

## **MINUTES OF MEETING 27th JANUARY 2009**

Members present: Mark Houston, Elizabeth Merther, Martyn Bateman, Kenny Fraser, Lesley MacGregor, Sandy MacPherson, Alex Nicol, Alex Sutherland

Also present: Councillor M. Davidson Mr M. Stephens (TEC Services) Police Constable A. Mathieson

Apologies received: Paul Higham, Katherine Grant, Councilor H. Carmichael Councilor D. Hendry Councilor H. Wood

### **Closure of the Footbridge at Lower Foyers**

Cllr. Davidson had arranged for Mr Stephens to attend. He explained that recent inspection revealed a serious deterioration in the structure with a further significant loss of stonework. It was felt there could be risk of collapse of one of the abutments, particularly in very wet conditions. Following discussion it was agreed that there is an absolute need to retain a bridge at this site for a number of reasons: shortest & easiest access to the Medical Centre for elderly & other residents; access to the Inverness bus service for residents including children to and from school buses; safest route across the river for children walking to the Primary School; risk of closure of the bailey bridge in flood conditions. It was noted that this has occurred on several occasions since the original closure of the old bridge and that there is no alternative access for the 30+ households affected. It was also noted that the footbridge route is included on many tourist walking guides and is very well used by walkers. The original bridge is a Grade B listed structure but Mr Stephens was very doubtful if it could be restored from its present condition to provide a safe, long term access. While agreeing that the ideal would be to restore what had been an attractive, historic structure, the meeting recognised that a completely new bridge may be the only viable option. The meeting felt that the bailey bridge was only a temporary solution and had been provided as such. Mr Stephens was given a list of options for bridge repair/replacement which had been produced by the Highland Council in 1987 shortly after closure of the old bridge. He agreed to provide a current engineer's report on the bridge for the CC and that a new list of options, plus costings, would be prepared. Cllr. Davidson felt that a new bridge should be included in the Highland Council Capital Programme along with the South Loch Ness roads. She will organise a date for herself and some CC members to meet with the Director of TEC Services to discuss these matters.

### **Matters Arising from Previous Minutes**

Notice Boards The new notice boards are now installed. M.H. will find a way either for keys to be left attached to the boards or for the catch to operate without the need for a key, so that people have easy access. The magnetic 'pins' for securing notices will be left in the boards.

Gorthleck War Memorial M.B. has confirmed ownership of the land and has a letter from the owner approving remedial work. He is currently awaiting a quotation from monumental masons at the undertakers who are able to carry out this work.

Handy Person Scheme Cllr. Davidson reported that this will be officially launched for this area in March with the provision of information & contact phone numbers. Anyone in urgent need of assistance before then could contact her. She also informed the CC that there are currently ample funds available for home care services. L.M. told the meeting that she is the initial point of contact at the Medical Centre for providing information on care services. She emphasised that people should not hesitate to approach either herself or one of the Doctors if a need for care is identified.

Meeting re Destination Loch Ness M.H. and K.F. had attended and received information about the changes in the organisation. Money may be available for tourist route signs and there will be more information about this shortly.

Wade's Bridge at Whitebridge M.B. reported the initial meeting had been well attended and a very helpful presentation given by Mr J. Townshend. The first meeting of a steering committee is scheduled for 3rd March at the Whitebridge Hotel. Notices will be posted to encourage interested volunteers and a report placed in the Boleskine Bulletin.

### **Tabling of Correspondence**

Highland Council Correspondence, Information on 'High Societies' web site, Licensing Notification (new regulations) - Foyers Stores, Notice of New Rural Recycling Collection Service, Newsletter - Development Plans Update Winter 2008

Other Correspondence & Circulars Received

Parent Council, Stratherrick School - Outing to Christmas Pantomime

Highlands & Islands Green Party - proposed meeting for CC members to discuss A96 proposals

Scottish Parliament - David Stewart MSP. Climate Change Bill - Questionnaire; Rhoda Grant MSP. Government proposals for Scottish Forestry Commission estate; Michael Russell MSP. Climate Change & the National Forest Estate Consultation Document

Letter of thanks from Malcolm Sutherland, Loch Ness Marathon

### **Treasurer's Report**

K.G. was unable to attend, but reported balances as at 31.12.08 as follows: Ordinary Account - £1148.50 Project Account - £3133.36

### **Planning Applications**

Whitebridge - House S.W. of Wester Drummond: Planning Dept. not able to provide detailed plans but, from information provided, no objections.

Foyers - Demolish church hall and replace with house and garage There had been no objections as such. A letter was sent to Planning Dept., requesting that provision be made to secure safe access for the Primary School children during any building work. The CC also enquired whether provision of a footpath from the end of the present path to the junction with the school road could be made a condition of planning permission. The Planning Dept. has noted our comments and will consider them during the planning process.

### **Policing Matters**

PC Mathieson reported that a new shift system is now in operation, and that he normally has a second officer with him. The new system should allow them to be more active in the district. Sergeant Blakey is now permanently established at Fort Augustus, improving the staffing situation.

Glendoe - There are only a few workers left at the Scheme now.

RSPB - A 'poisoning map' has been produced by the RSPB identifying sites of poisoning of birds of prey. Sadly some of these sites are within our area. Most worrying is that one of these sites had one of the most virulent poisons, with serious safety implications for both animals and people. PC Mathieson reported that a very small amount can be lethal. Investigations are proceeding.

### **Roads and Signage**

(a) The following matters were discussed with Mr Stephens and he will raise these concerns:

Winter gritting - Spreading rates poor or non existent; some routes not gritted; snow blades not used; customary piles of salt & grit bins at trouble spots not replenished. CC has received a copy letter from Mr Graham, Acting Head at Stratherrick School about having to close the School due to dangerous roads. Concern expressed that the School might lose another head teacher because of this problem.

Glendoe improvement fund for the B862 – K.F. reported that the land owner has still not been contacted regarding further widening work. Also, where widening has been carried out & preliminary work done no final surfacing has been done, and the previous work is deteriorating. The CC requested details of how much of the fund has been spent, what remains to complete the work and the expected cost of the work outstanding. The CC agreed that delays have been unacceptable and we do not seem to have had value for the £125,000 available.

The collapsing culvert on the B851 and the road around Newlands have still not been dealt with.

Offlets on the Torness brae need clearing. The road surface is being damaged by water. The first cattle grid at Bochruben needs clearing out.

(b) A.N. reported that the 20mph speed limit by Foyers School is being ignored. Cllr. Davidson said that speed checks are to be carried out at Aldourie and she will request this at Foyers also.

(c) L.M. reported that the road to Dell Estate is almost impassable due to huge potholes and is in urgent need of repair. The Estate owner believes that the Council owns the road as far as Serena's wood.

### **Water and Sewerage**

Cllr. Davidson has been informed that several large leaks have been repaired, and that there is now no problem with water supply.

### **Renewable Energy and Community Benefit**

The CC has been invited to the formal launch of the River E Hydro Scheme on 1st June 2009. All members will attend if possible.

### **Any Other Competent Business**

(a) Mr Donald Forbes attended to inform the CC about ideas which he and his wife have for both tourist and community facilities in Lower Foyers. It was agreed that both these things are badly needed to regenerate the village which has been in steady decline for years. He said that plans are at a very early stage and he simply wished to inform the CC about this as there will need to be enthusiasm within the community if some of the plans are to succeed. He will prepare an article for the Boleskine Bulletin to encourage some feedback from the community.

(b) It was noted that the Fraser monument beside Foyers Cemetery is in need of some restoration.

(c) A.N. reported that the panels on the bus shelter at Lower Foyers had been damaged by vandals again.

(d) M.H. had received a request for additional funding for the Boleskine Bulletin for publication of the CC Minutes. There is a very small shortfall in the CC donation, but the

CC have very little to spare in their funding. However, the Community Trust makes an equal contribution and A.S. indicated that the Trust would almost certainly be willing to increase its contribution if necessary. The Minutes could be further edited for the Bulletin but community members are asking for more information rather than less.

(e) L.M. reported that money received from the Loch Ness Marathon had this year been shared between Foyers School & the fund for Christmas lunches for Stratherrick senior citizens. The intention is for next year's money to be shared between the Stratherrick School & the Foyers senior citizens fund. Mr Sam Reid expressed thanks on behalf of the senior citizens at Stratherrick for the hard work of all the volunteers involved.