

Benbecula Community Council

Meeting Monday 9th March 2021, 5:30pm

MINUTE

1. Attendees & Apologies

Rona MacKay (RM), Vanessa Langley (VL), Angela MacDonald (AM), Hugh MacCormick (HM) Tracey Walker (TW), Fiona Buchanan (FB), Alasdair MacEachen, Cllr. Roddy MacKay, Cllr. Uisdean Robertson, Cllr. Iain MacLeod, Sheena Stewart

Apologies from Iain Stephen Morrison

2. Declarations of Interest

RM declared her interest in HIAL petitions.

3. Approval of minutes & matters arising

Proposed by AM and seconded by TW.

4. Balivanich regeneration project

Grass verges have been scraped back. RM and Cllr. Roddy MacKay recently met with Alison Cropper, Neil Campbell and Neal Ingram with regards to the gateway to Balivanich. Plans are in place to erect Failte gu Baile a'Mhanaich in both English and Gaidhlig at MacGillivray's shop and across the road from Campbell's shop. A sign will also go up in Market Stance "Welcome to the townships of Muir of Aird and Balivanich".

Plans are in place to change the 30mph zone in Balivanich to a 20mph zone. **RM is to discuss with the MoD with regards to lighting up the water tower and using it to display messages.**

Cllr. Roddy MacKay advised that the hole at Culla Bay has now been filled but he is unaware of who completed this.

5. HIAL – life vests, boat & trailer

RM has been informed that the money for the sale of the boat has been sent to the BCC account however she still hasn't been able to check it has arrived as yet. HM arranged the transfer to Donald Currie and delivered it to Lochboisdale for which we are very grateful for. A big thank you to Hugh! Sheena Stewart advised that Am Paipear recently covered the sale of the boat in an interview and pictures with Donald Currie.

With regards to how best to spend the funds raised throughout the Benbecula and Uist community, FB suggested that the footpath between Torlum and Griminish could be upgraded as the path is in very poor condition. TW suggested investing in play areas at the airport and ferry terminals. Roddy MacKay suggested that the footpath between Aird and the graveyard at Nunton is in need of rescraping. VL requested that the historic path between Griminish and Balivanich be considered.

6. Council Building & Third Sector accommodation around Balivanich

Sheena Stewart informed BCC that she was still waiting to have a conversation with someone from the Comhairle. RM advised that CAB are interested in renting a room. Third Sector groups do not want to displace current staff however renting some space will provide the Comhairle with some more income. Robert Fraser will be looking at the floor plans once provided however he is very busy and unavailable until May. Cllr. Roddy MacKay advised that he has obtained floor plans and will share them with BCC and Sheena Stewart.

RM advised that groups don't visualise a move into the Council Offices as a long-term option as there is interest in the creation of a new building for them somewhere in Balivanich. Sheena Stewart disclosed that there are five or six groups interested in moving into the office. Discussions are currently ongoing about the feasibility to build at East Camp but there is a significant flood risk there.

7. Road Gritting

FB phoned the Comhairle but no-one has responded to her. She will chase this up. Cllr. Uisdean Robertson advised that the Comhairle operate on a priority system with regards to gritting. They operate to policy, not budget. He disclosed that the gritting budget is 3-4 million overspent.

8. Salt Bins & dog fouling

RM advised that the salt bins have arrived and are currently stored at Market Stance. She will measure them up for stickers. Alasdair MacEachen has moved the bins to a safe location in Market Stance. He advised it would be best to have them dispersed throughout the community now so that they are in place whenever they are required. RM will contact the other community councils with regards to this.

9. Air traffic control – Benbecula Airport

Cllr. Uisdean Robertson informed BCC that the Comhairle's press release into the HIAL Community Impact study had been very hard hitting. It is very frustrating to remain in this position after two years. The damage HIAL's proposals will do to our community is extremely serious. RM advised that the second petition by The Uist Economic Taskforce petition has been submitted but has been paused until after the May elections. It asks for Island representation is on the board of HIAL and similar Government owned corporations. There is no-one with ATC experience currently on the board.

10. Police Update

PC Elizabeth MacKay provided an update via email. She informed that between 1st-28th February, there were 24 calls in the Benbecula area. 13 calls for advice, 1 call for muirburning, 2 road accidents, 4 calls from vulnerable people, 3 noise complaints and 1 other road traffic. She disclosed that there had been numerous high value frauds reported in North Uist recently and that Police are advising people not to give out any details, especially bank details.

11. Councillors update

Cllr. Uisdean Robertson advised that the focus of councillors had been the budget settlement. He advised that he, Cllr. Roddy MacKay, Cllr. Iain MacNeil, Cllr. Iain MacLeod and Cllr. Paul Steel met with the Chief Executive and the Director of Finance and successfully argued the case to retain the Benbecula/Stornoway flight and to maintain a Comhairle presence in the Balivanich Office. Amendments have been made

on roads infrastructure and Councillors have proposed to use an underspend on resurfacing roads. Improvement at Baleshare causeway are being discussed. Protection of local slaughter houses is also of vital importance. The Councillors have received abuse with regards to the removal of the dental chair in Lochboisdale however, as Cllr. Roddy MacKay points out, this decision sits with the NHS and IJB, not them.

With regards to Lochmaddy Pier Works, Cllr. Uisdean Robertson advised that the enablement contract was awarded recently and the other work is out to tender. Work will hopefully commence in September.

12. Correspondence & social media

AM informed that two people had recently been in touch with a view to joining BCC. Both were invited to the meeting but it was too short notice for them to attend. A local person has been in touch with regards to the Secretary post. AM to contact her to discuss and invite her to the next meeting.

13. AOCB

FB recently visiting the Co-op to discuss the disabled parking area. Staff weren't aware that they need to apply for proper disabled parking. The Area Manager is visiting soon so staff will discuss with him then. Staff will only be able to call the police once the spaces are enforcement spaces.

14. Date of next meeting

The next meeting will take place at 5:30pm on Monday 12th April via TEAMS.