

BERNERA COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Minutes for Meeting held on

Thursday 8 April 2021

6.45pm-8pm (via Zoom)

BCC Members Present (via Zoom)

Joan Macaulay (Chair, JM), Neil James Macaulay (NJM), Cllr Norman Macdonald (NMD), Chrissie Macdonald (CM), Rhiannon Teather (Secretary, RT), Calum Richings (Treasurer, CR), Madeleine Macaulay (MM).

Also Present (via Zoom)

Calum Mackenzie (CMK, CnES), Natalie Bowling (NB), Sally Norman (SN), Eric Stewart (ES).

Apologies

Alice Murray, Norman Macdonald, Cllr Randal Fraser, Cllr Angus Morrison.

1. Previous Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 11 March 2021 were approved by Chrissie Macdonald and seconded by Neil James Macaulay.

2. Matters Arising

No matters arising.

3. Finance Update

CR provided an update. Balance is 8863.07; 2,300 to pay to Hydro for Petrol Pumps; the cleaners for the toilets are still to be paid (payment details to be collected). Online banking for the account has been set up; CM and CR to sort out payments. The small fee for BT connection is also to be paid. CR noted we are awaiting a receipt for the money previously paid to BCA for Petrol Pumps (7,396.70).

4. Bernera Bridge Update

CMK (CnES) provided an update. He reported that there is now a month delay on the timetabled completion of the bridge. The revised date that the new bridge will be passable is by the end of July. Mr Mackenzie emphasised that the contractor has been cautious about their time estimates (potential tidal works, depth of works); the hope is that once work begins the timetable can be revised and the bridge will be able to be completed sooner. The manufacturing of the bridge is currently underway. The turf cutting ceremony will be held next week.

NMD queried whether the component parts of the bridge would be moved up ahead of the civil works. CMK confirmed the works on the Bernera mainland side and the platform

works ('launch pad') on the Isle of Lewis side will have to be completed in order for the bridge to be installed. These works are unaffected by any delays and will begin soon.

With reference to the announced month delay, ES commented that he had previously queried the lack of contingency built in to the timetable, e.g. accounting for weather and any other possible issues. He asked for guarantees that the timetable would now be fixed for the end of July. CMK responded that work is being conducted incrementally. CMK emphasised that we are now in a position that Bernera will have a new, functioning Bridge within a year of the problem being identified last autumn, which is a significant achievement. The hope is that the timetable can be revised down as further works discover more information about the site. ES also queried why the bridge was not properly maintained. CMK explained that the condition of the bridge was much worse than expected, in particular, the deterioration on the Lewis side was much worse. CMK stated that the team are gathering more information as they work and that every effort is being made to get the job done as quickly as feasibly practical. ES responded that the dates keep slipping and costs are rising for housebuilders and requested further clarity on the certainty surrounding the revised date of completion. CMK responded that after the site investigation team have done their work next week, he will be able to provide further clarification; if the date slips again, everyone will be informed. He reiterated that the team is doing everything they can.

NB also commented on the revised date and queried whether this is an aspiration rather than a firm commitment. CR noted that the weather conditions are not unusual for the time of year and that project is complex. NMD stated that it could have taken six months to a year to even assess the bridge and CnES have therefore acted very quickly. He said he understood the situation is disappointing for people but we have to adjust our expectations according to the ground conditions and the weather. The current timetable is conservative at the moment but it is possible less digging into the rock will be required and that it may be possible to move the end of July date forward. There was an exchange about haulage of materials between the sides. CMK responded that there is a balance to strike and the hauliers will know what is most appropriate for the conditions.

NMD requested that more regular updates be supplied to residents once the works formally commenced. It was agreed these would be provided on a weekly basis. It was queried whether we would be informed about the outcome of the site survey; CMK agreed to do so.

The period of notice given ahead of BCC meetings was also queried. Attendees were reminded that we have Bernera Community Council meetings on the second Thursday of every month, 6.45pm start.

5. Funding (Crown Estate, HIE, Bosta)

JM provided an update. The money from HIE for the Bosta toilets has now been received and work is underway. The solar panels have been ordered. It was queried whether the toilets will be open to visitors in the coming months, as many are still closed due to tier restrictions. The hope is that the level will change to allow visitors to use them in the coming weeks.

6. Petrol Pumps

CR provided an update. The cable has been installed but the meter has not due to delays at Hydro. It will likely be a few more weeks before there is progress.

7. Association of Community Councils / Housing

RT asked for input/questions to put forward on behalf of BCC on the housing issue, ahead of the Lewis Association of Community Council meeting next week. In making the case, the importance of support on the issue of land procurement was emphasised, as well as the fact that there would still be a school open in Bernera if there had been investment in housing. NMD advised that community owned land likely provides the best solution, as this would help facilitate new homes being built across Bernera. CR agreed to attend the housing meeting in place of JM (who gave her apologies); NMD also to attend. RT to forward details.

8. Bernera Graveyards

To be carried forward.

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday 13 May 2021 at 6.45pm.

Please contact: berneracomcouncil@gmail.com to make suggestions or raise any issues.
The minutes from previous meetings, dating back to 2012, can be found at: <https://e-sgire.org/communities/ward4/community-associations/>