

GLENNURQUHART RURAL COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

MONDAY 9th DECEMBER 2019

OPEN MEETING

Present: Susan Clark (Chair), Carolyn Wilson (Secretary) Neil Barron (Treasurer) and 17 others

A full list of attendees is attached as Appendix A

Apologies: Mhairi Marshall, Pam Lucas, Tish Fearn and Erik Trelfer

Susan Clark (SC) welcomed everyone. Before moving on to the main business of the meeting, she asked that all present should just take a few moments of silence to remember Angela Montague, whose funeral had been held earlier in the day. Angela had been an active member of GURCA and, for many years, had worked with Karen Mackenzie to organise the children's parties. She would be greatly missed.

1. Previous minutes and matters arising:

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

Matters arising:

- Phone boxes – GURCA had made the necessary formal applications to buy and take over the telephone boxes in Milton and Lewiston. The sale of the Milton box had been approved, and this will now be looked after by the local community, led by Dominic and Lynn Kropp. The sale of the Lewiston box could not be agreed at this time, because there had been sufficient use of it in the last year to justify it remaining operational, for the time being.
- Treasurer – Neil Barron had volunteered to take over the Treasurer's role from Nicola Vestey. Nicola is working alongside him for the first year, to ensure a smooth handover.
- Footpath from Care Centre to the church – Erik Trelfer had identified the point on this path where it was felt a handrail would be of assistance, and would pass this information to David Fraser.

2. Finance:

Neil Barron gave a summary of the current position.

Restricted funds sit at c£17,500, a reduction of around £5,000 since the previous report. The expenditure has been from the hall project funds, to pay professional fees associated with the resubmission of the planning application and building warrant submission.

Unrestricted funds remain much the same, at around £9,000, and there is £10,000 in the hall, separately managed, day to day account.

Both the bulletin and the fireworks made modest profits this year (£311 and £92 respectively). In addition to the income already received from the Markets on the Green, we will receive £230 as our share of the stall income from the Christmas market held in the Craigmonie Centre.

Current estimated surplus for the general account is around £1,500.

3. Tourist Information centre / Transport Hub update:

SC confirmed that Highland Council have now approved GURCA's Community Asset Transfer request. The sub-committee is now working on funding for our plans. We expect a response from Scottish Land Fund in January, regarding the grant funding to purchase the building. We have reopened our discussions with George Simpson over the purchase of Loch Ness Travel, and George remains supportive of our aims.

Carol Masheter was present at the meeting, to give an update on the proposals for a transport hub to be established, using the TIC as its base. The idea for the hub came about as a result of the transport consultation study that Soirbheas commissioned earlier in the year.

The first phase of the proposals would include expansion of the number and locations of electric charge points for vehicles, an e-bike hire facility in Cannich and establishing 'walking buses' for local schools, to reduce vehicle congestion.

Full details of the transport study can be found at <https://www.soirbheas.org/transportandenergy/>

Soirbheas is working closely with GURCA on the proposals, which helped strengthen our case for the asset transfer. However, the TIC work is not dependent on the transport hub work, which may move at a slower pace than the essential work to secure the building.

There is to be a meeting on **Monday 13th January, at 7.30pm**, in the hall, to provide a detailed update on all the proposals and work streams for the TIC, and ensure that all interested parties are fully up to speed with progress, and next steps.

If anybody would like to become involved with the project, they would be most welcome to attend this meeting. There is a lot of work to be done now, on this exciting development for our community, and new volunteers, with any relevant skills or enthusiasm, would be very helpful! If you would like to be involved, but can't make the meeting on Jan 13th, please speak to Gordon Findlay or Carolyn Wilson.

4. Urquhart Castle / Historic Environment Scotland:

SC reported that there had been a meeting at the beginning of December between Historic Environment Scotland (HES) and GURCA/Community Council/Soirbheas/Jacobite and Cobbs. This group has been working to try and get

as much engagement as possible from HES, and this particular meeting focussed on local transport and the environment. All of the group agreed on the fact that there are seasonal problems through the village, some of which are a result of the traffic to and from the castle.

At this meeting, it had been revealed that Jacobite have submitted a planning application for a 'temporary' overspill coach park, for up to 30 coaches, on the land behind the new doctor's surgery. GURCA's representatives at the meeting had said that while this may provide short term relief from parking problems at the castle, any long term proposal for easing parking and traffic congestion had to be part of a strategic approach that tied in with local plans and developments.

SC's report was interrupted at this point by a long and heated debate, prompted by the information about the planning application. There was considerable concern, about the timing and intent of the proposal, from many of the members present. The outcome of the debate was that the meeting agreed the following actions:

- ***Although it is understood that the Community Council is the formal body to respond on behalf of the community to planning matters, GURCA should nevertheless be requested by its members to respond to this proposal and ask that it be withdrawn, or that a suitable extension to timescales be given, to allow for proper consultation on the proposals.***
- ***The secretary should advise all GURCA members of the application, to ensure people are made aware of the proposals and are able to respond if they wish.***

The report then continued. SC confirmed that economic development had also been debated and that Dick Beach was now to lead a group looking into relevant issues, including any ways in which the tourist season might be extended.

5. Loch Ness Homes land transfer:

Gordon Watson (GW) gave an update on the very slow progress with the lease. The heads of terms of the lease have all been agreed in principle, but we are still awaiting the draft offer of a lease back from LNH lawyers.

6. Hall:

Gordon Watson reported that hall day to day finances remain healthy, boosted by the very successful fundraising over the summer. All of the lighting in both the meeting rooms and the main hall has now been replaced with more efficient, reliable and brighter LED strips, and the fire exit lighting and signage has been replaced. This was relatively expensive work, made possible by the hard work of our fundraisers. Despite this expenditure, we still expect the hall to return a modest surplus this year.

Work continues on the renovation project. Planning consent and the Building warrant have now been secured. Everything is in place to allow us to move forward with this project, except for the one vital piece – funding!

There is a small group working to put together a Business Plan and explore all possible funding streams. It must be said that at the moment, funding sources are looking thin on the ground, and the group believes it is unlikely now that any work will take place before 2021.

We continue to look for anyone who feels they can assist with this work stream. Please come forward if you believe you could help develop the Business Plan, or assist with funding applications! Contact Susan Clark or Carolyn Wilson.

7. Other items:

Proposed new Childcare Centre – A Scottish Land Fund Stage 1 application has been submitted, and the decision is expected shortly. If granted, this would pay for land valuations etc, to allow the group to move forward and submit a stage 2 application in due course, to cover land purchase costs. All of this would, again, be subject to identifying funding for the overall proposals.

Trustees – The meeting was asked to note that Pam Lucas had stepped down as a GURCA Trustee, and had proposed that Fiona Urquhart be approved as a Trustee, thereby providing a continuation of the link between GURCA and the Community Council.

The meeting agreed unanimously with this proposal and Fiona was adopted as a Trustee.

The meeting was also asked to note that the GURCA trustees had adopted Neil Barron as a Trustee. The meeting agreed unanimously with this action.

Christmas day lunch – The Courtyard café in Drumnadrochit is hosting a Christmas Day lunch, open to anyone who might otherwise be alone at Christmas. There is no charge (although donations are welcome) and transport will be provided if required. This is a great, community minded gesture.

If anyone would like to attend, or knows of somebody who may wish to attend, please contact June at the Courtyard café on 01456 450025.

Public Entertainment License – Our PEL is due for renewal next year, before the bonfire event. As the PEL is primarily necessary because of the fireworks and bonfire, it was suggested that John Carty may lead this application process. Relevant papers to be passed to John

To close the meeting, SC again extended her thanks to Nicola Vestey for her years as our Treasurer

9. Next meeting – The next meeting will be **Monday 9th March at 8pm**

Appendix A – List of attendees

Susan Clark

Carolyn Wilson

Neil Barron

Gordon Findlay

Gordon Watson

Ann Macdonald

Helen MacLennan

Dick Beach

Miranda Service

Adrian Varwell

Peter Bellew

Jan Bell

Nicola Vestey

Fraser Mackenzie

Jim Molyneaux

Sandra Bardwell

Neil MacInnes

Fiona Urquhart

Dot MacKenzie

And Carol Masheter, representing Soirbheas