

Strathard Community Council Meeting Minutes

Place: Kinlochard Village Hall

Date: 7th Sept 2017

Present: John Clow, Michelle Colquhoun, Ros Dingwall, Trevor Geraghty, Andre Goulancourt, Fiona McEwan, Colin Smith, Stuart Stephen, Meg Wright

Apologies: Geraint Short

Approval of minutes: Proposed by RD, seconded by MC.

Attending: Stuart Mearns (LL&TNP), Billy Ronald (LL&TNP) , Cllr Evelyn Tweed, PC Lorna Deans, PC Colin McKerracker Toto McLellan (Minute Secretary) 6 members of the public.

Item	Content	Action	Date
1.	Welcome & Introductions: Chair Trevor Gerhaty welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced Stuart Mearns, Head of Planning and Rural Development with LL&TNP, and Councillor Evelyn Tweed.		
2.	Matters arising: Carried forward.		
3.	Open Discussion with Stuart Means, Head of Planning & Rural Development, LL&TNP. Mr Mearns began by outlining the structure within the planning department, his experience in the field, and the issues under his remit which currently include; conservation, visitor experience, rural, heritage programme, strategic planning and local plans, with specific concerns at the moment being population decline, ageing population, housing, visitor pressure and facilities, roads, telecom masts and Tynedrum gold mine revision. The overseeing of core funding provision to Community Partnerships and Community Grant schemes, and implementation of The Park Management Plan which involves interaction with other authorities are also addressed. All decisions are dictated by the 5 year Local		

	<p>Development Plan, in conjunction with consultation and workshops to determine the preferences of communities.</p> <p>Three questions were submitted to Mr Mearns prior to the meeting: <i>1.To what extent does the Live Park Development Plan steer the National Park’s planning strategy and ultimately individual planning decisions? 2. How is the success of the National Park’s planning Department assessed, what are the current performance indicators? 3. In what ways does the Planning Authority drive the economic development of the area? How has the planning authority developed and amended it's policies to reflect the Strathard Flooding crisis?</i></p> <p>Responses were as follows: All decisions follow the Local Development Plan, unless material circumstances dictate otherwise. The question of how material circumstances are assessed was not answered. The Plan is up to date as of last year. The Park operates within a Planning Performance Framework which generates a document submitted to Scottish Government who respond with red amber and green assessments and can impose penalties. They are also answerable to the National Park Authorities Board. Mr Mearns stated that the Park sees itself as an enabler as well as a Planning Authority, and that investors keep a keen eye on land earmarked for development, which raises value in the area. On the subject of flooding and potential development, Mr Mearns said that there were not many sites in the area that could be developed, as most of it is in the flood plain; other areas with more elevated land therefore attract more development. He also stated that feedback from local consultation re flooding was negative, and that the National Park’s role would be purely as consultee in any future flood defence programme. He acknowledged that regeneration was essential in the centre of Aberfoyle.</p> <p>Questions from the floor on specific topics were as follows:</p> <p>a) Camping: Opinion is held that the Camping Zone signs are attracting more campers, but they are not using campsites, resulting in damage to the area. Mr Mearns disagreed with this, as Park Rangers patrol areas. The point was raised that Rangers arrive no earlier than 10am, when campers have already moved on. This point had been made previously, but has not resulted in any change of procedure, and it was felt that no policy on limiting campers is in place, and no action is being taken until damage is done. Concern was expressed that the Park are following the model of the Cairngorms National Park, which is a wilderness area and can accommodate a large volume of campers with no difficulty, whereas our area can not. It was felt that clear planning criteria is required regarding the number of campsites and</p>		
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	<p>visitors that the Park and communities feel are appropriate for the area, to protect heritage sites, landscape, and the quiet nature of Strathard, whilst balancing the need to generate income. When asked if the Park felt five or fifty camp sites to be appropriate, Mr Mearns stated that camping enjoys the status of visitor accommodation, and that if it meets the criteria of policy, it will be encouraged. He was not aware of any legislation protecting Strathard as a quiet area, but said that character of use is always taken into consideration in planning decisions. The point was made that the number of boats on Loch Ard has historically been limited to protect its quiet nature, the privacy of residents, and the integrity of the lochsides. Mr Mearns was not aware of any legislative process. On the subject of water sports, Mr Mearns said that the opportunity for more management on Loch Lomond resulted in more activity there. On the subject of significant heritage buildings and sites, Mr Mearns stated that the Park takes advice from Heritage Scotland and the West of Scotland Archaeology Department, and that both designated and non-designated heritage value is taken into consideration. b) Economic Sustainability: Concern was expressed that focus on tourism is resulting in a dearth of investment in other economic avenues, and that there seems to be no economic or industrial policy at work. In response Mr Mearns could cite only the area designated for industrial development near FCS offices, and will forward the relevant consultation document. Observation was made that employment in the area is dwindling, premises are closing, and a new plan is desperately needed as the present one isn't working. Mr Mearns was asked to address the problem of attracting investors to the area, and asked to consider the possibility of buildings being elevated out of the immediate flood plain. c) Forest Tracks. It was thought that lack of requirement to lodge planning applications should not release FCS and other businesses from the responsibility of reinstatement following completion of their works, and that this should be enforced by the National Park to protect our landscape. Mr Mearns stated that they strive to keep the area beautiful, that LLTNP cannot control planting, but they do control some tracks, and that this will be looked into, and responses will be reported back to the Community Council. d) Stronachlachar: Whilst acknowledging the impact of SW's decision to remove sheep farming, it was felt that more could be done to re-energise this failing community which was not even mentioned in LLTNP's Local Plan, and that the Park's recent decision to grant permission for change of use of a key building to conversion to holiday homes was a great error of</p>		
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	<p>judgement which exacerbates the potential death of the community. Permanent occupants and sustainable businesses are needed. Mr Mearns denied that facilitation of tourism governed the decision, saying that dependency on what the market brings forward is a factor, that demand for second homes is high, and that no-one had come forward with a proposal to live and work in the area, When asked if it would not have been appropriate to wait for such an event in consideration of the plight of the community, Mr Mearns expressed the opinion that holiday homes bring income to local restaurants.</p> <p>TG thanked Mr Mearns for his visit and assured him that the Community Council wish to be approachable, proactive and helpful. Mr Mearns appreciated this, expressed a hope that a good working relationship will develop from the meeting, and promised to speak separately regarding Aberfoyle village centre and the potential of raising buildings.</p>		
4.	<p>Treasurers report: £20 has been paid to Scotways. Due to the impending deadline, an application has been submitted for the Connect Fund. Clarification was made on which funds may be held by the Community Council, and which must be held by the Community Trust.</p>		
5.	<p>Planning Matters: Altskeith: An appeal has been lodged against the ruling regarding a canopy, and commissioners have visited. Kinlochard: Gate access to a lochside field has been refused a second time. The reasoning behind this decision is unclear. Ledard: The mast for mobile reception is now in place. A request has been made to retain 385m of temporary track for servicing. Duchray House: An alteration has been made to the application. Holm House: Application for an extension.</p>		
6.	<p>Correspondence: Playpark: AB is taking this application forward.</p>		
7.	<p>Stirling Council Issues & Councillor Report: Cllr Evelyn Tweed stressed that the problems of flooding, shop closures, limited employment, tourism and economic development all need to be looked at together, and was unwilling to discuss specifics. She negated the previously imparted information that Stirling Council are in possession of funds to take flood defence works forward, and said that no works will be commenced until money is sourced, the first £1.5million of which will be spent on detailed design work. The design and engineering study already undertaken was not mentioned. Cllr Tweed stated that what she needed was the community and</p>		

	<p>community groups to be cohesive and pull together. This was met positively by the floor, but responses of ‘what do you need, when do you need it and when will a result be shown?’ produced only a repetition of the fact that Cllr Tweed did not know, that funds must be found first, and no timescale can be given. Those present confirmed that the community had been told two and a half years ago that £1.3 million had been set aside for flood defences in Callander and Aberfoyle. Cllr Tweed said that this was not true. When pressed for a date for next consultation or decision, disappointment was expressed that Cllr Tweed could not confirm that either was likely to be forthcoming soon . Signage: it was noted that some form of signage to appraise people of water levels had first been requested 20 years ago. The Stirling Council website detailing this is not kept up to date. It was noted that texts and emails to report flood gauge levels are available, but a simple means of warning for areas with no signal is required. River Blockage: A request for Stirling Council to consider dredging the river was made, as gravel and detritus continues to build up from upstream. The blockage cleared by SC at Manse Rd bridge was appreciated, but it was agreed that this is not enough. It was thought unrealistic to expect landowners alone to clear rivers, as the problem of change in capacity of river flow is largely due to clear felling upstream by FCS. The effectiveness of dredging was vouched for. It was felt that the cost of this operation would be reasonable, that it should have been done long ago, and that in the face of objection from SEPA, the safety of humans should be prioritised. Looking ahead, a budget for such remedial action for this winter, and the consideration of radical schemes for the next 10 yrs were suggested, and it was thought that perhaps remedial action plus insurance would be a cheaper option long term for Stirling Council to protect the community. It was stressed that the flooding affects the whole of Strathard, with past instances of High School children from Kinlochard and upwards having to be fostered in Aberfoyle for three days, and Primary School children being rescued and returned home by boat and ambulance being cited. Road closure: Proposed road closure at Ballat, more information to follow. Bin Collection: A timetable for collections is available online. Closure: The possibility of a week-long closure of the A821 in October is causing concern, no response has been received from Kenny Sneddon, SC.</p>		
8.	<p>Reports: Police: A full report was submitted. The mobile police unit intend to visit areas on one day a week, to be more visible. Drones: Concerns were raised with officers regarding the use of drones in the area, which are alarming livestock.</p>		

	<p>Legislation is under review, at present only airfields and built up areas are protected. Road Safety: A local driver was recently alarmed on the road by encountering a man on roller skates brandishing skis. Officers advised that he was not breaking the law. Bridge: The question of priority signage to protect pedestrians on Manse Road bridge was raised with officers. The bridge is listed, and as such a request for traffic lights has been refused in the past. Cllr Tweed will look into this. Broadband: Ongoing. Business Hub: Visit Scotland have confirmed that they don't wish to retain 65% of the building. Contact has been made with Steve Caruth of SC, and progress is looking likely. Discussion will now begin on the management of the enterprise, and it is hoped that it will open by Christmas. Refurbishment of the Wedding Room is going ahead, a request has been made for this to extend to the other rooms also.</p>	Cllr Tweed	
9.	<p>A.O.C.B. Continuity of Councillors. It was suggested that having a different Councillor attending each meeting was hampering communication, and thus slowing down the process of getting things done. Registrar: During discussion it was mentioned that centralisation may remove this service from Aberfoyle. It was agreed to fight against any proposed closure, as this magnificent area draws couples from all over the world to be married in Aberfoyle. This is in no small part due to our Registrar, Sharon Johnston, promoting the area with her excellent reports in the Strathard News, which finds it's way to many distant locations. Her warmly written updates on local marriages, births and losses also contribute greatly to the sense of community in the area. Gateway: It was noted that Aberfoyle appears to have been downgraded from the identity as gateway to the National Park which it enjoyed in the Park's infancy, and it was agreed that effort should be made to champion it as such again. Economic Community Officer: It was suggested that a full time Economic Community Officer may be essential to revive future prospects for Strathard. Notification. There is a need for clarification on the different types of notification required by National Park planning in lieu of planning application. Mast: There is a meeting tonight in Aberfoyle Memorial Hall regarding the proposed telecom mast. Cycling Event: A cycling event is proposed for next September. It was noted that the Rob Roy hold a motorcycle event at this time. FCS: FCS are holding workshops concerning projects within the forest.</p>		

10.	Next Meeting: Thursday 5th October at Inversnaid Hotel		
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