

Chair's report – June 2024

Well, here we are again. It's hard to believe another year has passed, another year that has seen TKCC do and achieve all sorts of things.

First up to mention is our Local Place Plan. This is a major piece of work and a formal way for us as a community to express our aspirations and priorities for the future of our place. The Highland Council then has a statutory obligation to take account of these when they are making plans.

Our Local Place Plan is based largely on the extensive community consultation that we undertook for the community development plan 2023-28. We are looking forward to consulting on a draft with the community next month, before finalising and submitting it in September. As with the community development plan, we are hugely indebted to SCDC who have provided invaluable guidance and support.

In our community survey, the natural environment was the most important thing that people liked about living in our area. This view was also expressed strongly by the large number of locals who came to a meeting held by NTS to discuss the Shared Rural Network, which is the UK Government's new mobile phone initiative. With this in mind, we have been trying extremely hard to ensure that the proposals do not despoil the area, and bring the 4G connectivity that communities and businesses in the Highlands actually need.

In doing this, we are working closely with Lochbroom Community Council, as well as with Gairloch, Wester Loch Ewe, Shieldaig and Lochcarron Community Councils, and a coalition of conservation and recreational groups including NTS, John Muir Trust, Mountaineering Scotland, Ramblers Scotland and others. All are agreed that there must be proper community consultation to establish our needs before the masts are instigated.

In terms of the community development plan, it was testament to our role in helping to put this together that we were asked to present it formally last year at a meeting of Ward Councillors. I am also very pleased to say that TDCA has agreed to take forward some of the key priorities, with TKCC members and others continuing to be part of the development plan sub-group.

A key priority was to recruit a full time development officer, and it is great news therefore that Katie Anderson has recently joined the team.

Another priority is to consider a possible Community Asset Transfer of Torridon primary school, following the Highland Council's sad decision to close the school earlier this year. A lot of work has gone into a feasibility study – including raising the necessary grant funding for this - to look at the possibility of repurposing the school and reinvigorating the playpark.

At the same time as all this, we continued through 2023-24 with our normal business of commenting on planning applications; responding to ASC audits of fish farms; attending Kishorn Port liaison group meetings; participating in Highland Council consultations; getting new road signage for toilets; dealing with issues with litter and dog poo; responding to

residents' requests to sort out drains and street lighting; and helping when there were problems with the septic tank in Kinlochewe. We also supported local community organisations in expressing concerns to GALE about proposed extensions to their area of benefit.

We have written to and met with MPs, MSPs, and Highland Councillors; and enabled community members to ask questions and express their views directly by arranging meetings with local MP candidates, and inviting guest speakers to our own meetings.

Speakers have included the NTS community engagement officer, representatives from Bakkafron, Scottish Fire & Rescue, Highland Council Access Rangers, and Highland Council mobile library service. TKCC expressed strong views that the library service must be continued, and followed this up in writing to the Highland Council and participating in media coverage.

And finally, no report would be complete without roads. We have continued to liaise closely with Highland Council's roads team and I am delighted to say we have succeeded in getting a lot of things done - including a considerable amount of resurfacing, and repairs to a huge number of truly dreadful potholes, degraded edges and broken sections of road, and having Kinlochewe included in the 20mph speed limit programme. We continue to push for more this year.

In October, the community council elections were held. We said goodbye to Mat Webster unfortunately, but I am extremely grateful to everyone else who stood again, and to Jackie Todd who has joined as a co-opted member.

I said at the time of the elections that thanks to the work of all our TKCC members, we are an organisation transformed since the previous election in 2019. But this is not just our work, it is also the result of the input of everyone in the community who has expressed their views, helped with organising events, drafting letters, and attended meetings and so on.

It really is a team effort. So thank you.