

Dornoch Area C.I.C.

Registered Address: Balloan, Dornoch, IV25 3HS

Dornoch Focus Group

BUSINESS MEETING

Held at 5:45 pm on Tuesday 26th February 2013,
in the Council Chambers, Carnegie Building, Dornoch

MINUTES

Apologies:

Rev Susan Brown, Gavin Wright, John Murray, Neil Hampton, Mary and Ken Bromages, Judi Sutherland

Present:

Claire Riddell, Ian Walker, Jim McGillvray, Rachel Jack, Ruth Brown, Sue Helal, Colin Thompson, Ewan MacLeod, Leslie Bell, John McMurray, Kate Robinson, Terry Robinson, Peter Wild, Sally Wild, Pat Murray, Graeme Ross, Mark McAuley and one other.

Minutes of previous meeting:

Proposed by Rachel Jack, seconded by Terry Robinson

Matters arising

There were no matters arising which were not in the present Agenda.

Chairman's Report:

As Judi had stepped down from being Chair at the last meeting, there was no Chairman's report. At this point, the meeting accepted an offer from Jim McGillvray to be Acting Chairman, until a new Chair can be found.

Treasurer's Report:

Rachel presented the current statement. Payments this month include £100 to Calico for the domain name. Payments also to Jadcom for work regarding the webcam and £80 to Judi to reimburse her for the Highland Council planning and consent application fee for the Town Map. Funds allocated to allotments and community marquee are £3,000.00. Funds totalling £3,041.00 also set aside for remaining payment due for the website, town map and another application for advertising consent. Real cash balance for this month of £1,930.70. We expect £2,000 as grant funding towards cost of new website. Due to the redesign of the website, no invoices went out this January, but renewed ads on the new website will date from the 1st April, so this revenue will be taken into next financial year.

Update on Dornoch Sheriff Court registration of interest:

Judi's last email required some input from the board, and once that was in, the application can be sent in. The meeting unanimously agreed it was still important that the registration of interest should proceed. John McMurray added that charities and crafts people may also be interested in hiring the offices, and we should add these ideas to our business plan.

Jim is urging HIE and HC Devt Centre to become more interested in the SC, he has made sure they are aware of the likelihood that a key building in the centre of town will become vacant. He feels that the Scottish Court Service should pass the building over to community use for no cost, and in addition, make a payment towards future cost of maintenance.

Signs Update

The Community Council has in principle agreed to the Focus Group taking on the project of proposed new signage as discussed at the last meeting and we need their approval in writing for TECs to go ahead. Pat to write a letter to them. We need to confirm that there will be gaps between the signs to avoid a 'blocky' appearance. The sign at the corner of the Meadows and Shore Road should be moved about ten feet closer to the corner for better visibility, and this should be raised later when we know what is happening with the site. There is also a need for the abattoir site to be dealt with to make it more attractive. (Re this site, Jim assures us that both the HC and the HIE are aware of the urgency of dealing with it, given its unsightliness and negative effects on the town.) We will ask for additional signs for High Street, 1. at the corner of High St and Castle St, and 2. at the Square (on the new sign) as well as a small pedestrian one pointing along the footpath beside Trevoise. (Pat to contact to TECS.) Refurbishment and renewal of the finger post sign to be pursued.

Town Map Update

Judi has been hard at work arranging for the creation of the Town Map, to be put up on the wall of the bus shelter. She has obtained permission to put this up, has contacted Ian Westacott to update the map outside Historylinks for this purpose, and for a digital file to be made and printed. She has now compiled a list of businesses which will be marked onto it, with numbered stickers. It was suggested that the toilets both in the town and on the way to the beach also be put on it, under 'public places'. Funding is being made available for the physical frame and installation by the Highland Council.

Website Update

Still a bit of tweaking required, but it is scheduled to go live within the next few weeks. Additional features will include 'shuffle' and search mechanisms, the ability to pay for and update ads online, a community directory of businesses, an events page which can be updated by organisers themselves, and a small ads page. Peter Will expressed concern that shuffling with each click for the list of B&B's and Self-Catering might not be helpful to visitors who might need to refer back, perhaps a daily shuffle might be better. Pat to ask Plexus Media about this. When the site goes live, it will be useful to have as much feedback as possible to ensure it will work well for everyone.

Judi applied for and received funding from the Highland Council for £2,000 to put toward the cost of the new website. The meeting expressed its gratitude to the Highland Council and to Judi for arranging this. The funds must be claimed before 31st March, with copies of invoices.

Induction Pack

No real progress has been made on this, and is to be looked at this in the future.

Forthcoming Events

The Dornoch Fibre Fest will be held on the 16th and 17th March. There will be three masterclasses, in Fair Isle Knitting, Feltmaking and Rag Rug Making, and only a few places are left in the Knitting class. A lot of people are coming and staying overnight in Dornoch. The Director of the Royal School of Needlework is coming to speak at the Gala opening on the Friday night 15th March at the West Church Hall, doors open 6:00 pm for 6:30 pm lecture. On Friday, there will be knitting lessons with children of the school, which ties in with the Historylinks project about the school's 100 year anniversary. For the Fibre Fest itself there will be people giving demonstrations in all kinds of needlework, patchwork, quilting, recycling, knitting and there will be stands selling fabric and yarn craft supplies and books.

(Pat adds: The Dornoch Cinema will be showing 'Skyfall', the latest James Bond movie, on the 23rd March at 7:30, doors open 7:00 pm. February's showing of Oscar winner 'Argo' proved very popular and two screenings were held.)

Any other Business

Rachel wanted to suggest a change of day for meeting as a lot of people can't make Tuesdays. Others can't do Wednesday, and perhaps Mondays might be good idea, or a 'random shuffle' between Mondays Tuesdays and Wednesdays. Rachel will compile a list of dates by the next meeting. It was decided to keep the 5:45 pm start,

as this suited owners of businesses so they don't need to go home and come back. She pointed out that we also need some more directors, to ensure meetings are quorate.

The fact that the webcam was out of order was raised, and this ties in with the new website, - we hope that once the new website is up, we will negotiate with Calico about a better service, which should improve things. Many people from all over the world have emailed in to mention that it is out of action, and ask when it will be in service again.

A new Secretary is sought, as Pat would like to step back from the full role of secretary. There are 3 aspects to being secretary 1. is to keep records up to date, ensure submission of accounts and annual return etc, which involves going online on the Companies House website. 2. is the function of keeping the minutes, issuing the agendas and occasionally sending out letters following up on tasks outlined at meetings, and 3. managing a list of members, and possibly looking for ways to attract new members. Pat is happy to keep hold of this last role, and would like to stay on as Director, but will not have enough time to devote to 1 and 2. If anyone would be prepared to come forward to do these roles, please contact her. Kerensa offered to take minutes for the next two meetings, but could not commit to do so during the busy summer months. Jim suggested we discuss this further.

To follow up on a point previously mentioned, we need to look for new Directors. Susan Brown is increasingly busy, and cannot attend most meetings, and has expressed her wish to step down, although Jim hopes she will stay on without the pressure of needing to attend regular meetings. It was decided that with the launch of the new website there is a chance to contact a wider section of the community, and that we could look for directors (who have some free time to devote to the Focus group) among them. This could mean that some of the workload, hitherto on the shoulders of Judi Sutherland, our previous Chair, could be distributed more fairly.

The meeting then took the opportunity of expressing their appreciation to Judi for all her hard work in the four main projects (Sheriff Court, Town Map, Signs and Website) during her term as Chair. These projects are almost off the ground now, and would not have progressed so far without her detailed efforts. Judi also worked extremely hard at keeping the Focus Group together and getting us to the point we are at now. This was unanimously agreed.

Kate Robinson mentioned that she had been to a recent talk held at Strathpeffer about the 'Digital Tourist' outlining how the modern tourist seeks information and makes bookings online. She felt it had been a very useful experience, and is the process of applying for a free QR code, which people with smart phones can use to go directly to her website. Businesses in the town might consider using them as well. It was asked whether we had ever done a survey of visitors to the town, or a survey of accommodation providers about their guests. This could be a future project.

Ewan Macleod is liaising with the people at the retail park to come up with a design for a sign at the entrance they think is suitable, and then to consider how to fund it. The land is now leased to the Focus Group, and we are responsible for its maintenance. One new problem is that under the tangle of brambles, there is some archaeological material which should not be disturbed, and this will effect how and where the sign will be erected.

A new face at the meeting made himself known as Mark McAuley who has recently moved to Dornoch to set up a football coaching business, signing up schools in which to run after-school coaching. He is also keen to help with local football teams. He is keen to develop Dornoch as a football centre.

Dates of Next Meeting: 26th March