



North Uist Community Council Comhairle Coimhearsnachd Uibhist a Tuath

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NORTH UIST COMMUNITY COUNCIL HELD IN LOCHMADDY HALL ON MONDAY 12 DECEMBER 2016 AT 7.30PM

- Present:** Sheena Stewart - Chair
Flora MacDonald – Vice chair
Cllr Uisdean Robertson – Secretary
John MacDonald – Treasurer
Donald A MacLennan
Terry Wakeling
Ken MacDonald
Donald E Morrison
- Apologies:** Joan Ferguson
Cllr Neil Beaton (attending Berneray Community Council)
Ragnall Maclain
Effie Rodger
Cllr Andrew Walker
PC Katie Hebditch
- Public:** Philip Harding, Chair An Torc
Andrew Ross, NUDC Development Worker
Alasdair MacLeod, CnES
Alison Cropper, CnES

1.0 Adoption of Minute:

Proposed: John MacDonald
Seconded: Flora MacDonald

2.0 Statement of Account:

Account was circulated. The grant of £1150 from the Comhairle toward the Historic Environment Scotland work at Eaval had been paid. Previous issue raised regarding payment toward the two students has been sorted.

3.0 An Torc Project Update

This project continues to gather momentum. The second stage of the Feasibility Study for the project, led by design team Urban Animation, and funded by HIE and the Comhairle, is now underway. This will carry

on the work of the first stage and will investigate the various elements of the project in depth. The first two phases of the Study will be completed by March 2016.

The main outcomes of the Feasibility Study will be:

- Agreements with the project partners which include Lews Castle College, Taigh Chearsabhaigh and HHP, with whom An Torc has been working on the project planning for the last 3 years. The Urban Animation team will be building on recent successful meetings with HHP Commercial Director John MacIver, and LCC Principal Iain MacMillan, working with each partner in the coming months to map out the details of the commitment to the project.
- Design plans for the project site. They will take into account the desire of the community, expressed during the Stage 1 consultations, to keep the old hospital building. They will aim to use as much as possible of the structure, although the continued deterioration of the building may affect how much they are safely and economically able to retain.
- Business Plans and Forecast to enable an application to the Scottish Land Fund for acquisition of the hospital site. An Torc has recently put in an offer with 'suspensive conditions' to the hospital site owners, London & Shetland Securities Ltd, a property firm based in Aberdeen. The offer is conditional on the valuation of the site by the District Valuer and on the findings of survey work carried out as part of the Stage 2 Feasibility Study. The offer has been accepted and the latest news is that our consultants are now allowed to go on site to conduct the necessary surveys.

The request for ward funding was solely concerned with a contribution towards the cost of the valuation mentioned above. The estimate for this is £2,400.

The community and other key stakeholders, whose support has been sought since the inception of the project, will be consulted throughout the feasibility study process, and kept regularly informed. There are expected to be two community engagement events held in North Uist during Q1 as part of the feasibility study.

Discussions with HHP are particularly interesting, since they have funds available currently for new housing projects and it has always been a key element of the project to make part of the 8.2 acre site available for social housing, including extra care supported housing.

Complementing the work of the Urban Animation study is another investigation, the Lochmaddy 'Warmth from Water' Scheme, led by NUDC who are working with An Torc and Community Energy Scotland to study the option of using a Water Source Heat Pump (WSHP) to provide a robust, cost-effective source of energy for the hospital site, and potentially generate revenue for the project. The project will also look at the possibility of expanding the use of WSHPs to reduce heating costs in other buildings and houses in Lochmaddy. The information from the study will be transferable and could be used to

assess the potential for similar systems elsewhere in the Uists and helping tackle the fuel poverty from which many in our community suffer. The Study will be published in March 2017.

The Lochmaddy Primary School is a further vital component of the project, and An Torc has recently submitted a comprehensive development plan to the Comhairle relating to the School. The group aims to acquire the School eventually, to be used as a teaching facility which will allow the expansion of the BA Fine Arts degree. However an initial rental period of a year will give the community a chance to gather the information needed for a more robust business plan. Although in recent meetings LCC have said that the school, which is in excellent condition, is ready to use, the lease period will give the project a chance to assess requirements for the teaching space, and to plan for any necessary renovations.

The College have just received the necessary validation to enable them to teach years 3 and 4 of the course in Lochmaddy, which is very good news. The group will be meeting with the College principal in January to plan next steps.

The next steps include:

- Build on the outcomes of the Stage 2 Feasibility Study, including continued engagement and consultation with the main project partners.
- Application to the Scottish Land Fund for acquisition of the hospital site.
- Arrange and conclude missives with the hospital site owners for sale of the site.
- Engage with lenders and funding sources for the project finance. This will likely be through a variety of financial sources, including an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund.
- Working with the An Torc Sub-Group for the Lochmaddy Primary School, through consultation with LCC to generate a Business Plan and Renovation Plan, and to seek funding to cover these.
- Source funding for, and implement, the recommendations of the Warmth from Water Scheme, which is likely to suggest the installation of a WSHP to provide heating to a number of Lochmaddy sites, prior to the renovation of the main hospital site.
- Continued engagement with project partners and stakeholders to assist with the project planning, including HIE and CnES.

4.0 Matters Arising:

4.1 Defibrillators

All coastguard stations are to be equipped with defibrillators. Training will also be provided. The campsite at Goular was still awaiting electrician to connect the equipment. Still awaiting confirmation from Marine Harvest on whether they are prepared to support funding of the defibrillator in Lochportain.

4.2 D R MacLeod Yard:

Signage provision to be checked.

4.3 Street Lighting:

Neil continues to follow up on this issue and a series of emails were read out at the meeting. It appears that an extension at the weekend over the Christmas and New Year will be initiated.

4.4 Dentistry:

Disappointment was expressed that two of the community representatives from North Uist had not turned up at the Options Appraisal held on the 29th November.

4.5 Bayhead Area Surgery Provision:

Neil has now spoken to the Director of Education regarding the provision of a space within the new school for the doctor to use for appointments.

4.6 Baleshare Causeway:

Technical Services have agreed to put white lining along the sides of the Baleshare Causeway.

4.7 Food Banks:

Sheena has now spoken to groups looking at how to progress this in the Uist context.

4.8 Co Opting Members

A few suggestions were made i.e Jessie and Henry Morrison and also Iain Morrison, Carinish. Secretary agreed to speak to Iain.

5.0 Police Report :

Police were unable to be present at the meeting. Katie phoned to give her apologies and said she would be moving back to Stornoway prior to the next meeting. The members wanted to wish her well and thank her for her attendance at the Community Council meetings over the last year.

6.0 Matters Raised by Members of the Public:

6.1 Lochmaddy Bank of Scotland

Dissatisfaction was expressed at the service given by the bank. It appears that if a member of staff is on holiday and someone goes off ill, the bank gets shut – sometimes with no notice. Consequently the

bank in Lochmaddy and the one in Balivanich work on much reduced hours during such periods.

6.2 Post Office

The Post Office in Taigh Chearsabhagh had suffered over a long period with technical difficulties which had been difficult to resolve. Given that both Bayhead and Clachan operate on a limited basis it was critical to have a more robust service provision in place in North Uist.

6.3 Lochmaddy Surgery

Concern was expressed that the outside lighting at the surgery was inadequate. Secretary will speak to Health Board officers.

6.4 Benbecula Airport Ambulift

A query was raised reference the method of lifting patients who had mobility problems on to the plane. If an ambulift is available in Benbecula why is this not being used? The secretary said that Loganair were trialling a new system which was like the gangways used at ferry terminals.

7.0 Correspondence Received

7.1 Ward Funding

Letters of thanks had been received from Ada Campbell reference the photocopier for Urachadh Uibhist and from David Newman reference the surveying work at Eaval. Both these projects had received Community Council support. It was agreed to award the following ward funding applications:

An Torc - £1000

Grimsay Senior Citizens - £300

Sollas Senior Citizens - £300

Ros Craobh - £300

Tagsa Uibhist - £500

8.0 Date of next meeting: The next meeting will be on Monday 9 January in Taigh Sgìre Sholais at 7.30pm.

(This meeting will also include Bus Consultation on the summer timetable)