



# North Uist Community Council

## Comhairle Coimhearsnachd Uibhist a Tuath

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### **NORTH UIST COMMUNITY COUNCIL HELD IN HOSTA HALL ON MONDAY 16 APRIL AT 7.30PM**

**Present:** Flora MacDonald – Vice Chair  
Cllr Uisdean Robertson – Secretary  
John MacDonald – Treasurer  
Effie Rodger  
Donald A MacLennan  
Terry Wakeling  
Ken MacDonald  
Donald E Morrison  
Cllr Iain M MacLeod

**Apologies:** Sheena Stewart – Chair  
Joan Ferguson  
Jessie Morrison  
Ragnall Maclain  
Cllr Roddy MacKay (attending Berneray CC)

**Public:** Cllr Iain A MaNeil  
Jonny Ingledew  
Finlay MacRae, Calmac  
Mary Morrison, Calmac  
PC Michelle Nelson

#### **1.0 Adoption of Minute:**

**Proposed:** John MacDonald  
**Seconded:** Flora MacDonald

#### **2.0 Statement of Account:**

The Treasurer circulated statement. Total uncommitted balance sits at £6351.54. The War Memorial Fund sits at £2060.48.

#### **3.0 Calmac:**

The Community Council were appreciative of Finlay and Mary attending the meeting to listen to people's concerns. These

concerns could be broken up into two parts, decision making and communication.

The removal of the Hebrides at Easter was felt by all present to have been one of the most extraordinary bad decisions ever taken by Calmac management. The Comhairle had written the Minister several weeks ago highlighting a concern on the resilience of the fleet. Notwithstanding this, there had been better ways to move the boats around to ensure that the impact would not have been so great on certain routes. Suggestions made were ignored. It is critical that our ferry services are delivered effectively, efficiently and in the best interests of our community. That can best be achieved by having decision making done at a more local level, and by those who have a better understanding of the needs of Islands.

On the issue of communication a number of personal examples were given by members present on what they experienced. It can seem a little strange to hear complaints about communication when modern technology has made it possible for people to communicate with one another in so many ways. A negative customer experience caused by bad communication can easily spread beyond the one customer who had the experience. Regardless of the means of communication, fast response times and the quality of information provided will determine how people judge the experience. While most consumers still prefer the phone for answering queries, they experience long wait times and have trouble navigating the automated system to reach a live agent. Clearly, this is an area where Calmac should be constantly working to streamline the response process so calls are quickly answered and problems quickly resolved. Each port should be given this role rather than the current centralised function. Calmac would be wise not to ignore these issues related to communication and customer service. It may seem like a small thing, but it's things like these that lead the travelling public to lose confidence. A negative customer experience caused by bad communication can easily spread beyond the one customer who had the experience. It is said that this has already had an impact on tourism businesses in Uist.

#### 4.0

#### **Distillery Update:**

#### **Project objectives:**

**1. Put Uist on the whisky map** which will help in creating a whisky trail through the Outer Hebrides which will help boost tourism.

**2. Minimise environmental impact** - avoid use of non hazardous chemicals, waste products recycled as fertiliser and cattle feed.

**3. Use local contractors** where possible (Accountant, insurance broker, architect, civil and structural engineer, quantity surveyor, lawyer, and web designer are all Hebridean businesses).

**4. Employ locally** in the 18 to 40 year old age bracket (anticipate needing to hire between 4 and 6 full time staff).

**5. Establish a local barley supply chain** - ideally using solely locally grown bere barley (30 - 40 tonnes per annum).

**The distillery** will be 600m<sup>2</sup> in size which will provide enough room for the entire production process to take place - from milling the barley, making the whisky, maturing in barrels and bottling. Everything will be done on site. There will also be small visitor centre located on site, modelled on a modern take of a blackhouse. The visitor centre will have a small shop selling distillery products and a tasting room. Tours will be held throughout the year to nurture whisky tourism.

**The products produced** will be whisky, gin and flavoured vodkas. All products will fall into the super premium spirits category to further promote the Hebridean brand as one of high quality.

**The team** up until now has been Jonny working full time and a number of contractors doing design work for the distillery building. Kate Macdonald will be moving onto the project in the near future. If the project runs to schedule then it is anticipated taking on staff in Q4 2019.

**Progress to date;**

- Site identified opposite the Hebridean Smokehouse. Site is on common grazing land and purchase is ongoing.
- planning permission obtained and the building warrant is due to be submitted imminently.
- construction contract has been tendered with planned start date of Q4 this year and a 1 year build phase.

**Current work;**

- Spend the next 6 months fund raising through financial institutions, grant support, and private investors. Possible crowdfunding campaign will also take place.
- Looking for a temporary site to base the business from whilst the main site is being produced.

**5.0 Matters Arising:**

**5.1 HHP:**

The fence in Lochmaddy has still not been repaired. John will take photographs and forward them to the Secretary.

**5.2 White Lining:**

Disappointment was noted that white lining at the Co-op had not been carried out. However it was indicated that resurfacing had to be done before the white lining can be completed. If this is not done there is the option of an Enforcement Notice by Planning.

**5.3 Communities Board:**

This issue will be discussed further with the Chair of the Communities Board.

**5.4 Nail Cutting Service:**

Secretary is due to meet the Health Board again on this issue.

**5.5 Play Parks:**

The play park in Lochmaddy has been cleared by volunteers and is looking very good. It appears however that the Education Department are changing the way that the play parks could be funded.

**5.6 Vallay Island:**

Photographs of the large rusty tanks have now been circulated to the Secretary. There is ongoing dialogue on this issue and we will report back on how these discussions are progressing.

**5.7 Langass Wood:**

We await further information on this issue which was raised at the Sollas meeting of the Community Council.

**6.0 Police Report:**

The number of calls were in single figures so not a lot to report. There are now nine officers stationed in Uist. More patrols are being carried out and there will be a focus on Lochmaddy and Liniclate particularly. The police flat in Lochmaddy is still empty and the other house has not yet been sold.

**7.0 Councillors Report:**

**7.1 Uist Economic Task Force:** Cllr I A MacNeil indicated that a Faroese delegate would be present at the next meeting of the

Task Force on the 11<sup>th</sup> May. His attendance should be of interest and probably a good indicator of what we could be doing in the islands bearing in mind that we face similar issues.

- 7.2 Dentistry:** Still no decision.
- 7.3 Spaceport:** There is ongoing dialogue on the potential of Spaceport in Uist. Members present asked for clarity on the potential purchase of the land in question.
- 7.4 Islands Deal:** There is no further progress to report on the Islands Deal. It would be the members intention to report to the Community Council as and when new information becomes available.
- 7.5 Deer:** The Deer Management Group met on the 26<sup>th</sup> March in Benbecula. It was decided that Linzi Sievwright would take over as Secretary of the group. She would be paid by North Uist Estate and Storras Uibhist. Linzi has particular expertise on deer management which it was felt necessary at this stage in formulating a plan. The next meeting will be on 25<sup>th</sup> May.
- 7.6 HIAL:** The issue of Air Traffic Control centralisation was discussed at the Island Transport Forum on the 28<sup>th</sup> March. There will be a longer discussion at the Islands Strategic Group which it is hoped will take place in May.
- 7.7 Housing:** The issue of housing will be discussed at the Uist Economic Task Force meeting.
- 7.8 Loganair:** The issue of the cost of changing a ticket has been raised with Loganair and we await feedback.
- 7.9 Council Budget:** A new Sub-committee has been formed and two meetings have been held. We will inform the Community Council as to outcomes when decisions are arrived at.
- 8.0 Matters Raised by Members of the Public:**
- 8.1 Committee Road Cattle grid:**
- This cattle grid has been out of action for some time and the Secretary will discuss what the timelines are in replacing it with Technical Services.
- 8.2 Ahmore Corner:**
- Concerns continue to be raised on the alignment of this particular piece of road. Skid marks are to be seen on the corner and it was felt that if this was not addressed an accident would happen.

**8.3 Scottish Water:**

A complaint was received that the pressure of the water in the Sollas area was very much up and down. Secretary will discuss with Malcolm MacPhail, Area Manager.

**8.4 Unadopted Road:**

A query was raised reference work on a road in the Claddach area. Secretary will check if this is an unadopted road.

**9.0 Correspondence Received:**

None.

**10.0 Date of next meeting:** The next meeting will be on Monday 14 May in Carinish Hall at 7.30pm.