

BERNERA COMMUNITY COUNCIL
Minutes of Meeting held Thursday 14 May 2020
via Zoom Video Conference, 7.30pm-9pm.

BCC Members Present via Zoom: Joan Macaulay (Chair, JM), Callum Richings (Treasurer, CR), Cllr Norman MacDonald (NMD), Rhiannon Teather (Secretary, RT), Neil James Macaulay (NJM), Madeleine Macaulay (MA), Sue Long (SL), Virginia Allum (VA)
Members of the public in attendance: Julia Higginbottom (JH)

PREVIOUS MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting (Thursday 16 April) were approved by Madeleine Macaulay and seconded by Neil James Macaulay.

MATTERS ARISING

FINANCE UPDATE

CR provided a finance update. As of 26 April 2020, balance was 5,662.38.

RESIGNATIONS AND CO-OPTION OF NEW MEMBERS

Phillip Dunn resigned at the beginning of the last meeting. Kevin Long and Finlay MacIver resigned after the meeting. JM reported that two former members of the BCC have put themselves forward to be co-opted members (Norman MacDonald and Chrissie MacDonald). VA queried why needed co-opted members and how many members of the committee are needed for it to function. JM replied that the BCC needs four members minimum and can have a maximum of four co-opted members. CR said it is important that all areas of the community are represented and that the co-opted members would be valuable voices. There was widespread support for the two proposed co-opted members because of their experience and contribution to the community. The matter concluded with unanimous support for Norman and Chrissie rejoining the BCC.

COVID-19 UPDATE AND EMAIL REQUESTS

RT provided a mailbox update which included three main items. (1) There was a resident query on 15 April asking whether there was more that could be done to check on all Bernera residents (second leaflet drop, traffic light system suggested); also the possibility of a soup/pudding kitchen and hot food delivery service. On the latter issue, RT explained she had forwarded the soup/pudding kitchen suggestion to Ken Macaulay of the BCA as use of the kitchen is their jurisdiction. SL queried the hot food suggestion and whether the BCC is usually involved in these types of projects. NMD explained that it is usually community centres that do this; in Uig where they are currently running a hot food delivery service, the team receive funding for the ingredients. They have four volunteers with food safety certifications, who prepare up to 80 fresh meals on a day. These are delivered to people's homes, including extra cartons for home

freezing. NMD advised that any soup/pudding kitchen would require the agreement of/working with the BCA as well as volunteers with the appropriate food certification.

(2) RT outlined that the second query was from Steve Hankinson of the Citizens Advice Service, who has been in touch with community groups across the island about storing/delivering food boxes. RT reported that she had discussed this issue with JM – and as BCC does not have storage facilities – it was agreed to contact Ken of BCA about this. Ken had swiftly replied and said he would follow it up and offer support to CAS if needed. RT requested an update prior to the BCC meeting and was informed that there was not yet any news to report.

(3) The third item was another resident query from 29 April about problems accessing money and the support available for people who cannot go to the bank or who do not use telephone banking. RT reported that JM had replied advising that individuals should contact their bank for support and, if they want the matter to be taken forward, to supply some further information. SL reported that the access to banking had also been raised at the BCA meeting and pointed to the service information from the Post Office (posted on Facebook) which might help people with this issue. There was a debate about the chain of communication and whether all committee members should be kept informed about mailbox queries as they arise. Some members requested that all queries are circulated to the whole committee. RT raised some concerns about confidentiality in response and other members stated they had no objections to the current methods of communication. The food parcels in particular were discussed as an item it would have been helpful to have been informed about at the time. RT agreed to circulate this information.

NMD explained that CnES have widely publicised information about food parcels and that it was important that all community groups work together to help store and distribute them. He emphasised the potential sensitivities about local deliveries to homes and the risk of individuals feeling put upon with volunteers coming to their homes etc. NMD suggested that only half a dozen people would be required to organise the food parcels, plus some delivery volunteers; a general leaflet should be sent out to ask people if they need support/food boxes. Some members queried how many people required assistance and whether the boxes needed to be stored locally; for example, a trip to town may provide the anonymity for the individuals who would prefer this.

SL reported that the BCA are producing a newsletter to go out soon and suggested this was a good opportunity to distribute information about food parcels. MM asked whether the BCC should send out another leaflet updating residents about the change of name for the Volunteer Co-ordinator and other important CnES information about the Covid-19 Response. All agreed that a BCC update on the BCA newsletter would suffice at this stage and would co-ordinate timings for future leaflets with other committees to maximise their utility for local residents. BCC will likely organise a second leaflet drop in the next few months.

ECONOMIC RESILIENCE AND MENTAL HEALTH

VA raised the issue of mental health – increasingly pressing in a time in which people are

anxious about the future – and whether there was more the BCC could do in terms of initiatives to support people. The Uig newsletter was cited as an example of being proactive in keeping people informed. NMD explained this newsletter used to be once a month but Uig is now producing a one page double-sided information sheet which goes out more frequently. NMD emphasised anxiety will be more of an issue going forward, especially the longer the lockdown goes on and in particular regarding employment/earnings. There does need to be appropriate level of signposting at a local level so people know where to go to access help and support.

SL reported that there is an NHS Psychological Wellbeing Hub available with a telephone helpline number and a self-referral form. A request will also go out to Community Councils for members to take psychological first aid training (one hour course) from the NHS so we can help others access support. There is also an app called Sleepio (<https://www.nhs.uk/apps-library/sleepio/>), now on the Western Isles NHS page and featured in various articles, which can help people sleep. RT queried whether all of this information would go onto the BCA newsletter and SL confirmed it would.

FUNDING

JM provided an update on the funding application submitted to Scottish and Southern and informed everyone that £1,500 had been awarded (for Magnar Cushion); this was a reduced sum due to the volume of applications. There was some discussion about recent funding announcements and some more third sector funding being made available. There were concerns that the small percentage of funding (20% in some cases) would mean they were not viable applications. NMD explained that it may be possible to submit an application to the Resilience Fund at CnES but there needs to be proven demand for all proposals. JM stated that Scottish and Southern would be producing a bulletin and to keep an eye out for the press releases. No news as yet on the funding applications sent in by Development Trust and BCA. NMD raised a funding option that might be available to help the café from the Government, supporting small businesses and charities (3 years worth of accounts needed). SL stated that KM may already be working on this but would check. NMD agreed to explore some more funding options and feedback.

AOCB

BCC COMPUTER AND PRINTER

MM provided an update; desktop and printer to be moved to the Community Centre meeting room when we can meet in person once again. The prospect of getting a laptop was discussed, as this is a more portable option than a desktop. RT queried the condition of the printer as this being operational would be very helpful for leaflets etc. MM agreed she would test it.

FACEBOOK PAGE

JM raised concerns about the current running of the Facebook page, in particular that posts were being copied with comments onto the main BCC page. SL explained that she had been

posting general notices, e.g. about the Post Office, and had perhaps forgotten to take comments off. VA stated that the original BCC page had been set up as a discussion page, so the comments that people make on the original posts there are automatically included if posted again on the main page; if the Facebook page is simply an information page it needs to be set up again as such; comments from today were not negative. JM and MM responded that the Facebook page was supposed to be an information page rather than a discussion board and did not agree that comments should be included. JH expressed support for the Facebook page as a way of including newcomers to the island and keeping people informed about the BCC and what we do. She explained that as a new resident she views this as an opportunity to knit the community together that should not be missed. RT proposed the solution may be that JM is made an administrator, given that part of the problem was that posts are being made without consultation. VA made the point that she had been in touch about the administration of the Facebook page twice before the meeting. JM confirmed she would like to be made an administrator and this was agreed by current administrators.

CROWN ESTATE REVENUES

NMD provided an update about the project applications submitted so far, these included repairs to the coastal paths from Valasay to Bosta and the Fuel Pumps. NMD explained that the route for delivering the funding is from the Scottish Government to the local authorities, and then the local authorities down to the communities through Community Councils. The local Cllrs make the final decision with Community Councils input. NMD explained that it was his view that the Fuel Pumps were essential for the community and its future and that £31,000 of the Crown Estate Funding should be invested to help deliver this. While it will not be enough to cover the whole cost, there should be other sources of funding to make up the difference. The Fuel Pumps are an especially good choice given how late it now is in the year and it would be difficult to deliver the other projects in time for the deadline. All were very pleased about the news that the Fuel Pumps are receiving funding.

THANK YOU MESSAGES

JM proposed that Catriona Macleod should be sent flowers and a thank you card for her twenty years of service on the committee and to the Bernera community. All members who have resigned should also be sent thank you cards. All were in agreement.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING: Thursday 11 June 2020, 7.30pm.