

Morvern Community Council (MCC) meeting held on  
Tuesday June 11, 2024 at 7pm, Lochaline Village Hall

Present Community Council representatives: Henriette Laidlaw (HL), Clara Montgomery (CM), Jenni Hodgson (JH), Helen Jones (HJ), Miles Welsh (MW), Douglas Taylor (DT) and Members of the public x 10

1. The chair, HL, welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies from Sarah Fannett and India Boulton (IB)
2. AOB requests
  - a. Request to reinstate getting a community skip, which used to be booked roughly every 6 weeks, and would be filled very quickly with community waste, indicating a need. This would also contribute to keeping the village tidy. A proposition was raised that it could be possible to get a skip for metal, to be sold as scrap, and a skip for general waste separately.  
*Action for JH to find out cost of skips and logistics.*
3. Glencripesdale reserve plan: Izzy Baker, site manager from RSPB, attended to give an overview of the management plan for the reserve. Glencripesdale contains a mosaic of habitats, the primary focus of which is currently the Atlantic rainforest. The RSPB have owned the reserve for 2 years and so far have focussed on surveying the site to get an idea of what is there and what the main threats are. A 2 week survey found 99 species of lichen and 79 species of bryophyte. They have been looking at archaeological sites and how to include increasing access to these into their management plan. Priority actions moving forward are: controlling non-native species (e.g. *Rhododendron ponticum*), looking at peatland restoration and woodland expansion. In total RSPB will be employing 8.5 staff, and contractors, locally through the Saving Morvern's Rainforest project and reserves. Rhododendron removal will occur in a variety of ways depending on what is possible with the landscape and size of plants, but primarily similar to the Lever and Mulch technique, using controlled herbicide use where necessary.  
*Action for CM to promote citizen science techniques to Morvern residents.*
4. Future of the fire brigade: a survey has been sent out to get input from Scotland's citizens into the strategic fire service review currently happening nationally. Che Scott, District Commander for Lochaber, has attended to give more information and answer questions. Depopulation in rural places has contributed to many fire stations not having enough staff to remain functional, thus many stations have been unable to function for multiple years. Part of the result of the review could be switching fire brigade appliances between stations in order to suit local needs. Che highlighted risks within and around Lochaline: LQS sand mine, Nc'Neen distillery, Ardtornish house, the ferry, cargo ships, marina with yachts, highland basecamp and Lochaline Hotel, all of which are factors which are a case for Lochaline keeping its fire station at the end of this review. Lochaline fire brigade is up to 7 staff. Ideally we would have 2 more, making a crew of 9. There are 4 seats in the fire engine but a crew of 9 would give everyone a break and add resilience, considering the crew is voluntary. The minimum legal requirement for a fire crew is 4. Pilot projects will begin regardless of the strategic review to trial various ways of managing recruitment problems in the Highlands. This survey is a unique chance for a community to have its say in a public service, though the community is encouraged to be mindful of potentially loaded questions when answering. Community members are encouraged to speak to Rhian Evans and Keith Adams if they have any questions.  
*Action for CM to promote the survey on the local FB page.*

5. Minutes of last meeting and matters arising: Minutes have been approved by the board.
- a. Local Place Plan: HL updated that Ardtornish Estate, Nc'Neen distillery, Morvern Community Trust and the Highland Council have donated towards the LPP, allowing us to employ a Local Engagement Associate, Katy Donnelly.
  - b. School update: No update.
  - c. Village Tidy Update: Big thank you to the team who restored the phonebox, Kevin Laurie, Emily Rosier, Sue Rosier, and all of the community who contributed funds. It has been proposed that we get a plaque to go on the phonebox to thank this voluntary team and the community for rallying together to spruce up this feature at the heart of the village. Councillors agreed that a plaque is a good idea and we will progress with this. Additional money raised for the phonebox is proposed, and agreed by councillors, to be ringfenced for maintenance works in the future. Suggestions from the village tidy survey have been inputted to the Local Place Plan where appropriate.  
*Action for HL to investigate plaque for phonebox*  
*Action for CM to pick out a few immediately accomplishable village tidy suggestions to make an event for the community*
  - d. Air ambulance locations: one at Ardtornish Estate, one on Drimnin Estate near Nc'Neen distillery, and one in the field next to Kirk Brae. A map with details can be found on the Morvern Community Council Facebook page.
  - e. Street lights: No update  
*Action for CM to chase up Highland Council*
  - f. Public transport costs and logistics: HL fed back to Sarah Fannett (SF) the logistical nightmare of public transport connections and costs between Morvern and neighbouring communities (e.g. Mull and Oban), which could require cross council communication to change. SF is arranging a meeting to discuss such problems with members of Argyll & Bute council.  
*Action for CM to contact neighbouring community councils to encourage we work together to deal with this issue*
  - g. Forestry: Laudale Estate are making their long term forest plan for the next 10 years and are looking for public consultation. It was also raised that the Local Place Plan which is currently being created should feed into all long term forest management plans for Morvern.  
*Action for CM to look for public input into Laudale Estate forest management plan.*  
*Action for CM to request that FLS do not finalise their Morvern long term forest management plan before the community have completed their Local Place Plan.*
  - h. Roads - HL: Sarah Fanet is yet to have an update on increasing the distance of the 20mph speed limit outside of the village, to Kiel Church. We received correspondence from a Morvern resident on the bad state of the road between Lochaline and Drimnin. Also raised at the meeting was the lack of visible passing place signs at passing places on all Morvern roads.  
*Action for HL to contact Highland Council about road disrepair and passing place sign replacement.*
  - i. Water run offs Liddesdale: Dangerous road culverts/ditches have been noted on the bottom of the Lochaline side of Liddesdale near the Kingairloch turnoff, which could cause a lot of damage if a wheel went into one.  
*Action for HL to include this when highlighting road problems to Highland Council.*

- j. Fouling: It has been raised that there is a problem with human waste and fouling around the wishing stone carpark and at the hotel beach in Lochaline. HL has contacted Ardtornish about closing the gate down to the beach. An idea was raised to get children at the school involved in making signs to discourage fouling and directing beach users to the public toilets.  
*Action for CM to contact FLS about the possibility to have a bin at the wishing stone car park.*  
*Action for HL to contact the school about making signs.*
- 6. Youth's update: Sarah Fannett has organised a meeting with youth councillors in neighbouring communities to meet up with each other on the 20th of June to discuss shared issues.
- 7. Lochaber Redesign Project (new Belford hospital): JH updated that there is a big push going on to maintain the funding and hold on to the project as it has already been planned. The hope is to get 'shovel ready' so that if the funds become available to go ahead with the project, work can start immediately.
- 8. Dail Mhor: JH updates that Dail Mhor remains closed due to staffing. Dail Mhor likely requires some structural improvements. Urram are working alongside a project, Support in the Right Direction, to continue pushing for information. There are hopes that if Dail Mhor doesn't open soon as a respite centre then it could be acquired by the community.
- 9. Housing: HL contacted Scottish Seafarms about the empty houses which they own on Morvern Crescent - they will update at the end of June. Ardtornish has planning approved for two apartments in the Old Post Office, but there is no timeline for when this will be completed.
- 10. Planning applications:
  - a. Mungosdail planning application: a concern was raised by resident of Upper Mungosdail Bill Jack. MCC is not always given consultee status therefore MW gave personal support to the concerns raised by local residents on behalf of MCC.
  - b. Peatland restoration proposal by FLS. No problems or concerns raised with this.
- 11. MCDC Update: HL updated that MCDC is now advertising for a cafe manager to reopen the cafe in the hub. MCDC are also looking to employ a housing project officer to move forward with the affordable houses opposite Kirk Brae.
- 12. Treasurer's Report: JH noted four items of expenditure this month; to the village hall, MCTC and Kirsty MacIntyre (Highland Bookkeeper), with a total outgoings this month of £184.25. Leaves a total of £9,237.24.
- 13. Other correspondence:
  - a. Lithium ion battery safety campaign. Che Scott from the fire brigade raised this increasing concern.  
*Action for CM to respond in support of campaign.*
  - b. Living Rent job: not a local job so MCC won't advertise
  - c. SURF Award Applications 2024: MCC are not going to apply this year.
  - d. Community map: note to the community that MCC now have a licence for community mapping software that other community groups will be able to use.

## Upcoming Meeting dates

2024

July (no meeting)

August 13 (Drimnin Village Hall)

September 10

October 8  
November 12  
December 10