

USCA Committee Meeting, Tuesday, 17th January, 2017

Draft Minutes

Present:

Susie Carmichael, Moray Finch (MICT General Manager), Cally Fleming (LDO), Anna Hogan (Acting Secretary), Mari Kluczynski, Don Lambert, Helen Leitch, Josh Liddle, Jeannie MacColl, Helen MacDonald (LDO), Celia Royce (Treasurer), Iain Thomson (Convenor)

Apologies: Chris Leitch

Minutes of the last meeting were presented by CF, who had acted as Secretary. HL proposed and DL seconded. Minutes were approved.

1. School Business:

SC handed round copies of the school's newsletter for the Spring term, for which she was warmly thanked.

2. What Next?

In the light of the fact that the houses will be finished, and, hopefully, occupied in the summer, the pontoon is up and running, the bus services are now becoming well established, and the First Responder Scheme is almost up and running, there was a discussion of the future. CR asked SC if there were any intimations of the school being under threat of closure, now or in the future. SC replied that there were none whatsoever. IT and CR both expressed the view that both in light of this, and for a number of reasons, it is time to consider how USCA might change. When it was set up, the committee largely consisted of parents of children at the school. This is no longer the case. CF expressed the understanding that USCA's existence is important to the backing of funding for projects. The discussion revolved around the ongoing need to keep the links between school (parents, children and staff), community, (both those who engage with USCA and the school, and those who do not) in order to try to best serve in the future. The parents, and children it was felt, are the really key people in the community's future. **AH** to email Rebecca Munro, chair of the Parent Council, to invite sharing of thoughts on this.

There was further discussion around the fact that in the six years since USCA was set up, so much has been achieved, but also priorities will have changed, eg. Some years ago there was talk of a playpark. Is this still something parents would want? DL raised the issue of the polytunnel. SC spoke of how good it would be to have an all-weather pitch. CF explained that funding might be difficult for some projects as HIE has moved towards funding projects which would raise money. HMcD said, and all agreed, that it's important to find out if there is anything that the parents want.

3. Fundraising:

JMacC has arranged for Bingo nights at the Salen Hotel on 21st January, 11th February, 4th March, at 7.30pm.

There was discussion of an opening event for the Houses, in May/June. A Ceilidh proposed. A suggestion was made to emphasise, in the advertising, the 'Open Mic' nature of Ceilidh – encourage as many as possible to participate.

4. Willow Workshop:

CR explained that this has been arranged for 22nd April. Pauline and Fi from Bunessan have kindly volunteered their time, free, specifically for the members of the local community. This will make it possible to charge only about £8 or £9 to cover costs. **MK**, who is once again working for A and B Council, agreed to be keyholder, which means that the use of the school will be free.

5. LDO Reports:

LDO Report 1: CF

(Note that sections in italics are not part of the minutes, but have been added later, for fuller information):

Pontoon

CF reported that the pontoon services are mostly completed. The fuel system, water system and most of the electrics are installed. Some snagging work has continued intermittently over the past few months. An annual pontoon inspection took place to check all moorings etc.

Code of Practice

Information has been gathered from other small pontoon operations such as Lochaline and Salen Jetty to produce a code of practice handbook for pontoon users including terms and conditions of use.

As well as this we are looking at relevant sections of the Port Marine Safety Code which sets a standard for marine safety in statutory harbour authorities and other marine facilities. It is recommended that smaller marinas and pontoons seek a proportionate compliance with this Code through the adoption of a formal risk assessment process and the implementation of an appropriate marine safety management system.

Risk assessments are currently being prepared for the MICT board to assess as the pontoon operator and responsible party and a simplified code of conduct and best practice guide produced.

Marketing

A marketing plan has been developed to promote the pontoon for the 2017 season to maximise nos. of overnight berths, visiting day boats and pontoon use to cover operational costs, provide employment and increase expenditure in the Ulva Ferry area.

This includes website work; a social media campaign – FACEBOOK, Twitter and Instagram; advertising; listings; promotions; PR; branding – and the development of a logo; printing of a leaflet and business cards; mail shot to main marina departure points on West Coast and other parts of Scotland, Ireland and other pontoons.

Systems are also being developed to capture market research from visiting boats eg previous and next destination; which places visited locally; services used and what facilities visiting crews would

like – and if possible range of expenditure spent in area. Coastal Communities Fund seeks this information to monitor the grant effectiveness and is also useful for HIE and planning for the future.

Whilst the pontoon only opened towards the end of the season, feedback from visiting boats has been very positive, and it is encouraging for the pontoon's first full season in 2017.

Phase 2 Consultation

Early stages of phase 2 pontoon development consultation are underway. The previous plan to develop a shore facilities building was subject to consultation in 2012 and 2013, and will go out to full consultation to the community at an early stage and at the USCA AGM in March.

There was a brief discussion regarding one or two negative comments regarding the pontoon that had been made that some people didn't like the change and couldn't see the benefit to the community. It was discussed that the wider benefits would not be achieved until the pontoon was operational more fully in 2017, when services were available and the pontoon had been marketed. It was noted that the pontoon opening was a great success with some three hundred (mostly) Mull folks attending throughout the day from all over the island from north to south. Many of those commented on how lucky Ulva Ferry was to have such a facility. Unfortunately only a few Ulva Ferry locals were able to attend that day to see the enthusiasm from around the island.

Background of pontoon development for those members of USCA who were not involved earlier in USCA or LDO Steering Group (not part of minutes):-

To remind the group of some of the background to the pontoon:-when the Local Community Plan was prepared in 2012 after a widespread consultation, a waterfront development was identified as a key priority for the area, to help provide employment and increase economic development in the Ulva Ferry area. Further consultations followed and the proposal to develop a small pontoon and shore facilities building resulted.

The purpose of the shore facilities building would be to allow the pontoon to operate to full potential (as in nearly all other similar pontoon developments) – encouraging further boats to visit, due to the increased facilities on offer in this otherwise remote area. This will also help sustain the new employment created of the Pontoon Manager and create further part time local jobs as well as encourage further spend in local restaurants and potentially encourage new business and enterprises to operate from the area. It will contribute to the economic development and the sustainability of the Ulva Ferry Community, potentially provide employment to new families moving in to the area and the new houses, ensure that the pontoon is viable - and may provide further local rental accommodation by potentially providing a flat above the Shore Facilities Building. It may also help the school roll by providing employment locally and encouraging parents to maintain and enrol children in the local school. The development of Phase 2 will also provide an opportunity to improve the parking and visitor management at Ulva Ferry, which is badly needed at times and will worsen due to the increasing number of visitors with the introduction of RET. (Funding will otherwise not be available to alleviate the issues caused by increasing traffic to the area).

The Coastal Communities Fund grant that we received in 2013 was one of only a few CCF grants awarded in the Highlands and Islands that year out of over 150 applications. However this only covered part of the planned development and we were encouraged to apply for a Lottery fund for funding towards the remainder of the development (the shore facilities building). HIE has also expressed an interest in supporting the development due to proven success of other similar developments and growth of the marine tourism sector. HIE is extending the contracts of the LDOs

(currently just for a few months) in the Ulva Ferry area to start the process on consulting on the development of such a facility (or alternative revenue generating project), complete the current housing project and source funding to sustain the community minibus for the next 3 years.

Community consultation will commence again – and this will also be used to update the community development plan where necessary.

LDO Funding

HIE has awarded an additional 3 months of funding to extend the LDO contract from the end of March to the end of June 2017 (CF and HMcD job share). This will allow time to complete most of the current projects, particularly the housing, fundraising for the community bus, feasibility work for phase 2 Shore Facilities and community consultation. It will also give HIE time to assess a proposal sent to them to consider funding the LDO position for a further year until June 2018.

Combining USCA and LDO Steering Group meetings

It has been proposed by the LDO's that the USCA and LDO Steering Group meetings are combined. This is due to everyone's busy schedules, the fact that many of the same people are on each committee and similar issues are discussed, and maximising the time of the LDO's who work on a job share basis. It is proposed that all LDO Steering Group committee are invited to the next USCA meeting and that LDO issues are discussed early on the agenda to allow those who aren't involved in other USCA discussions to leave the meeting.

Responses: A question was asked about whether or not we make money on the red diesel.

Ans: Yes, we will make something on the sales.

Discussion followed and there was general agreement that there needs to be further consultation to verify whether Phase 2 is wanted by the community.

LDO Report 2: HMacD

ACHARONICH PLOT

Following discussion with the USCA Committee at the last meeting, Helen has been looking at options to develop the Acharonich plot as there has been little interest in its sale. Of the options available, it looks like another long-term affordable let would be the best option (rather than a rent-to-buy model, or partnership with a housing association). The MICT Board have agreed to support this option and the short-term Director's Loan remains available to cover the finances required for the rental housing build meantime; repayment of this loan would need to be incorporated into the project cost.

Meanwhile, Helen was continuing with low-level advertising of the plot, in the hope that a young family may come forward. An application had been received from someone wishing to retire to the area. The general feeling of the Committee was not to support this application as this went against the landowner's intentions for the plot. The application would be discussed at the next Housing Partnership meeting.

COMMUNITY HOUSING BUILD UPDATE

Building work is currently running approximately 4 weeks behind schedule due to delays with the weather; the estimated completion date is now the end of May, with tenants hopefully able to move in before the end of June, depending on how long the Council take to issue the completion certificate.

The target price of £416,000 looks still to be achievable, although all the £10,000 contingency is likely to be used up. Helen, Moray and Carolyne Charrington hold monthly site meetings with the contractor, architect and quantity surveyor to ensure clear communication throughout the build process.

RENTAL HOUSING ADVERTISING & ALLOCATION

Helen plans to start advertising the houses for rent later this month, with a late March closing date to allow those interested plenty of time to submit their applications. There will be advertising via local posters, flyers, emails, Round & About and social media; the USCA Committee are encouraged to spread the word locally.

Allocations will be carried out by Moray, Helen and Iona Smith from West Highland Housing Association; anyone with a potential conflict of interest with an applicant will remove themselves from the process.

AOCB

Moray is giving a talk at the Rural Housing Scotland annual conference on 24th February in Dunkeld. Helen also attending; if anyone else would like to go, please let Helen know ASAP. It is an excellent opportunity to meet with, and gain support from, other community groups similarly trying to develop community housing projects.

COMMUNITY BUS

We have recently welcomed three new drivers: Alex McMillan, Gaynor Lowe & Nick Haywood; we are always looking for additional drivers to add to the pool, please contact Helen if you are interested.

USCA have recently received a grant from Scottish Sea Farms 'Heart of the Community' Fund for the Bus, for £9,100; this will need to be transferred to MICT to cover running costs. A grant of £500 has also recently been received from the Health & Wellbeing Fund. Helen has made a further application to the Big Lottery Fund for £28,400 and Caroline Wood has been assisting with seeking additional funds. It is hoped we can secure enough funding to secure the service for 3 years from April 2017, however the Bus is never going to make a profit and any ideas either to increase the local use of the Bus, or for fundraising would be welcomed.

The next Community Transport Group meeting will be held at Ballygown on Thursday 26th January at 2pm – all welcome.

6. First Responder:

MF explained that the first bag has arrived, but that, very disappointingly, the equipment is only to be sent by the SAS in a piecemeal fashion. To date only one pulse oximeter has arrived. There are also problems over logging on the responders as Ulva Ferry team.

CR explained that we have enough in the FR fund to buy the second bag, and also jackets, and there is an excess of £124. MF suggested ways this might be used, eg to buy replacement pads for the defibrillators. Also, looking to the future we would hope to have more members in the team and therefore a third bag would be needed, because of our geographical spread. **AH** to write thank you card to recent donor.

7. Caolas Ulbha:

AH explained that HLF, the funders, have waived the need for the final report. However, it is still the intention to produce this for the transparency of the project. Health issues and pressure of commitments has meant that MH and AH have not yet been able to complete the final tasks of producing the DVD for local distribution. Also, there are items on the hard disk which have not yet gone on the website, again, for the same reasons. AH also raised the question of how the equipment bought for the project might be equitably used by the Community. No decision was reached on this.

8. Condolences:

The Committee heard with great shock and sadness of the death of Tessa Howard of Ulva. **AH** to send condolences.

9. Date of AGM: Wednesday, 29th March 2017 5pm (**CF** and HMacD to arrange a community consultation evening to coincide with this. **AH** to book school)

10. Date of Next Meeting: to follow on after the AGM