

Morvern Community Council Meeting held on  
Tuesday November 21st 2023 at 7pm Lochaline Village Hall

Present Community Council representatives: Clara Montgomery, Henriette Laidlaw, India Boulton, Jenni Hodgson, Miles Welsh, Terra Grier, Helen Jones  
and Members of the public x 7 throughout, with a further 12 present for discussion on Lochaber National Park.

1. HL welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies from Douglas Taylor, Sue Layton, and Janette Cameron.
2. RSPB – Ellen Bird on Tree nursery Project. Hoping to employ a local rhododendron clearing team. Aiming to expand and link existing rainforest habitat; working with Morvern Deer Management Group and starting up a tree nursery (will be employing a part time manager). Looking for community input into where to have the tree nursery; option 1) Kiel: advantage close to the village, can host a rhododendron works team and tree nursery in the same site. Disadvantage, not close to running water. 2) Savary: advantage close to Achnaha community woodlands and access to flowing water. Disadvantage, needs more development work from RSPB (e.g. car park), smaller in size so can't house rhododendron works team. Contact Ellen Bird for feedback before 4th December ([Ellen.Bird@RSPB.org.uk](mailto:Ellen.Bird@RSPB.org.uk)).
3. [Lochaber National Park](#) – Kate and Mike from the National Park Project. Preparing a nomination for a National Park for Lochaber (the whole of Lochaber). The Scottish government committed to a new national park by 2026. Area nominations are due by the end of February 2024. These will be whittled down and shortlisted by the government. A selected NP will then create a National Park Partnership Plan and strategy and all those in partnership must only operate in ways which align with the NP Partnership Plan (this creates the governance strategy). Generally a NP will help with the management of biodiversity, tourism flow (not by building roads, but could be by improving other travel networks), and sustainable communities. NP representation: 20% local community reps; 40% Local authority reps; 40% MSP reps. Thus, creating a setting for locals to engage with Scottish government representatives on a monthly basis, though it was raised during the question session that local community voices are a minority. Visitor numbers will increase, but not double or more in number. NPs do not restrict development, but do support sustainable development. NP would have a role in planning permissions (which could be defined in various ways). NP can stipulate regulation on housing - a NP partnership could bring in regulation on second homes for instance. NPs bring in a lot of funding - including to support meeting national legislation. NPs would bring in more rangers, including being full time funded (currently ~16 part time rangers in Lochaber, about 120 in the Cairngorms). NP strategy could be fed by the existing Local Place Plans in Lochaber. An online survey to express individual opinion will be posted in the Lochaline Facebook page, as well as found on a QR code on a poster around Lochaline. 26 members of the Morvern community (including council members) attended this part of the meeting.
4. AOB requests were taken by the chair. None raised.
5. Minutes of last meeting and matters arising
  - a. Co-opting of Council members and youth councillors by the chair. Helen Jones and Terra Grier co-opted as youth councillors, elected by Jenni Hodgson and seconded by India Boulton. Miles Welsh elected by India Boulton and seconded by Keith Laidlaw.
  - b. Amendment to last meeting minutes: None mentioned.

- c. Local Place Plan: JH and HL met to discuss options to move forward with additional funding for the Local Place Plan project. With the guarantee from MCT we can now start the project. However we have promised to seek additional funding and we would also like to be able to employ a local project manager for the duration of the project. In addition, we will want to create a steering committee overseeing the project. We propose the steering committee consist of representatives from the following: MCC, MCT, local interest groups, MCDC, local businesses.
- d. Village tidy: A map is still up in the Lochaline village hub and looking for additional comments from the community. Sam Firth has donated some trees to be planted around the village. Fixing of the telephone box is getting underway thanks to funding from the Attic and a great turn out at Let's Do Lunch fundraiser.
- e. MDMG: The re-election of Peter Lawson as Chair and Steve Fox as Vice Chair was agreed by consensus. It was agreed to amend the Group constitution to allow office holders to serve three consecutive terms in exceptional circumstances. The number of stags culled in 2023 and the proposed number of hinds to be culled 2024 were reported. These will be included in the minutes on the Morvern Deer Management Group website. It was agreed to have a foot count of deer numbers across Morvern in March 2024. It was agreed to carry out Herbivore Impact Assessment of dwarf shrub heath in 2024, repeating monitoring of the 90 plots monitored in 2020. The current Morvern Deer Management group cull plan and population model will run until spring 2026. There is a plan to revise the Group's Deer Management Plan along with the population model then. NatureScot updated that legislation removing the close season for male deer is now in place. MDMG members and Morvern landowners identified areas on a map in which they saw opportunities for habitat restoration, including native woodland creation and peatland restoration. There was an enthusiastic response from MDMG members.
- f. Air ambulance: Postponed to next meeting as Janette Cameron could not make it.
- g. Access to vaccinations: Morvern residents are struggling to get vaccinations due to slots in the village being taken up by Mull residents. HL will contact NHS Highland to inform them of this problem.
6. Report from Rural and Island Parliament. HL presented a statement from Morvern highlighting the areas of concern for small communities especially affordable housing, suitable and working infrastructure structure and the cost of energy.
7. Planning applications:
  - a. Kingairloch fish farm changing enclosure size – no objection,
  - b. Aggregate Industries (Glensanda Quarry) submitted in 2021 to amend their currently approved plan, requesting the removal of a requirement for a screen - HL will submit a neutral position to the planning agency.
8. MCDC Update by HL. AGM will take place on the 6th December 2023. Morvern Community Council will have two representatives on MCDC; HL and CM (both nominated by Jenni Hodgson and seconded by India Boulton). CM will write a letter to MCDC informing of this appointment.
9. Treasurer report: See table below. The 2023 village maintenance contract was organised by MCC this year and very largely funded by MCT. In the spring the MCT offered a grant of £5,000 to be paid on completion of the project. MCC contracted Bradley Revil to carry out 7 cuts of £750 each, supervised the work and paid, on a monthly basis, a total of £5,250 from the Common Good Fund Account. MCC filed a grant claim to MCT in October and the grant of £5,000 was paid to MCC on the 1st November. The net cost to the MCC Common Good funds for the year's project was £250. MCC bank accounts are underway to transfer mandates from AR to HL and JH.

<b>MCC Treasurer's report for period</b>		<b>£</b>
Opening Balance at:	5/10/2023	<b>£4,352.24</b>
INCOME	Morvern Community Trust. Grant of £5,000 towards 2023 village maintenance contract.	£5,000
EXPENDITURE	Meeting expenses (£42), consultation expenses (£50), 7th grass cut (£750)	-£842.00
Closing Balance at:	20/11/2023	<b>£8,510.24</b>

#### Upcoming Meeting dates

2023

December 12

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2024

January 9

February 13

March 12

April (no meeting)

May 14

June 11 (AGM)

July (no meeting)

August 13

September 10

October 8

November 12

December 10