



## Geàrr-chunntas

### Urras an Taobh Sear/Staffin Community Trust

Mins of Meeting 31.3.15 @

Church of Scotland Portacabin @ 7.30pm

#### 1. An làthair/Present

Donald MacDonald, Dougie Ross, Sandy Ogilvie, Roddy Gillies, Sine Ghilleasbuig, Hugh Ross

#### 2. Leisgeulan/Apologies

Angus Ross, Iain MacDonald, Gordon Higgins

#### 3. Geàrr-chunntas mu dheireadh/Previous Mins [February]

Dougie and Sandy confirmed they were accurate.

#### 4. Matters Arising: Beinn Edra

Staffin Community Council (SCC) meets on Thursday: Hugh said a decision needed to be taken on what side the plaque will be erected on, by Jon Hearach. SCT agreed that the side facing north would suit best, with views to Beinn Edra.

#### 5. A' Chidhe/Slipway

There was a positive working group meeting a week past Friday. Slipway now included in new Local Plan's "call for sites". Suggestion from HIE was to set up a meeting with council planning service to determine full process and timescale. Hugh had contacted Mark Harvey, area planning manager, who suggested Marine Scotland in Aberdeen is also invited.

40 people attended consultation drop-in event at Staffin Hall. Majority of attendees were in favour of proposals.

Marine Report – John Porteous will sign off the report next Wednesday and Steve Westbrook will follow with final draft economic report.

A positive is that the new marine tourism strategy plan from Government is in pipeline and new European funding streams on horizon.

Hugh will take artist's impressions to Staffin Community Council meeting. European Fisheries Fund official had phoned Hugh today and asked about press release: Hugh said that SCT had kept community informed throughout and would look to publicise end of initial feasibility stage. Donald said that reports could go onto SCT website, and would demonstrate openness, Sandy agreed.

Skye Sea Harvest might have reservations about the full economic report being published because of commercially sensitive information so a redacted version would be needed. Bigger, more expensive, studies will follow and as a community organisation, SCT needs to be sensitive with commercial information, but open and transparent as well.

Donald said another meeting with various public agencies would be required to get everybody around the table. Robert Muir of HIE had said that if SCT starts the discussion now, by the time it gets to a formal planning decision it is helpful, as there has been almost a working group running dealing with all the issues. Kishorn Port went through planning smoothly, as the ground work was done very well. Hugh had been advised to speak to Ally Ferguson at Kishorn Port to find out more. If the council's planning service was willing to help pull together a bigger meeting of agencies it would be helpful for SCT.

Hugh said it would be good if SCT could take up the open invitation to Lochboisdale Harbour soon.

There was a discussion about need for a second opinion that Lealt would provide rock armour for Slipway. Roddy had already taken local contractors Duncan MacDonald and John MacLeod up and both thought it was suitable. Donald and Roddy had discussed at consultation event approaching former Digg resident, Angus MacLeod, who is MD with Breedon Aggregates, and asking if he could have a look. Roddy had phoned already but Angus was away, suggested a formal letter or e-mail could be sent by Hugh.

Sandy might look to plan a Slipway Users Group meeting.

## 6. An Stòrr

Key meeting with Highland councillors and officials re sale and/or lease of Storr land on April 29 in Portree. SCT has been speaking to officials Emma Georgeson and Ann Hackett and will also meet with Pam Noble and Diane Campbell of HIE and Community Ownership Support Service, respectively. They have been good at advising Hugh on the main issues. Hugh had asked council for a plan of the forest replanting. Diane said there would still be maintenance required and told Hugh to seek advice from Community Woodland Association. The Storr being a woodland gives a lot of scope for interpretation, it is understood that a native wood was planted. Could help SCT access more funds for a "community forest". Pam stated that it was too early to draw up a business plan before councillors' views were known.

The question is - should SCT buy or lease the council land at Storr? Buying = ownership + upkeep. Lease = upkeep. Either way, responsibility arises unless underpinned by partnership.

The impact – If SCT purchased the site, it would go through the Scottish Land Unit. Scottish Natural Heritage would have to agree and might request conditions. Following ownership, SCT must manage and at that stage put in major car park and generate revenue.

If leased, could still put in a new car park but following period would renew lease or revert back to the council. Whatever option, there will always be maintenance.

Lease tends to infer a cost – might be £1 a year. Following this, SCT might then invest in that property and when the lease expires have to hand it back to council.

Donald said it is much easier to get funding at the start than to run it.

The board agreed that there is no point in doing anything at Storr unless income generation is possible for SCT.

Whilst Sandy did understand all the detail, his gut reaction was that it is an exciting and wonderful opportunity for SCT.

## 7. Taigheadas/Housing

Four sites were formally proposed by Hugh to West Highland Local Plan by March 31 deadline. They are Neil Nicolson's two sites on either side of Trotternish Avenue in Garafad, the Stenscholl site past the school and Columba 1400's land behind the centre.

Important meeting on 23.4.15 with Ronnie MacRae from Highlands Small Communities Housing Trust, John Lamont from the Lochalsh and Skye Housing Association, Mark Harvey and SNH's Alex Turner. Hugh has written a summary of SCT case for Stenscholl and will add testimonials to it, hopefully with political support.

SNH's initial view is that Stenscholl housing would visual impact on the Trotternish National Scenic Area (NSA). SNH had previously objected to housing on good croft land (that of Willie MacInnes in Garafad). The current objection was to housing on a common grazing. The board took the view that housing options were either croft land or common grazing - there was no third possibility. SCT took the view that the back of Stenscholl is a clean site, and suitable for houses. Nobody will object on the value of common grazing land. Currently, the Crofting Commission is receptive to development on common grazings and wanted to protect in-by land.

- **Action – Hugh ought to speak to Iain George MacDonald of Crofting Commission and hear its view.**

## 8. Ceumannan

Pushing for next stage – Paths Report. The paths consultant Chris York had presented to SCT in Nov 2014, and required a few tweaks. Some paths lacked detail to get a Bill of Quantities out to contractor. The Highland Council access officer, Donald Kennedy, said the content is now adequate. Next stage is for Hugh to speak to various townships/residents and share proposed path routes with them.

Interpretation plan – meeting 3.3.15 – Heritage Lottery Fund has assigned a mentor who is advising SCT to help with submitting the best possible final application. Development application had been lodged during Marion's time as Local Development Officer but permission to start was delayed until May 2014 because of work required on "in-kind" calculations etc. HLF requested a revised timetable. Gordon met team in Edinburgh and understood we would have two years from May but HLF now indicating final bid required before end of this year. Hugh not convinced this target can be met so appeal to HLF might be made.

Ecomuseum research visit in Wales in June 2015 – SCT already had links on this subject with Welsh friends (Arwel Jones) who had visited Staffin three years ago, to experience the Staffin Ecomuseum. Donald and Sine had accepted an invitation to visit Eararaigh /Snowdonia where they gave presentation on work of SCT. Since their visit to Staffin, Arwel and his colleagues have far more resources and have gone for big projects. Ireland was the obvious link that was missing, and Ireland is now on board. The only way it would benefit us is via future Euro funded projects. Donald said Wales were miles ahead in terms of their ability to access funding.

- **Action – Two or three reps from SCT are welcome to visit Wales in June, Hugh to circulate information to board.**

UHI and Ceumannan – Following earlier visit to Staffin, Hugh and Dougie had since spoken to UHI archaeologists Dan Lee and Nick Card earlier in month. They would like to do a small dig in Staffin over five days, possibly in September: they can access an Innovation voucher for 5k. Once verified as of Mesolithic age, the site will attract funding, Dougie predicted.

#### 9. AOCB: Carraig Chuimhne nan Croitearan /Crofters' Memorial

- Proposed research visit with ATLAS week beginning 25.5.15
- SCT to bear in mind dates of AGM (Tuesday May 26).

#### Coinneamh Bhliadhnail/ AGM

- **Action - Perhaps for next meeting can we have something on agenda for AGM.** Require to understand absolutely item in Memo and Articles as to tenure of directors/who stands down and who stays on.

#### Am bann leathann/Broadband

- Public meeting to be held in Kilmuir about broadband on April 29. Glendale has funding for superfast broadband project feasibility study.
- **Action – Hugh to ensure Glendale understands that Staffin is served from Duntulm.**
- Staffin falls between two systems, and has infra-red system from Duntulm to Staffin. Our microwave links are affected by the weather. From the survey, it is clear that an alternative to standard service might be beneficial.
- Sandy and Robert pointed out how very important a good service is for their and other businesses.
- **Action – UTS to encourage everyone to submit their own stories about the shortcomings of broadband here.**