

Black Isle Partnership (BIP)

Zoom Meeting 1000 27 April 2021

Present: Gordon Adam (GA) (host, Highland Councillor and BIP), Julian Paren (Minute taker and BIP), Penny Edwards (Culbokie Community Trust), Becky Richmond (Black Isle Tourism Team), Neil Cameron (Resolis CC), Anne Phillips (Rosemarkie and Fortrose CC and Rosemarkie Amenities Association), Jon Palmer (Chair BIP), Nigel Shapcott (Cromarty Development Trust), Katrina Taylor (Highland Council Waste Management Team), Jennifer Barclay (Highland Councillor), Peter Ratcliffe (Cromarty CC), Kevin Wickham (Waste Operations Manager for Highland North), Andrew Mackay (Treasurer Killearnan CC deputising for Ann Mackay), Helena Macleod (Kessock Kindness and Residents Association of North Kessock), Helen Robinson (Rosemarkie and Fortrose Trust), Diane Agnew (Ward Manager, Highland Council), Vanessa Halhead (BIP).

Announcement: Jon Palmer informed the meeting that BIP had identified money that could be allocated to fund a Minute Taker for future meetings. He asked those present if they could suggest a potential applicant. This action would put the meetings on par with CC Meetings where a funded Minute taker was available.

ACTION ALL. Find a Minute Taker.

ACTION Nigel Shapcott – talk to new Minute Keeper of Cromarty Community Council

Agenda 1. Litter and Waste (Katrina Taylor, KT; HC and Kevin Wickham, KW;HC, Waste Operations Manager for Highland North)

Katrina Taylor

KT informed that HC had created extra staff, and litterbins would be emptied weekly. Extra bins would be provided where a need was identified. HC was waiting to see how busy the summer would be before committing even further resources.

GA asked for the plans for dealing with dog mess and whether community help was required. KT responded that most requests came from areas of housing. HC was trying to phase out red dog poo bins in favour of more general litter bins which were more cost effective to deal with. HC was not in favour of bins in areas of housing as the message should be to take waste home. Education was key.

KT happy to look at any requests for bins. She noted that there were 8 in North Kessock already so there was a case for reallocating their positions rather than introduce further bins.

KT said it was HC policy to maintain bin size at 40 litres and to increase servicing of them rather than to invest in larger bins that increased their use by inappropriate fly-tipping.

KT said HC planned to roll out later a web-based reporting tool on the HS website to ensure HC was informed of litter problems in a timely and speedy manner.

ACTION ALL: Dialogue with Katrina Taylor over all aspects of waste management on the Black Isle.

Kevin Wickham

KW said that more money had been allocated to litter, and there were now five extra litter lorries doing three “bin sweeps” a week in Highland but focussed on the West Coast. He said that if there was demand and a request was made he could consider increasing the service at weekends in the Black Isle.

KW mentioned the new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system that would be based around the What Three Words app for pinpointing locations (to within three metres). He urged all interested to download the app to mobile phones. The CRM would use one portal on the HC website to log complaints and could be available by mid-May. By using the portal there should be less likelihood of complaints/reporting being lost than was the case with e-mails or telephone contact, which were prone to being overwhelmed or neglected.

KW mentioned the Management Groups that were being set up across the Highlands. These groups included additional traffic wardens/rangers and representatives from the Forestry, Community Health, Environmental Health, and Visitor Management Groups etc.

KW asked for feedback from the Black Isle during the summer as all expected that Staycations would create demand higher than in previous years. Feedback on how close the area was to saturation and where the remaining capacity was located would be useful information for his team.

ACTION Inform KW or KT at HC of where focus is needed at the time it becomes apparent.

Becky Richmond (BR; BITT) was heartened by KW’s report. She requested that BITT should have a focused meeting with KW in view of BITT’s bid for waste-related funding from NatureScot. KW agreed to attend a fact-finding meeting with BITT after May 12.

ACTION BITT arrange meeting with KW after May 12

Jon Palmer (JP) mentioned the BITT “Venture Safely” campaign asking that the banners in each community be checked and if necessary tightened up. He pointed out that a key line was “Respect Local Needs” which tied in with taking litter home. Also the new BITT pledge leaflet had a specific tick for agreeing that you had not left litter.

KW drew attention to blue bins in rural areas and particularly to the Biosphere designated region in Wester Ross. Here visitors were filling blue bins with items that could not be recycled from Highland, and the presence of such items attracted a surcharge at the recycling depot. PE suggested that the bins should carry a label saying what materials were appropriate for recycling, but KW said that fixing labels could not be carried out before NEXT YEAR.

Agenda 2. Covid-19 Report

GA briefly reported a success in Highland in keeping CoVid infection rates low. The figure was less than 10 per 100,000 – less than a third of the average for Scotland. Worrying though was a great increase in the number of people applying for Universal Credit. 542 folk now compared to 287 a year ago. GA surmised that a lot of people were struggling.

Agenda 3. Wellbeing Project

JP said that with extraordinarily short notice BIP had received funding for a wellbeing project to be completed by the end of May 2021. This had proved to be a challenge if the project was delivered in the form it was originally conceived. So a new way had to be found to provide a lasting benefit for the Black Isle with limited money for spending in a very short period. JP had thought through the possibility of arranging a Wellbeing Week for the end of May and invited the Key Stakeholders that delivered care on the Black Isle to consider its feasibility. The meeting endorsed the concept and a steering group including Black Isle Cares, Cromarty Care, Fortrose Academy, Cromarty Youth Café, James Support Group, and Kessock Kindness is now involved. Other interested groups are welcome to join.

The result so far is this plan for a Wellbeing Week:



The week contained virtual sessions during three days in the week, and a series of virtual evening meetings run by the organisations themselves probably podcasts from mobile phones at their usual locations. Gillian Newman was involved with the focus on the young. Helena Macleod was taking the lead on the Wednesday sessions and Friday sessions were focused on ourselves. The technical side of the week would be helped from Matt Hall of farnorth.scot.

JP believed the programme could be pulled off. It needed the compliance of HIE to allow the Wellbeing funding to be used for a Conference, rather than other wellbeing sessions between now and the end of May.

ACTION: JP to broach HIE with Gordon Adam after further deliberations for cange of wellbeing project objectives.

In brief: JP said the outcome of the week should be the development of a wellbeing support network on the Black Isle that would be part of a wider network. He saw the group meeting regularly in the same way as the Larders Network or the Black Isle Tourism Team.

Helena Macleod said that together with Megan Urquhart at Highland Hospice Helping Hands they wanted to put weight behind Black Isle Cares for a befriending service and there would be a case for funding for activities right across the Black Isle.

JP said that a potential outcome of the project would be a Directory of all the organisations involved in wellbeing. Jon showed a skeleton spreadsheet that he proposed to send to all the Tuesday community groups for adding to, and ultimately the project would ensure all data that could possibly be gathered were complete. VH asked what the data protection issues were in generating the Directory but GA dismissed the concerns by analogy to others.

ACTION: JP to circulate the skeleton of a Black Isle Wellbeing Directory for local communities to update and complete.

VH asked whether HIE funds could be used to pay a person to prepare all the material for the Conference and write it up. JP said that Matt Hall would provide some technical support for a fee and he would approach HIE with a fully-costed proposal for other help. He was as yet uncertain who might lead the Friday session to ensure there was a tangible Way Forward. GA suggested JP approach Di Agnew and the Community Partnership for advice here.

Helena Macleod asked how HIE might be persuaded for BIP to keep the allocated funding but roll out a different Wellbeing Project. JP responded that he would say this was the best use of the funding but he would do more on it before approaching HIE for the green light.

Nigel Shapcott argued that if money was available and a suitable person emerged who could advance the planning process, this was the best solution as the wear and tear on BIP and other volunteers in arriving at the current position should not be underestimated. The point was accepted.

JP thanked all for their input to the discussion.

Agenda 4. Tourism Preparations

GA said he expected to be able to announce soon new arrangements from HC on the impact of increasing visitor numbers at Rosemarkie and Chanonry Point. Under discussion were additional parking spaces and CCTV at Chanonry Point, and a one-way road layout at Rosemarkie for the front along Marine Terrace from Mill Road to Hawkhill Road. An announcement was likely soon.

Agenda 5. News around the communities

Penny Edwards (Culbokie) reported some minor vandalism and bad behaviour around the sharing shed. Craig Fraser had suggested involving the police, but as this was the first occurrence it was decided to keep investigations very local. PE also mentioned a £10k grant from the Coastal Communities Fund, but did not elaborate.

Helen Macleod (RANK) said that the community groups in North Kessock (NKTOP, RANK etc) would be meeting in “openness and transparency” to reduce tensions between them. She thought a “silo mentality” in North Kessock needed reversing.

Helen Charley (Rosemarkie Development Trust) lamented the failure so far to open the Fortrose and Rosemarkie toilets. The renovation had found traces of asbestos and the contractors did not seem to be in a rush to complete the job. The good news was that the disabled toilet refurbishment was complete in Fortrose.

Nigel Shapcott (NS; Cromarty Development Trust) had been in contact with Becky Richmond (BITT) about the Highland Council Comfort Scheme and its possible further development with NatureScot money. Currently HC will only pay for a limited seasonal opening which is not attractive to the suppliers. GA thought it worth talking again to Highland Council with a united BITT/CDT argument.

Peter Ratcliff (Cromarty CC) felt he had nothing further to add from Cromarty.

Andrew Mackay (AM; Killearnan CC) was deputising for his mother Anne Mackay who was unwell. All wished Anne a speedy recovery and to have thanks passed to her for all her interactions at the Tuesday calls. AM reported that as Killearnan is very spread out, it was rare to hear concerns from the most isolated folk. But around the A9 there were concerns with rubbish thrown from car windows, fly-tipping and illegal overnight stops and litter deposited in lay-bys.

Vanessa Halhead (VH;BIP) wished to focus on the more rural communities on the Black Isle and said that the Resolis area shared this aspect too with Killearnan. Helena Macleod (HM;KK) agreed that the evidence was that both poverty and wellbeing were at their extremes in such areas and required more attention than hitherto.

Jennifer Barclay (JB; HC) noted that illegal parking on Ness Road had been reported to the police and that the bins at Chanonry Point were already full by Saturday night. She did not know what the situation would be after the weekend or when the bins were due for emptying.

Helena Macleod (HM; RANK) noted that there were rough sleepers at North Kessock and she wondered if they had been attracted there by the Community Larder. With larders freely available she wondered if the rough sleepers were now able to leave the towns with less concern than previously.

Agenda 6. AOB

GA proposed that there be a meeting next Tuesday, and without dissent the proposition was accepted.

The meeting ended at 1122.