

GLENURQUHART RURAL COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

MONDAY 21st JANUARY 2019

OPEN MEETING

Present: Susan Clark (Chair), Carolyn Wilson (Secretary), Nicola Vestey (Treasurer) and 20 others

A full list of attendees is attached as Appendix A

Apologies: Janet Emery, Pat Veitch

1. Previous minutes and matters arising:

No amendments tabled to previous minutes, which were approved, proposed by Gordon Findlay and seconded by Mhairi Marshall.

Hall Transfer – further to the previous minutes, Carolyn Wilson (CW) confirmed that all necessary documentation relating to the transfer of the hall to GURCA had been lodged with OSCR. The hall transfer was now fully concluded.

No other matters arising not covered by the agenda.

2. Finance:

Nicola Vestey (NV) gave a summary of the position. £7,800 in our unrestricted funds, and currently returning a small surplus. The website has cost GURCA £737.00, but those costs include running and maintenance for the year. £1,200 had been generated for GURCA by the Markets on the Green, and once again, thanks were extended to Marj Tait and Karen Price for their work in establishing and running the markets.

3. Community Action Plan (CAP):

Susan Clark (SC) advised the meeting that GURCA is still £5-6k short of the required funding to enable this project to commence. Funding has been secured from Soirbheas and Historic Environment Scotland. SC will try to pursue the final funding via Scottish Canals and Highland Council.

ACTION - SC

4. Urquhart Castle:

A meeting was held in November with Historic Environment Scotland (HES). No further progress to report, but in the current circumstances, GURCA's main efforts are being concentrated on the Tourist Information Centre (see later item).

Our Castle Working Group had sent draft terms of reference to HES for comment.

There are signs that HES is beginning to engage more with the community: HES has committed to contributing financially to the Community Action Plan (£2.5k) and the Cnocan Buraidh project (£5k)

5. Loch Ness Homes land transfer:

Gordon Watson (GW) had met with our legal advisor in November. She had met with Loch Ness Homes' legal team and believed there were no real impediments to finalising the Heads of Terms. GW had not yet received a formal report back from our advisor, and SC agreed that she would speak with the parties to try and move the matter forwards.

ACTION – SC

6. COBEN / Local Energy Plan:

The Local Energy Plan Working Group had met the previous week, and were now looking to take forward the actions identified through the Local Energy Plan. The Group is applying for funding to undertake work associated with the local transport strategy, and towards upgrades for the Glenurquhart Centre heating. Anyone interested in becoming involved should contact Carol Masheter direct, or speak to Susan Clark

7. Website

The website is now live and members' constructive feedback will be welcome. There is still work to be done in more fully populating some of the sections, but the format has been finalised.

There is an events tab on the website, and GURCA hopes that in due course this will become recognised as a calendar of all events in our area. Local groups and clubs are encouraged to pass information about any events that they are holding to Carolyn Wilson, who will add the information to the calendar.

It was suggested that the website should set up a link to the Glen Urquhart Facebook page, and CW agreed to discuss this with Fiona Urquhart.

ACTION – CW

8. Glen Urquhart Shinty Club – alcohol and drugs policy:

On behalf of the Shinty Club, Andy Lloyd spoke to the meeting about how the Shinty Club was trying to respond to requests to address the perceived problems, locally, with alcohol and drugs.

He said that given the timespan of membership – from junior right through to the most senior level of playing – it was almost inevitable that the Shinty Club would come into contact with users of drugs and alcohol. The Club has declared that it will have zero tolerance of drugs, and was seeking to do all it could to eradicate underage drinking.

However, there is only so much that the Club can do in terms of policing this issue, and it was hoping that other local groups, such as GURCA, as well as the Council, would help address the problem in whatever ways possible.

Margaret Davidson advised the meeting that she had visited the school and met with the youth worker, Brenda Seatter, and it was hoped the Council could work with the school. She had also spoken with the Police, who were hoping to increase surveillance.

Sessions were to be held with S3 and S4 in the near future, then S5 and S6. Parents evening would be a good opportunity to raise the issue generally, as it was clear that families should be engaged and involved in helping tackle the problems.

All parties are trying to adopt a preventative approach, and provide support where needed.

There was a question from the floor about the possibility of random drugs testing for shinty players, and a query as to whether the Shinty Association in the Highlands had a policy on this? Andy Lloyd did not think this was likely to happen, as it would be such an undertaking. Susan Clark suggested that the Shinty Association might talk with the Highland Games Association, as they do manage to undertake random drug testing.

SC thanked Andy Lloyd for coming and talking to the meeting about this important matter.

9. Tourist Information Centre:

Gordon Findlay (GF) provided an update on the proposals for the TIC that had been presented to the community at a drop-in session the previous week. The formal Asset Transfer Request, in relation to the TIC building, had been submitted to Highland Council in December 2018. A formal Expression of Interest had been made in relation to the car park. The Council will now review our request and it is hoped that the council will provide a response before April, although the rules do allow up to 6 months for a response.

We have requested that the council grants GURCA a short term lease on the building, until such time as a purchase can be made. During this time, GURCA will lease the building, with the exception of the toilets, as Highland Council have indicated that the rent would increase by £20,000 per annum if the toilets were to be included. The indicative figure for renting the building without the toilets is c£7,500 per annum (an increase of almost 90% on what Visit Scotland was charged).

GURCA has applied to the Scottish Land Fund for Stage 1 support, to allow for an independent valuation of the building, and associated surveys, to be undertaken to inform the debate about the eventual purchase cost.

With regard to the proposed Social Enterprise business (purchase of Loch Ness Travel) we have been talking to potential funders. The most promising discussion has been with Social Investment Scotland (SIS), as they would potentially be willing to lend without necessarily requiring security over assets from the outset. Work was continuing to provide information to SIS, in support of the bid for a loan.

Most of the attendees at the drop in session had already cast their votes regarding the proposals, but members who had not already voted were now invited to do so.

The result of the vote was that of 84 votes cast, 2 were spoiled /ineligible, 2 were against, and 80 were for the proposals. GURCA would therefore continue to pursue the proposals

10.AOB:

A new coordinator for the community bonfire is sought, as Ron Fraser is stepping down from this role. The fireworks will continue to be managed separately, so this role is about ensuring the bonfire is built and burned safely. Please get in touch if this is something you would be willing to consider taking on.

The Council have been churning up the grass near the shinty pitch when accessing the bowling green. CW will ask the Bowling Club to speak with the council representatives if possible.

12. Next meeting

The next Open meeting will be on Monday 8th April at 8pm.

Appendix A – List of attendees

SC, CW, NV + Gordon Findlay, Gordon Watson, Fraser Mackenzie, Ann Macdonald

George Cruikshank

Margaret Davidson

George Simpson

Andy Lloyd

Iain Macleod

Vanessa Ferguson

Helen MacLennan

Fiona Urquhart

Mhairi Marshall

Neil Barron

Angela Veitch

Neil Macinnes

Erik Trelfer

Jan Bell

Jim Molyneux + 1