**Black Isle Partnership (BIP) – Black Isle Communities Meeting**

**Zoom Meeting 1000 1 June 2021**

**Present:** Cllr. Gordon Adam (GA) (host, Highland Councillor and BIP), Jon Palmer (Minute taker and BIP), Becky Richmond (Black Isle Tourism Team), Neil Cameron (Resolis CC), Nigel Shapcott (Cromarty Development Trust), Cllr. Jennifer Barclay (Highland Councillor), Cllr. Craig Fraser (Highland Councillor), Peter Ratcliffe (Cromarty CC), Helena Macleod (Kessock Kindness and Residents Association of North Kessock), Vanessa Halhead (BIP), Anne Mackay (Killearnan CC), Alison Petch (Culbokie Community Trust), Megan Mackenzie (Black Isle Cares), Jenye Monkton (Black Isle Cares), Sylvia Bertram (Knockbain CC), Sinclair Browne (BIP), Sheila Currie (TBI).

**Introductions**

Gordon Adam introduced Sinclair Browne as a new director of BIP and he was welcomed to the meeting.

**Minutes of the last meeting held 18 May 2021:** The minutes were accepted as a true record of the meeting. Proposed JP, seconded HM

**Agenda 1. Update on Munlochy Junction consultations**

Richard Gerring from Highland Council has formulated an emergency action plan based on a 50mph speed limit at the junction with B9161. This has been circulated amongst the CC’s and meets with general approval. It will form the basis of a demand for immediate action at the upcoming consultation meetings.

So far, the police have taken a neutral stance on any proposals.

Craig Fraser re-iterated the need for time-limited action. It is now 11 years since concerns were first raised and suggestions of short-term solutions being a further 3-7 years was not acceptable.

Anne Mackay stated that issues with Tore roundabout, and a demand for immediate action, were now the sole focus of Killearnan CC.

**Agenda 2. Update on HIE Wellbeing Funding**

Jon Palmer reported that a good proportion of the original grant had now been allocated for legitimate expenses towards establishing a Black Isle Befriending scheme. This has been co-ordinated by Black Isle Cares and he thanked Megan Mackenzie and the board for their efforts in enabling this to happen.

Megan Mackenzie indicated BIC were hopeful to launch the scheme in the next couple of weeks, with the support of Highlands Helping Hands.

**Agenda 3. Tourism Issues**

An additional item for discussion was prompted by reports of major problems at Chanonry Point over the previous weekend. Sarah Macdonald-Taylor had e-mailed to say that Sunday saw chaos caused by a log-jam of vehicles waiting to gain access to a full car park, with no facility for turning on the singletrack road through the golf course.

**Gordon Adam expressed his intention to hold an urgent meeting with Shane Manning (THC) about the electronic signage promised for the top of Ness Road warning of when the car park was full.**

Becky Richmond expressed frustration with THC not responding to any of her requests for support from Planning in regard to the funding application to Nature Scot. This was particularly infuriating because the fund, if successful, would actually be saving THC expenditure. All she was asking for was permissions to the additional signage properly sited. A decision from Nature Scot should be known mid-June, at which point, if successful, it is hoped THC will be more co-operative.

It was also noted that on Sunday 30th May the Police were alerted to the traffic problems at Chanonry at 11.00am arriving at the scene at around 2.00pm.

It was further noted that the new Ranger was not present at the weekend. Jennifer Barclay stated that he had been in the area on Wednesday of the previous week (when the weather was poor and there were few visitors). She also referenced a driver who had not paid a parking fee and was subsequently surprised to learn that the money raised from parking directly benefited the community. This information could be made more prominent.

Sarah Macdonald-Taylor had also highlighted that visitors were generally unhappy about the lack of information available. Becky Richmond added that it would be difficult to persuade volunteers to become ambassadors (and support the work of the ranger) if there were concerns about harassment and verbal abuse. A lot of this could be alleviated by having clear and visible information that volunteers were able to refer people to. As a bare minimum it would be appreciated keep BITT and others informed of the planning process.

Anne Mackay informed the meeting of the impact on a resident who stays at the lighthouse property. Because of the blocked road she was unable to use her car to get to her engagement playing the organ at a local church. Instead, she had had to request a friend to meet her at the top of Ness Road and provide a lift. This resident also referenced multiple occasions when visitors abused the use of her private garden for public access, and worse.

**Gordon Adam agreed to address these issues with both Phil Waite and the new Ranger designated for the area.**

The discussion broadened to cover other general points:

Sylvia Bertram said that on a trip to the West Coast at the start of May many of the car parks there were already full during the day.

Vanessa Halhead made a strong plea that whilst tourism was important for the local economy, communities should not be beholden to it or adversely affected by it. She blamed promotion of the Highlands without adequate consideration of the impacts.

Gordon Adam responded that Highland Council was not responsible for promoting tourism. That rested with Visit Scotland and others. Highland Council was left to deal with the problems it caused – additional waste, road maintenance and traffic issues etc.

Jenye Monckton suggested that individual residents could alleviate some of the issues caused by campervans by offering overnight parking places on private land, driveways etc. if so desired. She also wished it to be noted that not all the ‘problems’ were necessarily the fault of visitors. Some anti-social behaviour, such as littering, inconsiderate driving etc. was in equal measure the fault of locals.

Gordon Adam advised against setting up unofficial overnight parking in driveways etc. and suggested that Colin Simpson at THC would support approaches from individuals wishing to offer land for such use. The necessary protocols could be accomplished within a matter of days.

Nigel Shapcott wanted to know where the guidance was on these matters. It was difficult to find on the Highland Council website. **Craig Fraser agreed and suggested it should be on the homepage. He agreed to follow this up.**

Sheila Currie wanted to know what could be done to prevent random overnight parking in inappropriate places. Could Community Councils or BITT produce a friendly-worded leaflet to be placed on windscreens? Was there a role for the Ranger in supporting this activity – a diplomatic conversation with the vehicle owners alerting them to the actual laws relating to wild camping?

Jenye Monckton asked that any leaflet should aim to be positive and not authoritarian – providing practical advice as to where people could ‘camp’ and where there were appropriate facilities.

Vanessa Halhead asked to have a discussion about a tourist tax but Gordon Adam said it was a big topic for which there wasn’t time in this meeting.

**Agenda 4. Nature Scot Green Health Fund Application**

Becky Richmond and Helena Macleod had met to discuss the potential of a weekend in July/August to promote outdoor health activities. To have a community focus but open to visitors too. A wide range of options: showcasing what is available on the Black Isle – everything from the tri-shaws, rowing clubs, paddle-boarding etc., a trail of less obvious attractions, opportunities for those currently not engaging, focus on more vulnerable residents, passive as well as active offerings, breaks for unpaid carers. Outcomes could include a directory of everything available, a calendar of events, toilet mapping and sitting places. Becky and Helena asked for feedback to help shape a final application.

Jon Palmer suggested a tight focus with a single objective rather than trying to do too much. Thought the aim of appealing to those least engaged with small, achievable activities was the appropriate focus. Highlighting some less obvious ‘healthy’ events.

Anne Mackay hoped it could build a network of small groups/events and avoid the more ‘commercialised’ activities.

Alison Petch agreed with the focus on the least engaged. An opportunity to provide support for home carers by providing respite.

Sylvia Bertram agreed but commented that unpaid carers often simply wanted a rest and to have time off. Too exhausted to get involved with an activity.

Gordon Adam asked what would be helpful from the group to advance the application.

**Becky Richmond explained that she and Helena planned to have a further meeting to pull the ideas together and would then circulate a draft proposal.**

**Agenda 5. News from the Communities**

Knockbain. Request to THC for recycling facilities in Munlochy. A reminder to Councillors to push for 20mph limits in the villages.

North Kessock. HTSI have agreed to facilitate mediation sessions to alleviate tensions/differences between a number of community groups. Helena Macleod asked Gordon Adam if, as a resident, he could also be involved.

Cromarty. Impact of tourism and litter the main concerns for CC. Cromarty Care Project report continued use of the larder and six families receiving regular home deliveries. Aim to do a soft launch of the tri-shaws soon. CCDT continue to have problems with Planning re. the campervan site. The latest directive has reverted the plan back to the original proposal, so a lot of time and effort wasted. Gordon Adam suggested pressing ahead with temporary measures to avoid delay.

There have similarly been issues of disagreements aired on Facebook groups and CCDT was prompted to produce a public statement detailing facts in order to correct misunderstandings. The ferry started operations today.

Black Isle Cares. Have now regained access to use of offices in the Leisure Centre. The larder is seeing increased demand for produce.

Culbokie. Proposals for the village green are now with Planning.

Resolis. A dispute about ownership of land adjacent to the village hall has arisen and is being dealt with. Incidents of speeding reported at Balblair/New Hall.

Transition Black Isle. Sheila Currie suggested considering some form of community ambassador scheme to tackle conflicts. Aware especially with the number of new developments (e.g. North Kessock/Charleston, Fortrose) that new residents might not be formally welcomed or particularly supported to feel part of the community. Accepting that this has been harder through the pandemic.

Killearnan. As previously stated, implementing immediate action on the A9 is the number one priority of the CC.

General. Sinclair Browne said that he’d found the meeting very informative and provided a better understanding of the scope of BIP.

Vanessa Halhead re-iterated that Localism was the big Government agenda and that we should take full advantage of this.

Jon Palmer expressed concern for the reports of local conflicts and suggested this had to be, in part, exacerbated by 15 months of the pandemic. The lack of physical meetings and direct contact with others was taking its toll.

Becky Richmond agreed and suggested promoting community walks. In response to Sheila’s point, it could be a way to welcome newcomers with a ‘Get to know your village’ theme.

Sylvia Bertram added that a recent Place Standards survey revealed that ‘knowing your area’ was one of the top responses.

Jennifer Barclay reported that she was dealing with issues about the width of the new pavement by the Care Home. Currently it was not adequate for use by wheelchair users and families with buggies.

The Meeting ended at 11.30. It was proposed to hold a further meeting on June 8.