

Minutes (draft) of Torridon and Kinlochewe Community Council (TKCC)
Meeting held by Zoom at 7.00pm
Wednesday 29th March 2023

Present: Caroline Hamilton (Chair), Steve Schnabel (Treasurer), Sue Whiting (Secretary), Tom Forrest, Colin Stevenson, Alpin Stewart, Mat Webster, Maud McIntyre, Councillor Chris Birt
8 members of public.

1. Apologies – None.

2. Minutes of the meeting on 1st March 2023
Approved.

3. Matters arising from minutes of 1st March

Blether Bench Diabaig – CH contacted Nico Bacon. He said as far as he is concerned the estate does not own the pier. However, to cease the merry-go-round he would be happy for the bench to go on it. TKCC will install soon. *Action: CH*

Road signage in Fasaig – The “No Parking – Residents only” sign is now up in Fuaran. TKCC will put 30mph signs up soon. *Action: SW*

Kinlochewe Toilet Signage – MM will keep chasing HC as the sign has not been erected and the poles for the Kinlochewe sign have not been replaced yet.

Kishorn Port & Dry Dock – Co-ordinating a notice for accommodation wanted is underway. *Action: SW*

Glenelg & Arnisdale CC- closure of Kyle dental practice. SS contacted Glenelg and Arnisdale CC but has had no response. We assume they have decided not to take any action.

Information on subject areas – The list provided by Cllr Kraft is now on the TKCC website.

Mo Dhachaidh care home in Ullapool – CB confirmed that the Chair and Vice Chair of HC’s Health and Social Care Committee are fully aware of TKCC’s concern about the closure. He said there were multiple reasons why unfortunately the home was no longer viable, therefore it will definitely be closed. HC and NHS Highland are looking into a new model of care to meet community needs.

Torridon School, HC consultation paper – TKCC has put copies of the proposal in Torridon and Kinlochewe shops and the community centre/hall. We have also publicised the consultation through the usual channels.

Community Map Scotland – CH will sign TKCC up for the free trial soon.

Action: CH

4. Treasurer’s report

No change since last report.

5. Slattadale car park

Sandra Reid and Rhiannon Naismith of Forest and Land Scotland (FLS) were present to explain proposed new charges in the Slattadale car park. These were first discussed in 2019 and will be introduced in the next couple of months, at standard FLS north region rates: £2 for one hour, £3 for

3 hours, £4 for all day and £12 for vehicles with more than 7 seats. No charge for Blue Badge holders.

There will be an annual parking pass available at £40 for up to two named vehicles or £100 for minibuses and coaches. This will include the other FLS charged car parks in the North – at Kylerhea, Contin and Glen Affric. There is a national parking pass for £100 for cars and £150 for minibus/coach.

FLS will collect the charges via RingGo. Payment can be made via the app, website or by dialling a free phone number and paying via an automated service. As the phone signal at Slattadale is not strong, visitors will have up to 72 hours to pay after their visit.

Sandra and Rhiannon said car parking charges were now an essential source of revenue for FLS, enabling them to deal with the increased pressure from visitor management, both locals and tourists. Charging for parking allows FLS to continue to provide and maintain car parks, trails, signage, information, other facilities such as picnic benches and toilet blocks, provide seasonal rangers and look after the forest and its wildlife.

In answer to questions and concerns from the meeting, Sandra and Rhiannon reported as follows:

- Revenue from car park charging sites is used by FLS generally rather than in the specific area of the charging site.
- If FLS have sufficient staff, they will monitor the car park and place 'Reminder to Pay' notices on non-paying vehicles. They will also send reminders. Otherwise the system will rely mainly on visitor honesty.
- Historically at other charged sites, such as Glen Affric, the honesty rate is high.
- The Tollie Path is a public right of way but visitors who use the car park to access this path will still be liable for the car park charge.
- There is no evidence that visitors will choose to park along the roadside rather than pay charges. Normally visitors understand the need for the parking charges – supported by information signage - and the planners for the charging at Slattadale have no displacement concerns for this site.
- The potential for motorhomes parking long term with a national pass will be monitored, but signage will be in place that overnight parking is not allowed, and rangers will patrol at times to discourage this.

Sandra confirmed that FLS will be happy to work with TKCC to resolve any issues once the system is in place and TKCC can relay any reported problems from the community.

6. Torridon School – Highland Council statutory consultation

AS and MW both attended the public meeting held by HC on 28 March. They said it was well attended, and that HC explained the process to close the school as follows:

*** 21 April 2023 – anyone wishing to comment must do so by this date. *** Comments must be addressed directly to HC, details of how to do this are in the consultation paper and at https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/26531/torridon_primary_school_consultation_paper

November 2023 – HC education committee will decide on the proposal.

February 2024 – Scottish ministers will make the final decision.

Assuming the decision is taken to close the school, HC will first offer the premises to other HC departments to use. It will then be required to offer them up for a Community Asset Transfer (CAT).

AS said it was clear HC would take on board comments about the future use of the school. He proposed, and all agreed, that TKCC should comment as follows:

- TKCC is of the view that the situation needs to be resolved. It has been ongoing for over 10 years and the building is deteriorating badly. HC themselves acknowledge that maintenance has been low and there is a lot of damage.
- Whilst we understand the benefit of larger numbers of children attending a school, closing Torridon will have a negative impact on people looking to stay or move into the community. We would like HC to recognise that there will be a particular burden on parents living in Inveralligin, Wester Alligin and Diabaig for whom Shildaig school is a long way away.
- If the school is closed, it should be retained for community use. There are strong feelings in the community that it should not be made available for commercial development or become another holiday home.

TF proposed, and all agreed, that we should also question why Torridon School has to close. It occupies a larger space than either Kinlochewe or Shildaig schools and is in a more central location. Also there may not be many children living in our area currently, but demographics could change.

Action: CH

CB said he was sure the school would be closed. He was also sure that HC would be happy to do a CAT. He suggested that if the community used at least part of the building for educational purposes, it might be possible if anything changes to persuade HC to re-open it as a school in the future.

7. Roads

TKCC members expressed their anger at the recent announcement by HC in association with Transport Scotland to award 20mph status to many communities, but to exclude from this list Kinlochewe. It was agreed this was a kick in the teeth after over 10 years of TKCC and the Kinlochewe community requesting that HC implement appropriate traffic calming measures for the village.

SW reported that initially both Kinlochewe and Torridon were excluded. When she questioned this, Transport Scotland quickly reversed their decision on Torridon but not in relation to Kinlochewe, stating that *“on review this does not fit the criteria as this is a through road with minimal frontages to the carriageway.”*

The 20mph programme will be rolled out from June 2023 with completion by 2025, https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/1523/transport_and_streets/1049/20mph_programme/4. Roads are assessed against the ‘Place Criteria’ provided by Transport Scotland that indicates which of the 30mph roads are considered appropriate for a reduction to 20mph.

AS pointed out that Strathpeffer has been accepted for the 20mph limit, yet has the A834 as a through road and other relevant comparisons with Kinlochewe. TF said there are enough (21) residential or retail buildings in Kinlochewe that front the road over the required continuous length of the road to fulfil the criteria.

Members and Cllr Birt agreed the rejection was unfair and felt Kinlochewe clearly meets many aspects of the criteria for acceptance. SW will reply to Transport Scotland listing these, with a request for re-assessment.

TF & MM agreed to supply SW with details of all key buildings/locations/map and relevant information. *Action SW*

In the interests of time, further discussion on roads, including a report on the recent Ward 5 roads meeting, was deferred until the next meeting.

8. SEPA opinion survey

Deferred until the next meeting.

9. Correspondence Received

- Wester Ross Biosphere – a feasibility study is being conducted for a new research station at Anancaun which will be open year-round for research, scientific tourism and volunteering; a blend of dedicated research space incorporating an opportunity to provide educational interpretation of natural and cultural landscapes. The feasibility will also explore any potential added value opportunities for the site, including affordable housing and/or additional staff accommodation for the NNR.
- Wester Loch Ewe CC – GALE shieling consultation. WLECC reported they found the recent meeting that had been held very unsatisfactory for various reasons and were unhappy overall with the proposal by GALE.
- SCDC – Scotland is introducing a national alert system that will warn people through their mobile phones of very severe weather emergencies. There will be a test of this on Sunday, 23 April.

10. Planning Applications

23/00987/FUL | Erection of house (further to permission 21/02199/PIP) | Land 30M NE Of Duart 2 Kinlochewe. No comments.

11. Any Other Business

- Cape Wrath Ultra 2023 will be passing Kinlochewe on Wednesday 24th – Thursday 25th May. They are expecting 160 participants, and once again will be camping at Cromasaig Croft.
- Post Office/Shop Kinlochewe – MM reported that COW Trust are holding a public meeting on Friday, 31st March to discuss the possibility of a community buy out of the shop. The owners have been trying to sell it without success, and are receptive to COW Trust taking it on.

Meeting concluded.

Date of Next Meeting: Wednesday 26th April at 7.00pm on Zoom