

Minutes of Morvern Community Development Company

Board Meeting held in public

Thursday, 11th February 2016, Lochaline Village Hall, 7.30pm

Directors: Malcolm Burge, Angus Robertson, John Hodgson, Jenni Hodgson, Mike Foulis, Lilia Dobrokhodova (Dev Officer).

Members of the public: Martin Gale, Christine Gale, Fiona Christian, Nicola Jones.

Apologies: Lesley Jones, Jane Stuart – Smith, Sam Firth, Clare Holohan.

Agenda:

1. Minutes of last board meeting 12th November 2015
2. Matters arising
3. Morvern Hydro – update
4. Housing and Scout Hut site – update
5. Marina expansion - update
6. Morvern Sailing Club – proposal
7. Fiunary Forest – proposal
8. Morvern Booklet – proposal
9. Broadband
10. Lochaline Fire Station
11. MCDC newsletter
12. CAOLAS – request
13. Next public meeting, 12th May 2016 Lochaline Primary School, 7.30pm

1. **Minutes** – Malcolm proposed, John seconded, with an amendment (see under Matters arising).
2. **Matters arising** – amendment to the minutes - point 3, following a meeting between MCDC and MCT, the Trust clarified that the letter to MCDC was not a rejection of funding for marina expansion but a request for more information.

3G signal – installed on Lochaline Stores and Lochaline Primary School. Lochaline Harbour has the equipment installed but as the BT line has not put in yet, it is not operational. BT have not met the appointment twice now. Several people reported good 3G signal in the village. Lilia explained that the signal will be available when there is the line of sight.

WHAM – Lilia contacted WHAM to see if any potential objections to new swinging moorings in the loch. WHAM said that they will be contacted as one of consultees by Marine License Scotland. Their membership would be consulted, in case the proposed area is used by members for free anchorage.

Road to Ardtornish – MCDC wrote a letter to Ardtornish following a request from a member of public to make improvements to the old road leading from

the harbour to Ardtornish. Response received from Ardtornish saying that they will look into it in the near future but that there was a list of projects that are already in realisation that would need to take priority. The Estate promised to look into filling large holes with stones to make the road better short term.

3. **Morvern Hydro** – Hydroplan are working in accordance with the programme and a few environmental surveys are currently ongoing, i.e. bryophytes, flow rates etc. Grid connection has been applied for with SSE. Potential planning application in the summer, if no show stoppers have been identified with planning in place in autumn. A possible private connection to Loch Teacus hydro scheme is being explored. If no show stoppers identified and planning successful, MCDC would need to decide whether to take the scheme/schemes forward. Financial assessment also forms part of Hydroplan's brief. MCDC have a 95% CARES grant/loan for Hydroplan to carry out the work with 5% coming from MCDC's own funds. There is an uncertainty still with feed in tariffs still.

Sallachan scheme – MCDC invested £30K in the scheme with funds from MCT. MCDC have been managing, any money coming in to MCDC is passed onto MCT. MCDC charge MCT a management fee. Green Highland, who built the scheme, now have new owners and they are selling their shares to Triple Point (venture capitalists who invested in the scheme). Perhaps this is an opportunity for the community to buy more shares as there will be no more tax relief for venture capitals after 5th April 2016. Change of ownership will not mean change to the community benefit.

4. **Housing and Scout Hut site** – the architect provided drawings for both forestry and Scout Hut site for the Board to review and make a final decision in order to allow the architect to apply for planning permission on both sites. The board reviewed the drawings and agreed on Option 2 for forestry site – although a little more expensive to realise, it offers more potential for future development, better access, offers south facing gardens and safer entrance. The Scout Hut site was approved as it was, Lilia to ask the architect to include extended eaves on the community building. Jenni had no objection with the layout of “sheltered” housing; she mentioned that internal fixings will be very important. It was agreed to apply for planning permissions for both sites, based on the above comments. Lilia has been successful in securing trees from Woodland Trust for replanting at the Harbour in order to compensate for the trees that would need to be felled on the forestry site. The trees will be arriving sometime in the beginning of March. When they do, a volunteer weekend will be organised to help plant, if the Directors can be there it would be great. Trees replanting is a condition of planning.
5. **Marina Expansion** – Marine License consultation ongoing. Awaiting draft lease from the Crown Estate. MCT offered a grant of £5K towards the project, thank you to the Trust.
6. **Morvern Sailing Club (MCW)** – been successful in securing a £5K grant from MCT for buying sailing dinghies to start teaching children to sail hopefully in the spring 2016. MCDC are in the process of extending their lease with Ardtornish Estate that will allow MCW to have a presence at Lochaline Harbour. Malcolm did some sketches as to a possibility of a natural slipway, dinghy storage, additional parking and the Board agreed

that the plan looked good. Malcolm was going to speak to the mine to see if any reject materials could be obtained for the infill. Angus will check with the Estate re plan Malcolm produced and obtain a response in writing.

- 7. Fiunary Forest** – MCDC had an initial meeting with MCW to discuss this. A very loose steering group has been formed. A letter will be sent to all households in the community seeking people's views on the Fiunary forest potential. A community consultation is planned for 6th March in the Village Hall and a trip to Mull organised for 12th March to talk to communities who have been successful in buying and now managing their own forests. Martin Gale has kindly shared his thoughts with the meeting about the Fiunary Forest opportunities. See below in italics. Thank you Martin.

"I am surprised at the sad lack of involvement between the Forestry Commission Scotland (FSC) at Fiunary Forest and the Morvern Community. The forest is a major asset, (economically, environmentally and socially) of the FSC, and if it was in the Central Belt or Cairngorms, the FCS would certainly be much more engaged than they are in Morvern. The forest still has a significant long term contract with Iggesund Paperboard to supply standing timber for harvest, but other work like restocking felled areas is under achieved and general maintenance is completed by contractors from areas outwith Morvern.

General replanting and maintenance work could be carried out by a local squad drawn from the Morvern community; in the first instance a squad of 6 could be a good start. This would contribute in a considerable improvement in the wellbeing of the forest. Replanting could include specific native hardwood areas as well as maintaining coniferous species for local industry.

The potential of serious mountain bike trails could be established, similar to the one at Strathmashie Forest in Laggan (Wolftrax Trails). This could develop into a local business for someone willing to run bike hire shop, wash down and refreshments. The forest being so large would enable long distance routes which are increasingly in demand.

The proximity of the Lochaline School offers considerable scope for local pupils to get involved in their forest environment, using it as a major educational asset for general and project based work.

When the Forestry Commission was first created in 1919, it used a system of Forest Working Holding to have an all the year round working presence in the forest. We could recreate this by establishing Woodland Crofts, whereby people live in affordable homes built within the forest. The inhabitants could be part of the working squad (or not) and also work a cleared crofting area for themselves and perhaps the benefit of the Morvern Community.

These are only a few ideas which others can build on during our proposed 'free thinking' process. It is all very exciting.

Personally, I caution against taking on major cost liabilities, especially as I believe we can gain all the benefits for the community through a leading partnership approach with FCS. Also we should manage our ambitions on a clearly thought through planned basis maintaining a quality standard that could become a showcase to other communities in Scotland with similar ambitions."

- 8. Morvern Booklet** – Lilia got some costings for a Morvern walks booklet. The board looked into several options and agreed to go ahead with a full high quality option with contributors paid, if funding was available. Lilia to action.

9. **Broadband** – due to broadband issues in the area and the effects it has on people’s lives and local business, a joint effort with MCC was discussed. Involving MSPs – invite Ian Blackford to visit Morvern? Drimnin broadband was also discussed. It was agreed to draft a letter re broadband, petition and campaign could also be organised.
10. **Lochaline Fire Station** – opportunity for the community to purchase. Lilia expressed an interest. Potential use – skiff build initially, then workshop, charity shop, office.
11. **MCDC** newsletter – it was decided to publish meaningful updates about what MCDC do in De the Dol? Also, keep a copy of minutes at Morvern Post Office and Drimnin Post Office for those with no access to internet.
12. **CAOLAS request** – asked if MCDC could help with securing funding for a project officer. Lilia to meet with CAOLAS and report back to the board.
13. **AOB**

Scottish Sea Farms – press release about reinstatement of Mungosdale bridge. Lilia to publish on Facebook and on www.morvern.org

MCT – MCDC and MCT had a meeting where a discussion took place about recent misunderstandings. Both organisations learnt from it about how they operate and what is required. MCDC and MCT will continue to work closely together for the benefit of the community.