

BERRIEDALE and DUNBEATH COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Minutes of meeting held in Dunbeath Community Centre on 4th July 2022 at 7.30pm

Present: Neil Buchanan, Francis Allan, Donna Matheson, Jenna Irvine, Andrew Jarvine (Cllr.)
Members of the public: Hugh MacLeod, Frank Sutherland, Anne MacBeath, James MacBeath, Anson MacAuslan, Michael Sutherland

- **Apologies:** Angus MacInnes
- **Minutes:** John Gunn stated that for agenda item 5, the wording to be changed from planning applications to planning application consultations. This was agreed. Francis proposed the minutes and Donna seconded these.
- **Financial Statement:** The latest financial statement was circulated to all present.
- **Matters Arising:**
 1. **Highland Council road repair:** There is no further updates regarding when the maintenance of the potholes will begin. This is now a Caithness wide problem. Previously councillor Willie Mackay had advised the Highland Council had a new machine that would carry out the repairs, this has not yet taken place in Berriedale and Dunbeath. Anne stated that some potholes have been repaired on the road where she resides. There has been no further knowledge of when further repairs will take place on Highland Council roads. Everyone was informed that there is restrictions on the amount of tar the roads area manager can order, which could likely be affecting the progress of road repairs.
 2. **John O Groats Trail:**
 - a. There continues to be feedback from individuals walking this trail. It has been described as very dangerous, especially north of Lybster and stated it should not be advertised as a trail.
 - b. Andrew recently attended a JOG Trail engagement sessions and felt there is a lack of research into the trail and that smaller landowners have been given no consideration from JOG Trail organisers.
 3. **Phone box, Dunbeath harbour:**
 - a. A letter had been sent to Dunbeath Preservation Trust about the siting of the phone box outside the ladies toilets. A reply had been received from Ranald MacAuslan stating this matter was currently on hold. – no further updates. Jenna will contact Ranald to ask if there is any further update regarding this.
 - b. It had been suggested there is a leaflet stand for people to collect and leave leaflets – ongoing
 - c. The advertising that is currently in the phone box has faded due to the sun light, this will be replaced – Neil will arrange for this to be reprinted.

4. **Dunbeath Broch:** Road signs for Dunbeath Broch have still to be agreed with Visit Scotland – no further updates.
5. **Berriedale Brae Realignment:** It had been highlighted that there is very little soil on the surface of the embankment of the new brae. This has resulted in very little growing on it and debris blowing on the road when there is a strong wind. Neil has contacted Marco Bardelli, BEAR Scotland regarding this – no reply as of yet. It had been stated that when it rains a rivulet is on the embankment. It was also highlighted that growth of plantation. Anson said he would make enquiries about this.
6. **Footpath on Old Brae, Dunbeath:** New crash barriers were previously installed, the old crash barriers were removed and the holes were not refilled. This has left multiple holes on the footpath along the brae which is used regularly by pedestrians and school children. Upon investigation it was discovered this job has been signed off as complete and all efforts to highlight this as not complete has been ignored. Andrew is going to follow this up – no update as yet.
7. **Dunbeath Strath Project:**
 - a. Neil advised that funding has been awarded for signage for this project. The funding for improving an area of the footpath on the Strath was declined.
 - b. It was highlighted that the footpath of the Strath is overgrown and there have been comments on social media about this. It was stated that John Irvine has recently strimmed the footpath of the Strath.
8. **Berriedale broadband:** The broadband signal in Berriedale has poor connection. Donna has stated a family who recently moved into the area contacted BT to transfer their broadband package to the new address. BT Openreach refused as they no longer service copper cable connections. This is an ongoing problem in the Berriedale area and BT Openreach appear to have pushed back the date of resolving this to 2026. Donna had stated Berriedale was featured on the TV recently due to having the worst broadband reception in Scotland. Neil has contacted MSP Maree Todd, still awaiting a reply. Anson advised that his wife emails on a weekly basis to highlight the need for this upgrade. Anson also stated that the information the Community Council received of the Brae Alignment stopping this upgrade is incorrect as there was ducting laid when the works on Berriedale Brae was taking place. Andrew advised the Community Council to contact HIE regarding this matter.
9. **A9 speed limit/no overtaking:** The speed of some traffic on the A9 travelling through Dunbeath is a concern and that the stretch of A9 from Knockglass Road to Braemore Road is dangerous for overtaking. It was stated that daily there is near misses of accidents due to speed, overtaking manouvers. John recently received a reply from Transport Scotland stating this area does not meet the criteria for a speed limit. It was agreed we would enquire about no overtaking on this part of the A9. Jenna sent a reply to John's letter regarding this. No reply has been received.

- **Bridge at Portormin:** The footbridge crossing the river on Portormin Road is no longer fit for purpose due to the walkway corroding. The Highland Council have been notified and they have installed barriers on either side to restrict it being used. There is a meeting on 9th August between Matt Dent, Highland Council Outdoor Access Officer and Mr Threipland.

- **Playpark:**
 1. The playpark in Dunbeath is in need of upgrading, due to equipment being unsafe for purpose being removed. It informed everyone Dunbeath and Berriedale Development Trust were looking at taking this forward, however due to the lease being in possession of Dunbeath Community Centre they will need to drive this forward. Both organisations are liaising with each other at moving forward.
 2. Francis provided an update to the progress of this being on hold due to queries about the lease. He informed everyone that Neil had spoken with Mr Threipland regarding the Dunbeath Community Centre committee and how they should be doing more. It was explained that Mr Threipland is now in discussions with the DCC committee if the lease will be renewed to them and this is creating a delay with the playpark and could possibly lead to loss of funding raised.
 3. Francis stated that it was recently discovered that the current playpark and football field area were not covered by liability insurance as it was thought this was still provided by the Highland Council, he stated that upon discovery of this the DCC committee have public liability insurance on these areas.

- **Correspondence:** Jenna informed everyone that she had received a letter from John with his resignation from Berriedale and Dunbeath Community Council. John felt that at the recent BOWL meeting he was being victimised due to his involvement with the Dunbeath and District Centre. Neil explained it was not personnel and that he wanted Berriedale and Dunbeath Community council to have the use of their 2 votes at the BOWL meeting but due to John's involvement with the DDC we would not have this.

- **AOB:**
 1. Local signage – it was discussed of the signs that were outdated with incorrect information upon entering Dunbeath from the north and south and that due to plantation some were not visible. These signs were the brown information signs and funding needs to be raised to have these updated. Transport Scotland will be contacted regarding the plantation from the ditches affecting the visibility of signage.
 2. Donna stated that the cat eyes installed on the A9 passing through Newport appear to have been stuck down with an adhesive and they are easily removed with passing traffic. Transport Scotland will be contacted regarding this matter.
 3. Anne stated the pavements along the A9 in Dunbeath, especially between the end of Knockglass Road to the Mains Cottages are in poor condition. They appear not to have been swept resulting in them being covered in debris from the road, grit and from the recent chippings from the poorly painted white lines. This is making the footpaths not suitable for everyone to use.
 4. Anson stated that he had received a letter that stated the Community Council had accused Welbeck Estate of doing a Highland Clearance within Berriedale. Anson stated

that this was not true and did not appreciate this. He stated that since he has been in Berriedale 6 more houses have been occupied and one building is has been renovated for a business. Anson stated that anyone is welcome to come to Welbeck Estate in Berriedale and he will be delighted to show anyone around the Estate and his door is always open. Anson expressed his interest in being a member of the community council.

5. Michael highlighted that the Royal Bank of Scotland mobile van has not been in Dunbeath for the last 3 weeks. This is a service that is meant to be weekly. Jenna will contact RBS regarding this.

- **Date of next meeting:** 5th September 2022 at 7.30pm
- **Membership of the community council private meeting:** Members of the public were thanked for their attendance. It was stated the next part of the meeting was to discuss the Dunbeath and District Centre's planning application and due to members of the Community Council being verbally abused online and in public this would be held in private. Neil asked if any members of the public had any comments before they left.
 1. Frank asked if Neil should be declaring an conflict of interest on discussions about the Dunbeath and District Centre due to Neil previously stating their operation was having an affect on his business.
 2. Neil stated the Community Council support the work of the DDC. The Community Council feel a full community survey was not done due to the surveys only being distributed to their users and being available in the GP surgery at a time of COVID and entry to the GP surgery was limited.
 3. Anne stated that Frank had previously informed her that is was an error of an employee that the surveys were not available in the Post Office.
 4. Frank said that he had heard from individuals that if the new DDC project goes ahead it will close the local GP surgery. Donna said that she had spoken to residents in Berriedale to compile the community views as she lives in Berriedale and wanted to give them the opportunity to express their views. She stated that she did not tell anyone information of the GP surgery potentially closing and stated she approached everyone in an unbiased approach. She stated the feedback she received was there people supporting, not in support, some didn't know about it or some were not interested in either way.
 5. Hugh stated that he is a user and volunteer of the DDC. He said he was approached previously by Neil to ask if he would consider joining the Community Council. Hugh asked if this would still be an option for him to be considered to joining due to his involvement and support for DDC. He was told yes. Hugh stated that he wouldn't fulfil this.
 6. Andrew suggested that if the feeling is that a full community survey was not completed, that the organisation who completed the survey could be contacted.
- Members of the public left and a private discussion took place.

Meeting closed at 10pm