trust had been guided by Scottish Woodland in making the decision.

PB wondered if there was a possibility of red squirrels being introduced to Applecross. AM explained that SNH had pulled the plug on a reintroduction due to a lack of enough suitable habitat.

KECM expressed some concerns about the annual £5000 community benefit contribution from the Allt na Moine hydro. She felt strongly that the community had a right to inspect the relevant parts of the contract. RHJ maintained that the provisions of the agreement meant that a properly constituted community body would have to make a request for the funds. KECM felt that this was unsatisfactory and reasserted her concerns at the lack of transparency.

RHJ said that the developer was interested in installing recharging points for electric vehicles. This met with a positive response and it was suggested that the LDO could meet with the developers as a similar project was being undertaken by the community company. It was also noted that the developer had paid to upgrade the grid infrastructure to allow export of the power.

G) COMMUNITY WOODLAND

No questions were raised but it was noted that the meeting had been rescheduled to Monday 20th at 6pm

H) HELIPAD

JG summarised the report that had been submitted for the website. No questions were raised.

I) TOURISM MANAGEMENT

JW summarised the tourism management report.

The tourism group which JW was leading are intending to undertake a small scale and targeted survey of the community as initial discussions had made clear that aspirations throughout the community varied greatly. Local business will be asked to supply relevant data with regards to visitor numbers, length of stay etc.

JW had attended a meeting in Torridon hosted by Wester Ross Biosphere which had given her confidence that our approach was in keeping with others in the sector.

JW acknowledged in response to interventions from KM, RC and OK that a significant body of data could be gathered from previous studies and surveys. She stressed that this would be a short and very targeted survey with a specific tourism strategy in mind.

PB expressed concern about lack of available premises for small businesses and that a business/tourism hub should be a priority. RHJ confirmed that this ambition was shared by the Trust.

OK added that the community company were committed to examining the potential for such a centre and expressed the hope that the work of the tourism group might ascertain the level of enthusiasm in the wider community. KECM agreed that a hub should be a major priority and that CLUP (community land use plan) should be used to identify potential locations as an essential first step.

JW pointed out that in recent years most physical tourism information centres in the Highlands have closed as people became more reliant on the internet for information.

TM said that in her experience running a small business, many tourists had a clear need for local information and advice. RHJ expressed a hope that an Applecross app could be developed at some stage.

5. GOVERNANCE

TO had sent a questionnaire to 16 members of the original working group and had receive eight responses. These responses had highlighted some concerns including lack of effective communication, underutilisation of website, times and dates of meetings and maximisation of attendance. KECM added funding, and whether the forum should be a decision making body to the issues.

JG responded with the observation that a wide and diverse range of the community were present and that meetings were attended on average by 30-40 people. He added that a facebook group could be a good idea and that the original working group had envisaged drop in style meetings over afternoons which could be discussed more formally at an evening meeting. He cautioned against the need to spoon feed people and expressed the view that in the long term results would encourage more people to attend meetings. He also observed that many of the projects under the remit of the forum are undertaken by volunteers and those being led by paid employees have a much better record of success. With this in mind he suggested that the Community Company could divert some LDO resources to help with priorities identified by the forum.

OK rejected this request on the grounds that the LDO's priorities had already been set.

PB observed that the forum had been operating successfully as non decision making body until the community fund issue had arisen.

A wide range discussion ensued with regards to communications and promotion of the forum. OK stressed the need for comprehensive communication from the experience of the community company. Possibilities for a newsletter, or e-newsletter, website improvements. Facebook, An

Caranach and posters were covered. No firm decisions were taken but it was agreed that this needed further discussion.

Action: KECM to have further discussions with TO regarding governance.

6. Community fund

KECM strongly expressed the view that the time for making a decision was rapidly approaching. The two particular issues that made this pressing was that the £5000 from the new hydro scheme would need to be paid to a correctly constituted body. The second being that if any were to be invested in the Foundation Scotland scheme then there was a March deadline if we were to take advantage of the extra £12,500 offered by foundation Scotland. KECM added that there had been interest in all of the proposals offered at the previous meeting. A robust exchange of views took place. KECM concluded that lots of views had been expressed. There were currently four clear options and it was agreed that a way forward, suggested by KECM, was to set up a small group with a very specific remit to investigate the legalities and practicalities of these options in the hope that their findings would allow us to come to an informed decision.

7. AOB

RC informed us that the Church of Scotland was not yet for sale but that an interest had been registered. She also noted that The Church of Scotland had handed over ownership of the church to the community in Glenelg.

Date of next meeting: Monday 2nd of March

ENDS