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

**Zoom Meeting 1000 20 July 2021**

**Present:** Cllr**.** Gordon Adam (Highland Council and BIP),Jon Palmer (BIP), Julian Paren (Minute taker and BIP), Helena Macleod (Kessock Kindness and Residents Association of North Kessock), Ann Jefferson (Fortrose and Rosemarkie Community Council), Ann Mackay (Killearnan Community Council), Anne Phillips (Fortrose and Rosemarkie Community Council), Peter Ratcliife (Cromarty Community Council), Helen Charley (Rosemarkie and Fortrose Trust), Vanessa Halhead (BIP), Sarah Macdonald-Taylor (Avoch and Killen Community Council)

**Welcome:**

Gordon Adam welcomed all to the meeting and thanked Becky Richmond and Helena Macleod for all their work in creating the Think Health – Think Nature Festival carried out since the last full Black Isle Communities Meeting.

**Agenda 1: Minutes of the BIP Black Isle Communities Meeting on 29 June 2021**

Julian Paren reported that he had taken notes, but the meeting had only discussed technical details of the Think Health - Think Nature Summer Festival. It had been agreed that official minutes were not required. The Minutes of the meeting on 22 June 2021 were accepted at the 29 June Meeting after one correction.

**Agenda 2: The Black Isle Festival funded by Think Health - Think Nature**

Helena Macleod reported that all the Village and Unpaid Carers posters were distributed, and were now available through the home page of [www.black-isle.info](http://www.black-isle.info).

All activities needed to be risk assessed and this aspect would be covered in the Health Walk Leaders training scheduled for Friday 0930 to 1300.

**Action: All 12 who volunteered to be Health Walk Leaders should attend training on Friday 23 July**

The advice from Highlife Highland was a basic understanding of risk would be sufficient. Sarah M-T mentioned that there were three necessary aspects to the Risk Assessment: Covid related risks; Food handling related risks; and risks specific to the activity being undertaken. How you mitigate the risks (such as using disposable plates and cutlery) is then documented in the Risk Assessment. Vanessa Halhead was nervous about risk-assessing the Resolis walk, in case she got it wrong. Becky Richmond offered to walk the Resolis walk with Vanessa to assist the process.

**Action: Vanessa to ask Becky to accompany her on a Resolis Walk if required.**

Helena Macleod reported that 12 Health Walk Leaders had come forward, including four in North Kessock. The Cromarty walk leaders (Nigel Shapcott and Jon Palmer) did not want to be trained because of the implications for future expectations.

The meeting discussed the question of further publicity for the event. No village wanted to be overwhelmed, so it was thought appropriate to send a Press Release to Susy Macaulay at the Press and Journal and Hector Mackenzie at Highland News (that includes the Ross-shire Journal) but not to contact MFR or the BBC. Louise Glen had already interviewed Helena Macleod.

**Action: ALL A Press Release to be written for the local newspapers.**

Ann Jefferson explained that a visit by a Disabled Group to Chanonry Point could not go ahead because of a number of logistical problems, not least because wheel chairs needed a firm surface to access the point. An indoor event had been considered an alternative with Charlie Phillips giving a talk. The decision had been made to organise an event later at Fort George where there were reliable surfaces for manoeuvring disabled wheel chairs and buggies.

Helen Charley offered her garden for any event in Rosemarkie that might be looking for such a space.

The question was raised whether District Nurses or church congregations had been approached for information on those who would best benefit from the Festival, but whom otherwise would not get to hear about it.

**Action: ALL Contact church groups and District Nurses**

**Agenda 3: Activities of the Black Isle Tourism Team**

Becky Richmond said there had been a wide distribution of Visitor Maps and the Visitor Pledge, and she was pleased some people had already left feedback on the Visitor Pledge on–line.

Becky reported on a recent meeting of the Chanonry Point Advisory Group (Becky Richmond, Sarah Macdonald-Taylor, Rose Grant, Ann Jefferson, Anne Philips, Charlie Phillips, and a wheelchair user, Deborah Fluke) with two Rangers, Tim Francis and Rachel XXXX attending. Stewart Eastaugh (Highland Council Access Officer for Inverness and Nairn) had become involved while Phil Waite was unavailable.

Stewart Easthaugh had agreed the newly gravelled surface to Chanonry Point was unsuitable and it was expected that Tim and Rachel would be involved in replacing it with a surface that could take prams/wheelchairs etc.

The Rangers had stated that it was totally inappropriate and irresponsible to ask volunteers to operate the Car Park Full switch when an advance warning system came into operation. The Rangers had a large stock of an Access Code leaflet explaining clearly where there was no “right to roam” and a QR code for further information on people’s rights and responsibilities. Becky noted that a “No Drone” sign at Chanonry Point was removed within a day.

Becky said that she had circulated widely her letter to MSPs, Highland Council and Community Councils on the ongoing impasse at Chanonry Point, where all progress on traffic management seemed to have stalled. She had had one reply from Tracey Urrey, Head of Roads and Transport in Highland Council, reiterating all the team was involved with, and recommending that Becky contact Police Scotland and the Coastguard. Becky would reply to that letter. Becky reminded all that the Inner Moray Firth was a Special Area of Conservation and through government agencies protection of the wildlife was its prime focus. The Inverness Courier was mentioning the situation.

Sarah M-T said wildlife crime was occurring multiple times each day. Police Scotland had become involved after two incidents had been spotted in three hours. Kayakers and windsurfers were involved with dolphins being chased for 90 minutes. Sarah M-T said that the campsites and marinas were being informed about the wildlife crime, and she asked them to promote the NatureScot guidelines and Codes of Conduct. She reminded all that the dolphins would give birth within the next six weeks, so it was a crucial time to stop habitual offenders. She felt let down by the Scottish Government and NatureScot .

**Agenda 4: Improving communication between community groups, community councils and The Highland Council. Discussion**

**Chanonry Point was the prime issue discussed.** It was clear the public needed to be better educated in their attitudes to the residents of Chanonry Point - by not trespassing or disturbing the wildlife by water sports activities.

Becky Richmond reported that Tim Francis, one of the Black Isle Rangers, said that the solution by Highland Council to have volunteers at Chanonry Point acting as car park marshals operating electrical Advance Warning signage was not viable. He said that Chanonry Point needed better management with a full-time Ranger. Becky confirmed that there were once 50 Shore Watch volunteers taking turns at being at the Point, but because of stress with parking and visitors, only two were now active.

Gordon Adam thanked Becky for this intelligence and said he would take up with Highland Council the need to reallocate Ranger resources. Becky said that the rangers were collecting data each day, and they would analyse these in the winter, hopefully so that next year was not spent “firefighting”.

Jon Palmer thanked Becky, Sarah and team for all the voluntary work they had done.

**Black Isle Area Committee**

Gordon Adam said that a new Highland Council Committee, the Black Isle Committee, would meet for the first time on August 5. The date and time of the meeting would be announced on the Highland Council website. The Meeting (as all official meetings of Highland Council members) would be streamed for on-line viewing in real time. Jon Palmer said he had been invited to provide a talk that he would base on his presentation to the Black Isle Partnership AGM, and emphasise the “bottom up” approach to local democracy. Gordon Adam said the meeting would be an opportunity to discuss how the Area Committee would function.

Ann Jefferson asked how in practical terms the new committee would improve dialogue with Highland Council. From her perspective, it just took one Ranger to make a comment about problems at Chanonry Point for an issue to be taken seriously, while the Community Council had been trying to press for improvements, but were ignored. She thought this showed Highland Council’s disregard for local democracy. She wondered how a new Black Isle Committee could change this relationship.

She mentioned the plans to build a new Co-op next to the Care Home as an example of a lack of consultation with Community Councils. It became apparent that Planning Application Notices for the Black Isle were received by some Community Councils, but not all.

**Agenda 5: Update from the communities – with an emphasis on how you are dealing with tourism pressures**

**Killearnan**: Ann noted that Susan Cord would be one of the leaders of the Milton of Redcastle Walk for the Black Isle Festival weekend. She also noted that Kilearnan CC was very concerned with their relationship with Highland Council, and that they were having an Emergency Meeting on Wednesday to express how they felt let down and ignored.

**Fortrose:** Anne Philips said more people were camping under the trees and on the sand in Rosemarkie Bay. The trees were in a dangerous state. Mostly folk just camped overnight, but some were staying longer. She wished to discourage such activities.

**Cromarty:** Peter Ratcliffe (Cromarty CC) said the only problem worth mentioning was a failure in bin emptying.

**Rosemarkie and Fortrose Trust:** Helen Charley announced that the Fortrose toilets were now open so both Fortrose and Rosemarkie had functioning toilets. Donations of £150 a week were coming in. She regretted that the renovations of the toilets had not been done to a higher standard.

**Avoch and Killen:** Sarah M-T reported that, as in Cromarty, bin emptying had been erratic. Once-used Pizza cartons were a problem in both communities. Sarah mentioned a beach clean sponsored by Eden Court as a contribution to CoP 26 and this would occur on 12 September.

**Munlochy area**: Julian Paren had discussed a number of issues about Think Health – Think Nature with John Stott who had agreed to publicise the event. Julian noted that he too had problems with Highland Council, as a crucial confirmation of what route Highland Council could maintain between Avoch and Munlochy had yet to be received. Sarah M-T asked to see the correspondence.

**Action: Julian Paren to send Sarah M-T the background to his letter to Highland Counci**l.

**Resolis area:** Vanessa Halhead mentioned the deterioration of the road surfaces recently. She was advised to log complaints through the Pot Holes section of the Highland Council website.

The meeting ended at 1142 with an agreement to meet again on Tuesday 27 July at 1000.