

GLENURQUHART RURAL COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

MONDAY 8th APRIL 2019

OPEN MEETING

Present: Susan Clark (Chair), Carolyn Wilson (Secretary), Nicola Vestey (Treasurer) and 22 others

A full list of attendees is attached as Appendix A

Apologies: George Cruikshank, Fraser Mackenzie, Dot MacKenzie, Jennie Macfie, Mhairi Marshall, Leona Joiner

1. Previous minutes and matters arising:

The previous minutes, which had been posted on the GURCA website, were approved.

There were no matters arising, not covered by the agenda, other than a reminder that if the bonfire and fireworks are to go ahead this year, a new coordinator for the event will need to step forward, 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.

2. Finance:

Nicola Vestey (NV) gave a summary of the position. We have just over £7,612 in our unrestricted funds, although we made a small deficit at year end (£112.48).

The Markets on the Green have made a huge, and very welcome, contribution to our finances.

A full summary of the accounts for year ending March 2019 will be given at the AGM in June

3. Tourist Information centre update:

Gordon Findlay gave an update on progress with our efforts to take over the TIC and establish a Social Enterprise business to support this.

Gurca's Asset Transfer Request is with the Council for consideration, with their decision due by the 16th May. Meanwhile, we have secured funding from the Scottish Land Fund to commission a valuation survey. When the survey was being undertaken, Gordon and a couple of the TIC sub-committee went into the TIC to tidy things up and try to make the empty building look a little better.

There was a debate about whether we should put up posters while the building is empty, to make the place look more attractive for the many tourists who will be using

the car park in the coming months. Marj Tait has agreed to produce some posters, but SC, in response to a query from Dick Beach, agreed we would also look into whether we can source any 'scenic' type posters as well.

ACTION – SC / TIC sub committee

With regard to the Social Enterprise business (Loch Ness Travel / Baggage handling) we have been in discussions with potential funders over the last few weeks. We have been providing additional information to these, in response to their queries, and will be speaking with all the potential funders in the coming week, to try and establish whether funding can be finalised.

Meanwhile, a shadow Board for the Social Enterprise has been set up, to ensure that we would be able to commence operations as soon as possible should we be in a position to acquire the business.

Robert Cockburn asked whether GURCA had taken into consideration the nearby businesses, in putting together its sales strategy. Robert advised the meeting that the Post Office would be closing in the afternoons from September, as it was no longer economic to keep it open during the autumn / winter months.

Gordon confirmed that the majority of our projected income would be from the baggage handling, and (as was the case with Visit Scotland) commission from ticket sales. We would not be proposing anything that would be in competition with the existing nearby businesses.

Margaret Davidson asked what the reporting process back to the community would be, should GURCA be in a position to take over the baggage business.

Gordon confirmed that the timeline from getting the go ahead, to being able to start up business, would be around 10 weeks. We would report back to the GURCA Trustees for approval, and then to the community, before this took place.

4. Loch Ness Homes land transfer:

Gordon Watson (GW) gave an update on progress with the lease. Heads of Terms have been agreed in principle. There have been a few changes to the landscape scheme as a result of amendments to the original plan, and size /location of the suds pond.

Meanwhile, a local group – “Grow Urquhart” has formed and is looking for land suitable for establishing a community allotment scheme. Karen Mackenzie outlined the main aims of the group, which would be to provide a sustainable facility available to all, for practical and educational purposes. Through the group's activities it would be hoped to raise and increase awareness of climate change and pollution, and reduce food waste in our area. A large element of inspiration for the group has been the MOO Food project in Muir of Ord.

The members present at the meeting were supportive of the broad aims of this group, and it was agreed at this stage, the group should now consider ALL options for available land, and continue to liaise with Gordon Watson to keep GURCA involved.

5. Childcare Centre:

At this point, Mike Thorpe, of the Glenurquhart Childcare Centre spoke about their aspirations for developing a new centre. The current location, leased from the High School, limits their ability to adapt the premises, and they would like to be able to provide more outdoor learning facilities.

There are three potential sites to be appraised, but the main challenge, once a suitable site can be identified, will be finding the funding for a new building.

Margaret Davidson agreed that this would be the real challenge, as she was confident that the new centre would be a sustainable business, once established.

SC commented that this was another example of us needing, as a community, to work together, and be aware of all the aspirations for community led developments, so as to ensure the most effective use of available land and resources.

6. Community Action Plan:

SC believes that all the ideas coming forward still need to be pulled together, and the proposed Community Action Plan would be the obvious vehicle for this.

We have been unable, so far, to find the last £5k – £7k of funding required to allow us to commission the work on the plan, so SC has now been back to the consultants and will be meeting them later in April to discuss what they might be able to produce with the funding we have secured.

SC will report back on the outcome of the meeting

ACTION - SC

7. Urquhart Castle:

Gordon Findlay explained that the Castle Working Group is continuing to meet with Historic Environment Scotland, although at the moment, GURCA is prioritising work on the TIC, so the castle Visitor Centre discussions are taking place less frequently.

Although we have seen some improvement in levels of engagement from HES, there is still no indication of significant commitment.

Margaret Davidson felt that Gordon's summary suggested that HES are happy just to allow this to proceed slowly, and she felt it was time for the main Steering Group to reconvene. SC agreed that this would be helpful, as it would reinvigorate the process of producing a Business Plan, which would be an essential element of our Asset Transfer request.

The next liaison meeting with HES is in June, and the Working Group would aim to be well prepared in advance of that.

8. COBEN / Local Energy Plan:

Erik Trelfer explained that the Local Energy Plan Transport Study was about to be launched, and he urged members to become involved in the consultation / study. The start-up meeting with the consultants had been promising, and Erik was hopeful that this would be a useful piece of work to inform transport options going forward.

9. Glenurquhart Public Hall:

Gordon Watson, as Chair of the hall sub-committee, gave the following summary of the hall's activities and performance in the months since its incorporation into GURCA until the end of its financial year in March.

“GURCA – Hall Committee annual report

The hall continues to enjoy a high level of regular usage as well as one off bookings. We are grateful to Miranda who works very hard at keeping bookings running smoothly.

Financially, the hall has had a solid 8 months since GURCA took ownership, recording a small surplus of a couple of hundred pounds. We supplemented rental income by running fundraising stalls at the games day and markets on the green, the latter being particularly successful. We are very pleased with this financial position, as heat, light and insurance alone for the period amount to over £3,500, so to continue to cover costs is an achievement and means we have been able to hold on to a healthy balance of general funds in the bank of £10,000.

On the management side, we are holding regular health and safety walk-rounds: recording and following up actions. In the course of the year we have repaired roof leaks and re-plastered damaged areas, and improved the lighting in the small hall, as well as regular maintenance tasks. For part of the summer we had to get by dealing with cleaning ourselves, but we are delighted now to have the services of a very effective cleaner.

As a subcommittee we have no constitutional obligation in respect of election of office bearers, but as a matter of good governance we will hold annual general meetings. This year's took place on 1st April, and the office bearers and committee were all re-elected to serve for a further year.

The hall redevelopment plan is progressing, under the auspices of a separate GURCA development committee. We have explored alternative energy solutions, and are now completing the technical design ready to submit building warrants. We have funds in the order of £17,000 to cover the current design stage. In tandem with these activities we will be seeking funding to enable us to proceed to the tender stage.”

10. AOB:

There is now a new community notice board, at the new Scotmid store.

Correspondence had been received from Dot MacKenzie with some thoughts on options for using the Parkland when transferred. This correspondence would be incorporated in the Community Action Plan list.

Erik Trelfer advised that Soirbheas has now advertised the post of Community Development Administrator, and suggested that when this post is filled, the individual might be able to assist GURCA with some of the bigger projects we are pursuing.

Pam Lucas advised that Tim Stott, who is heading up the Inner Moray Firth 10 year Development Plan, will be attending the Community Council meeting on 29th April (8pm, Craigmonie Centre). He is keen to meet the community, and it would be good if we could have a decent attendance and ensure we put forward ideas.

11. Next meeting

The next meeting will be the AGM, on Monday 17th June 2019 at 8pm.

Appendix A – List of attendees

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

Margaret Davidson George Simpson Christine Hart

Helen MacLennan Neil Barron Neil Macinnes

Erik Trelfer Jan Bell Jim Molyneux

Dick Beach Miranda Service Mike Thorpe

Sandra Bardwell Karen Mackenzie Adrian Varwell

Barbara Girvan Robert Cockburn Robin Miller