

The Dornoch Area Community Interest Company  
Company Registered in Scotland: Registration No 327565

MINUTE OF DIRECTORS MEETING 1<sup>st</sup> November 2013 – Adopted at the meeting on 4<sup>th</sup> December 2013

Present Jenifer Cameron (JC) (in the Chair), Cllr Jim McGillivray (JMcG), Rachel Jack (RJ), Pat Murray (PM), Tommy Mackay (TM), Joan Bishop (JB), Anne Coombs (AC), John McMurray (JMcM)

Apologies:

Item	Point of Information/Discussion/Decision	Action
1. Minute	Of meeting 3 <sup>rd</sup> October 2013. Proposed RJ seconded JMcG.	
2. Matters Arising	<p><u>a Signs update.</u> At the HIE meeting (d) Phil Tomalin confirmed there are legal requirements on road signs (for cars) and Dornoch is at the limit. Neil Hampton (RDGC) said there was no road sign to the golf club. Phil asked for that and any other anomalies to be sent to him. Pedestrian signage is open to development. HIE would support innovation, taking advice from world class destinations (proposal to follow). The current map on the wall of the public toilets, while a work of art does not have street names. Multiple “you are here” conventional maps would be more helpful. Phil confirmed new pan Highland rules for A signs will be available shortly.</p> <p><u>b.Visitor Experience Update</u> All forms to be collected and sent to JMcM.</p> <p><u>c. Website</u> JC has re-organised the layout for more logical flow. Non-paying entries for accommodation suppliers have been removed. The events menu now has pages for each major event and JB is linking this to accommodation availability for shoulder months. RJ is to contact all businesses &amp; trades as currently only one paid advert</p> <p><u>d.Masterplan</u> Meeting held 1/11/13 with Roy Kirk, Pete Guthrie (HIE), Scott Armstrong (Visit Scotland), Neil Hampton (RDGC), JMcG, Phil Tomalin (HC), Eilidh Todd (NHI), Jerry Bishop (DADCA), JC and JB. Each party gave report of projects in hand. Scott was impressed by our branding plans. Jerry to prepare proposal to link website calendars (DADCA &amp; DACIC). JC highlighted wedding receptions going out with county as restricted venues or need for expensive marquee. JC outlined plans for major food event linked to the Sutherland Show with “cook off competition” using local produce. Ideally top named chef and TV coverage, but with limited time may use the 2014 event as a pilot to build on in future years. Potential for heats in shoulder months etc. HIE will arrange for a consultant to flesh out the proposal. JMcG pointed out the UHI/Burghfield has just held fourth Young Highland Chef competition with Albert Roux leading panel of judges. HIE have plans to hold Rural Symposium in Dornoch next May, following success in Brora. Scott Armstrong advised that accommodation providers do not have to be quality assured to be promoted by Visit Scotland, following EC ruling. Phil reported that there are plans for enhancements/repairs at the beach including steps, bench, car parking and shelter.</p> <p><u>e. NHI</u> Eilidh Todd (EH) and Laura Edwards Mackinnon (LEM) are progressing with accommodation providers survey, promoting website advertising and have started mapping activities in the area and day trips from Dornoch to encourage longer stays.</p> <p><u>f. World Host</u> RDGC have indicated they have candidates for this. JC is progressing. At the HIE meeting we were told that Caithness is working toward county wide World host status so we will be in contact with them.</p> <p><u>g. Pipe Band Championship</u> Future events will not be discussed until after the 2014 championships in Forres in June. TM, JC and Alastair Rhind to</p>	<p>All</p> <p>HIE</p> <p>JB</p> <p>HIE</p>

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	form sub-committee to progress.	
3. Membership Applications	There were applications from Jane and Warwick Harrison who have just moved to the area. They were duly admitted.	
4. Court House	<p>a. Meeting held with Community Right to Buy (CRtB) team from Edinburgh and Liz Howard (Scottish Land Fund) on 22nd October. They went over the ballot process and timetable. We updated them on our plans and gave the Robin Knet's report (see below).</p> <p>b. The valuation has now been set at £115,000. This takes account of our representation on SCS outstanding repairs and B listing restrictions. The valuer comments that "the property would generate limited interest if placed on the open market". Whilst the board recognises that this figure makes the purchase achievable (via Scottish Land Fund), it is the significant maintenance and conservation burden that is of concern.</p> <p>c. The conditions report by Robin Kent, conservation Architect has detailed the work and associated costs of repairs and renewals to bring the building up to conservation standards of £770,000. (No grant streams have been researched for this yet – Historic Scotland is a possibility)</p> <p>d. A viability study into the significant work and costs of converting six rooms to en-suite bedrooms is well underway with architect's drawings and specification now with the QS for costing. The work includes removing all the panelling in the upstairs corridors, the stairwell and the ground floor hallway up to new doors (where current "no entry" tape is), adding fire resistant material and then replacing the panelling. Furthermore the structural engineer is not happy with the first floor masonry above the vaulted ceiling in the records room, so this heritage ceiling would have to be removed, new first floor timber joists installed and the ceiling reconstructed to the satisfaction of the Conservation Officer. Building Control have indicated that the building warrant and listed building consent processes are likely to be time consuming due to the nature of the proposals. (Post meeting note - costs for this work are £350k)</p> <p>e. JB had returned to HC with bedroom proposal to see the effect on rates. The assessor has confirmed that each business would be rated separately. DACIC would be responsible for the Court Room and Records room as venue spaces with rateable <b>value</b> of £15k (compared to building less HC area of £33k) and 80% reduction would apply (so £1380 to pay pa).</p> <p>f. So far the only sustainable business plan is based on the bedroom conversion above. Time will be needed to develop this proposal to satisfy conservation and building control requirements. The grant funding stream identified is the Heritage Enterprise Fund which is new and has no Scottish applications to date. It is based on a conservation deficit calculation which requires a valuer to assess the increase in market value that the conversion would contribute and this is deducted from the grant available. For example if the bedrooms would add £50k to the value but the conversion costs £350k then £300k would be eligible. The application is a two stage process and the next stage one deadline in 29<sup>th</sup> November. Even if we could make this date we would only know a few days before CRtB completion in March, if we had been successful and that brings no guarantee for stage 2 funding.</p> <p>g On balance the board agreed that it could not proceed with the Community Right to Buy because the timeframe does not allow us to explore the options for the Court House to a stage that we have a sustainable business plan with likely funding streams to secure the conversion, maintenance and conservation burden. Furthermore the valuation price, on the open market,</p>	

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	<p>may well attract a private buyer (like Links House did) who could provide a better solution than a community bid.</p> <p>h. As discussed previously with SCS, they are willing for HC to remain as tenants until a sale goes through. If there is no interest then the community has time to develop its proposals and associated funding without the restricted timetable required by Community Right to Buy. It is anticipated that this will take until March 2015. A sub committee of JB, AC and JMCM to continue to work on funding options.</p> <p>i. Plans for Public Meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> November at 8pm West Church Hall. Board to meet at 7:15 to lay out room. JB has produced draft leaflet for distribution (JC to refine). JC tabled a Press Release and letter to SCS which were approved, but to be held for release until after the Public meeting. JC will address the meeting and then open up to questions. Posters are already on display. Members will receive a reminder email invitation to attend.</p> <p>j. JC will inform HC, in confidence, on 4<sup>th</sup> that no ballot is required.</p> <p>k. After the public meeting JC will inform SCS, CRtB and Liz Howard (Scottish Land Fund). JB will contact HIE, Architectural Heritage Trust, SC Mackintosh, consultants and membership. RJ will update UHI and Castle Hotel.</p>	<p>JC, JB</p> <p>JC</p> <p>JC, JB &amp; RJ</p>
5 AOCB	<p>a. A tripartite meeting of chairs of DACIC, DADCA and CC set for 6<sup>th</sup> November in Coffee Lounge above library at 6:30</p> <p>b. World Sheep Dog Trials 3-6 September 2014 in Fearn. We have been asked to work with the organisers to promote accommodation for this event as Tain has very little availability. 240 competitors from 24 countries plus spectators are expected to attend. There is also an opportunity to market Dornoch for an extended visit.</p>	<p>JC</p> <p>JB</p>
6. DONM	Wednesday 4 <sup>th</sup> December 7-pm Council Chambers.	