



www.staffin-trust.co.uk

STAFFIN COMMUNITY TRUST MEETING MINUTES

SCT office

Tuesday, September 29, 2015

7.30pm

- 1. APOLOGIES:** Sine Gillespie, Ian MacDonald and Gordon Higgins. **Present:** SCT directors Donald MacDonald, Angus Ross, Dugald Ross, Sandy Ogilvie and Roddy Gillies; SCT member Martin Farquhar; local development officer Hugh Ross.
- 2. MINUTES:** DR approved the August minutes, which was seconded by SO.
- 3. MATTERS ARISING:** HR said he had not included the Slipway or Lealt Quarry as agenda items because there was little to update on either. He said that he had requested information from community organisations in South Uist and Gigha about their respective quarry operations.

SO asked if the board would be comfortable with him asking the Wallace Stone marine engineer John Porteous about the depth of water, tides and access to the pontoons for vessels at the Slipway.

There was a brief discussion about the quarry: DMcD said the SCT minutes from August, including IMcD's comments, had reiterated the huge potential it had. DMcD raised concerns about potential security at the site should SCT take it over. RG and DR said it could be securely gated, with SCT's contact details and only HGVs could take away significant material.

On the subject of rock, DR said he understood that Scottish Water had left material for the use of the community at its new treatment works in Sartle. DR said he thought it would have been suitable for the repair of the Brogaig Ceumannan path but RG said he believed it had all gone now.

- 4. ACCOUNTS & LDO PENSION:** AR presented the SCT Accounts for 2014/15 and said there was a loss over the last 12 months. He said that was not surprising as the outgoings were more than SCT income. He said it was an issue to bear in mind because eventually SCT would run out of money.
DMcD asked HR to change SCT's registered office from his home to the SCT office.
 - **Action Point - HR to ask Donald Rankin's office to do this via Companies House.**

Local Development Officer Pension – By law, SCT required its LDO to be enrolled in a pension scheme. HR and AR had discussed it and proposed SCT enter into the pension scheme offered by the Development Trusts Association Scotland (DTAS), of which SCT has become a

member. HR said DTAS's pension provider would do all the administration and asked if the SCT board was content with the proposal. There was unanimous agreement.

- **Action Point – HR and AR to enrol SCT LDO post in DTAS pension. DMcD added that the scheme was more of a saving scheme than a pension for the LDO and he or she should make provision for themselves as the amount was minimal.**

5. **STORR:** HR said the latest electronic counter figures supplied by Highland Council showed that 121,000 visitors had walked the Storr up to September 10 (91,500 last year). He had visited Spittal of Glenmuick, the visitor site in Cairngorms, in August, and which had taken in significant parking income from similar numbers. There are still three months of 2015 to go at the Storr so the number could be higher.

HR had carried out 41 surveys at the Storr on September 11 as part of the consultation required and none of the visitors objected to car parking charges, with £2/£3 seen as the fairest proposed charge. The feedback was that there was a lack of information about what Staffin offers like other visitor sites, shops, places to eat, public toilets, bus timetables etc. They were grateful to receive the Ceumannan leaflets HR had handed out and the majority were first time visitors, a lot were travelling by bus.

Next week HR was going on a second research trip with Highland Council officials to Lochaber, Perthshire and Loch Lomond to investigate car parking/toilet sets-ups at other popular visitor sites. DMcD had offered to help HR with the business plan for the Storr and hoped to start populating that with content soon. HR said strong advice from HIE and Community Ownership Support Service was that SCT had to carry out a comprehensive public consultation with the community about its Storr proposals, through a confidential questionnaire which had to be delivered to every house in Staffin. RG offered to help HR delivering them.

- **Action Point – HR to share report on visitor surveys with SCT board, HIE and COSS.**
 - **HR to present draft questionnaire and consultation plan to next SCT meeting**
- 27.10.15**

RG asked how parking fees could be enforced at the lay-by and DMcD said the proposal was that a new main car would be built at the timber stacking area and buses would then park on verge. SCT was now only interested in the bottom half of the site, as the recently-planted native woodland could have incurred maintenance costs.

6. **HOUSING:** HR outlined the lobbying re the preferred Stenscholl site carried out on behalf of SCT by Ronnie MacRae of the Highlands Small Communities Housing Trust and Lorne MacLeod of Community Land Scotland. HR had spoken to Staffin's MSP Dave Thompson after he met him at the SP's Rural Affairs Committee hearing in Portree earlier in month. HR had then spoken to Ronnie who asked if SCT were prepared to purchase some of the land and homes as part of the funding model. Ronnie thought there needed to be an element of community ownership and had e-mailed HR with a summary of a potential funding model for 6-8 houses with SCT owning land and houses, which could be managed by the Lochalsh and Skye Housing Association. That could be a regular income for SCT which could also set its own housing allocations policy. HR passed out that summary for the SCT directors to read and asked them if it should pursue owning land and houses at Stenscholl, with a grant of up to 95 per cent available from the Scottish Land Fund.

DMcD said he thought that SCT should proceed. There was unanimous agreement from the SCT directors.

AR asked what was the Stenscholl township's view and HR said he intended speaking to the clerk Stewart Clark this week, and he was mindful that their AGM was coming up. AR said if

Staffin Community Council submitted a planning application on behalf of SCT there could be a 50% discount. HR said six, possibly seven of the community councillors, may step down next month ahead of the elections and he was concerned it may go into abeyance, unless there was a flood of people coming forward and wishing to stand.

- **Action Points – HR to inform HSCHT and L&S Housing Association that SCT wishes to proceed with the Stenscholl development and purchase land/construct houses.**
- **HR to speak to Stewart Clark to discuss the land required by SCT.**

7. CEUMANNAN II: HR said that the Heritage Lottery Fund had granted an extension for the previous November date so that the funding application for the footpath, bridge and viewing platform could now be submitted in June 2016.

He said the Ceumannan II sub-group had met earlier this month to discuss the project and HR handed out a summary of the consultation process with all the different townships for the SCT directors to digest. HR said the extension was welcome but there was still a lot of work to do and at the next sub-group meeting in mid-October he hoped to start allocating tasks to each of the members. DMcD said it was worth remembering that Highland Council had granted SCT about £21,000 in the last Ceumannan project which had been hugely helpful. He added that Donald Kennedy, the council access officer, had recently hailed Ceumannan as the best example of an outdoor healthy living project in Skye.

On the Loch Shianta – Glasphein walk DMcD said it was important to recognise in the interpretation the huge amount of history in that area, including the diatomite industry and the influence of Thomas Telford with the shipwrecked vessel nearby. He thought Telford's links with Staffin, which also included the Church of Scotland and old stone bridge over Kilmartin River, should be celebrated more.

DMcD also said SCT had to be aware of potential safety implications around the viewing platform and that it could be vulnerable to abuse. SO agreed and said it could be the kind of thing that attracts the climbing community, especially as it would be close to water.

- **Action Point – Ceumannan II sub-group to meet mid-October after paths consultation completed by HR.**

8. ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION: HR said the first Staffin dig for more than 20 years had gone very well. It was blessed with good weather, more than 200 people, with a surprising number of locals, visited the site over the five days. Three separate visits by about 40 Staffin and Kilmuir school pupils was an undoubted highlight, such was their enjoyment and enthusiasm. There were 10 volunteers from Staffin, Uig, Portree and Dunvegan. There was coverage of the project in the BBC, Herald, and West Highland Free Press but also in the archaeology industry through UHI and on social media - it certainly made the archaeological world sit up and take notice of Staffin again.

DR said the structure he had monitored for 15 years was not Mesolithic but was built on top of a Mesolithic site. Thousands of flint scrapers had been found but there was a bit of disappointment at lack of pottery and shellfish remnants. The possible date is post-medieval but DR thought it would turn out to be earlier than that. There was excitement as the discovery of a sculpted animal bone. Overall, the dig had been a great success and DR said there had been a fantastic effort and paid special tribute to the volunteers who worked very well together.

DMcD had spoken to Dan Lee who said the next possible grant for a second excavation was £20,000 from the Interface fund, which had provided £5,000 for this month's dig. He

thought UHI would be keen to return to Staffin. DMcD said on behalf of SCT he wanted to pay tribute to DR's contribution to the project in that he was at the site every day and helped re-turf it afterwards.

- **Action Point – HR to issue press release about project.**
- **HR to share report on project with SCT directors and funders.**

9. **AOCB:** HR said he wanted to thank MF for attending the meeting having just travelled back from Afghanistan that day. MF had become a director of the North Skye Broadband Project which was meeting regularly and was in the process of setting up a company, plus a steering group. A list of addresses in Skye, which were not going to have a superfast broadband service had been provided, and there were no Staffin postcodes on it. However, that was likely to change. MF said the NSB was moving along at a reasonable pace and a job advert for a full-time project officer was in the pipeline and it was aiming to go out to tender in spring 2016. DMcD said it was his understanding that more funds would be allocated to BT for superfast broadband so it was important not to go headlong into it and end up with a sub-standard service, MF said there were one or two individuals who wanted to “do everything tomorrow”, but most were looking to deliver a quality online project for the north of the island.

DMcD suggested that a letter was written on behalf of SCT and sent to Skye Sea Harvest asking them to outline their plans for the next stage. He thought they were still committed to Staffin but the funding of the development was a concern and said they needed to define where they were to SCT.

- **Action Point – HR to draft letter to SSH.**

NEXT MEETING: 27.10.15