

MORVERN COMMUNITY COUNCIL
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 8 May 2017

CHAIRMANS REPORT

Good evening again everyone, and thank you for staying to attend the 2017 Annual General Meeting of the Morvern Community Council, covering the period from April 2016 to March of this year. Lots to go through, but I will try to make this as brief as possible.

As you will be aware, this Council was formed after the dissolution of the previous one, and an "election" which resulted in the only 7 names put forward automatically being elected. 2 of those unfortunately chose to resign before the Council started in earnest, and one Councillor resigned later. Thankfully Davy Shaw and Martin Samson were subsequently co-opted, and for the majority of the year we had 7 Councillors out of a possible full complement of 8.

Rather than go through the year chronologically, I propose to highlight the major issues that have arisen, and how the Community Council has dealt with those.

FINANCE.

We inherited both general and Common Good Funds from the previous Council. Due to difficulties, mainly with the Bank of Scotland, and completion of the necessary paperwork, we were unable to access any of these funds until November 2016. Councillors personally ensured that bills were paid however and reimbursement has been made from the general account.

Otherwise, it was agreed that the Common Good Fund should be transferred to the Morvern Community Trust. This has now been completed.

Teresa will elaborate on the finer details of the Council's finances later.

TELEPHONE BOXES

As agreed by the previous Community Council, we now own all 3 phone boxes, at the Shop, Larachbeg and Drimnin. The previous Chair, John Hodgson agreed to be an associate to the Council to oversee their future use. As at 31 March Drimnin have proposed in installing a defibrillator, and Ardtornish have expressed an interest in the box at Larachbeg.

BROADBAND

This is an ongoing problem, and I am afraid that there is as yet no light at the end of the tunnel. MCC have been in correspondence with BT, Ofcom, MP, Highland Council and MSP, but so far to no avail. This matter has been transferred to MCDC who, who we consider best placed to take matters further. The only bright spot is that in Lochaline village, we now

appear to have 4G mobile reception which is sometimes much faster than broadband speeds (but also more expensive).

Drimnin still experiences the worst of the problems, and research is underway locally to create their own network.

ROADS ETC

You will all be aware of the state of the roads on the peninsula. MCC has highlighted this on many occasions, and some improvements have been made by Highland Council. This has included a lot of "Patching " work using one of their new machines, repairs to the road from Drimnin Pier, 2 repairs to the cattle grid outside the village (which is now in the process of being completely replaced) a new cattle grid at Claggan, and after much prompting, replacement of the crash barrier near Uillen.

Despite this, major problems still exist, some in Drimnin, some in Lochaline, and on the road to the village from Carnoch Bridge. We continue to press HC about this, but are repeatedly told that finances are scarce. Apparently £1Million plus has been added to HC roads budget, and we must hope that some of this (and some of the £Millions in the Inverness City Deal _ finds its way here. We understand however that Uillin and Drimnin are scheduled for major works this summer.

VILLAGE MAINTENANCE ETC

Last year, we once again had difficulty in employing a contractor to do grass cutting etc. This meant that some areas remained untidy. In May we did however have a Village Clean up. This was a success, and our thanks go to all who turned up to help.

MCC hired skips for larger refuse. These were well used and we will be seeking to provide this or an alternative service to help in the future. Due to the replacement of the former HC "Discretionary Budget" we are unlikely to receive much financial support for this. We will continue however to ask for HC assistance.

Finally, 2 years after it was broken down, we ensured that the wall outside the hall was repaired.

COMMUNITY BENEFITS RECEIVED

With the transfer of the Common Good Fund, the only monies received by MCC by way of Community benefit come from the SSE Loch Uisge fund. We have received no monies this year so far and are currently in correspondence with HC where we have had to show where monies were spent in the past. We will ensure that any monies received will be dispersed solely for the benefit of the community.

Although not recipients from the Glensanda fund, MCC, as the original negotiators of the fund attended a meeting with Aggregate Industries (MCT also). It is hoped that this fund will continue, but concerns have been raised that Glensanda may wish to control any community benefit when the current scheme runs out. MCT demonstrated clearly how well they have managed funds to date, and we hope that this will continue.

Otherwise, discussions have been held with Ardtornish Estate on the “Ardtornish Community Fund.” Despite there being a public ballot on the issue which overwhelmingly voted for funds to go to MCT, confusion remains on this issue.

CHRISTMAS LUNCH

With financial assistance from MCT, MCC hosted a lunch for Senior Citizens in December. This was well attended, and enjoyed by all. We will be continuing this tradition. My thanks to all who helped and to the caterers (Faith) and entertainment.

These are the main points, but throughout the year MCC also contributed to the following:-

- Organised a public meeting with the NHS on new Out of Hours Service (a success as many locals are now “First Attenders”)
- Organised a public meeting with one of our MSPs, Kate Forbes. Unfortunately not too well attended, but useful discussions on Community benefit, MCDC, Land Use and Community Ownership ie Land Reform Act.
- Contributions (ongoing) to proposals for a Living Landscape project. Alisdair Firth has agreed to be an associate to MCC to help take this forward. It is hoped that MCW will lead this along with MCC, MCDC, Land owners and any other Community Group who can contribute.
- Regular Liaison with the Police, Highland Council, BT, MP’, MSPs,
- Liaison and support to Community Groups.
- Help to individual Community members where necessary. As Chair, can I give thanks to my fellow Councillors, our Highland Councillors, particularly Andrew Baxter, our local Police, Angie and Kevin, all who have assisted the Council, and of course the Community itself. And of course Lesley, our Minutes secretary, and Kirsty for auditing our accounts.

Myself and the other Councillors are all volunteers, and sit on the Community Council purely to act on behalf of the Community. In doing so, we do appreciate that it is not possible to please all. We do however try. Despite this, some of us have come under what can only be described as vitriolic personal attack, mostly on social media. Despite having taken legal advice on this, we will not be taking any action. I would however say, that if anyone has a complaint or beef, you know how to contact us, and ask that you speak with us direct. Better still, come along to a Community Council Meeting.