

Cumbrae Community Council (Zoom Meeting)
12th of November 2020 at 5 p.m

Members Present

Graham Wallace (Chair), Sharon Hagan, Lisa Christie, Dr. Charlie Shaw, Crawford Gillan

Apologies: Alec Caldwell

Also present: Cllr Ian Murdoch, Cllr Tom Marshall

Apologies: Cllr Alex Gallagher and Constable Hamilton.

The minutes from the previous CCC meeting held on 10th September 2020 had been circulated before the meeting. These minutes were approved by Sharon Hagan and seconded by Charlie Shaw.

Matters Arising.

Regarding the coronavirus updates, there was not believed to be anything specific regarding the island at this time.

Lisa Christie asked if the Covid-19 figures could be narrowed down to indicate what the island's figure was, as the current method of preparing the statistics were not particularly relevant to the island as it also included Largs. It was agreed that a more accurate reflection of the island's stats would be better but it was not believed but this would currently achievable. It was noted that the same point had been made for some time about the statistics for the island being misleading when looking at socio-economic data gathering and this in turn could lead to decisions on the current performance and future requirements of the island being based on inaccurate base information.

Concerning the coronavirus pandemic, Graham Wallace reiterated a concern that was initially highlighted in March regarding what the position was should any of the local food retailers have to close due to self-isolation requirements. It was understood that North Ayrshire Council was aware of the potential problem and had contingency plans in place to ensure adequate food (and other) supplies to the island were maintained.

In relation to the containment of the spread of the virus locally, Cllr Marshall said that the local school children who attended Largs were being transported directly by bus to the School and he firmly believed the school was doing everything they could to control the spread.

Cllr Murdoch did say that it was a difficult situation to manage as the kids were going into town on lunch breaks and after school but this situation was in no way unique to Largs and was happening everywhere. It should also be noted that the West Kilbride children came up by train and it would be almost impossible to do anymore.

Cllrs update.

Cllr Marshall informed the meeting that the North Ayrshire Council Cabinet met recently and discussed the report around the Millport Flood Prevention Scheme. There had been 5 objections to the scheme from the general public. North Ayrshire council cabinet gave the go-ahead with set timescales in place and the project should commence in April 2021 with a finish date at the end of 2023.

The flood protection scheme proposals for Millburn were discussed and it had been agreed to submit the project details to the Scottish government for funding. Cllr Marshall informed the meeting that the Ayrshire Growth Deal had £23 million for marine tourism and that hopefully there would be something for Cumbrae in that figure, perhaps step ashore facilities would be a good start? Graham Wallace opined that it would be extremely disappointing if Cumbrae missed out and that the Marina plans slipped down in the list of NAC priorities. It was important to get local community support behind the Marina Project and to ensure that proper costings etc were obtained. It would be necessary to have the services of a consultant to help develop the community Marina plan as 2023 was not too far away. Cllr Marshall stated that he would make enquiries with the relevant NAC officer to make contact with CCC.

Dr. Shaw asked if there were any plans for the pier, but it would appear at this moment in time this was unclear. Graham Wallace stated that access to any forthcoming Marina development would need to be via the pier area as there were no other suitable locations on the shore in the town.

Cllr Murdoch advised the meeting that he had asked a recent NAC cabinet meeting if they would continue to support Millport Town Hall and this very encouragingly was met with a resounding YES. Cllr Murdoch went on to say that he would be pushing that the £23 million earmarked for marine tourism should be spent in tourism areas and not allocated to the less tourist dependant areas. The money should be spent on Largs, Cumbrae, and Arran.

Cllr Murdoch advised that both himself and Cllr Marshall agreed that Hunterston did require an Environmental Impact Assessment. Cllr Murdoch was concerned that there was talk of oil and gas decommissioning and also reference having been made regarding decommissioning of naval submarines. Graham Wallace stated that it appeared that some of the former Hunterston Parc “dirty industry” proposals might still be under consideration for the site and that places to store low level nuclear waste products were being looked at nationally and the former Hunterston A site could be an area being considered. He asked that fellow community councillors made sure that they read the NDA consultation response document, prepared by FCC and supported by CCC, which had been previously circulated.

Cllr Murdoch stated that there seemed to be an obvious conflict between green energy and green economy projects versus nuclear waste.

Reports from meetings attended

1. Cumbrae Watersports Centre

Graham Wallace stated that he had had a couple of meetings/ discussions with Barry Fleeting to move the matter forward and ascertain if there was any willingness, on the part of the local community, to take on the responsibility of the Centre. A meeting had been arranged by CCC at which representatives from the main groups on the island agreed that a small subgroup be set up to explore the possibility and meet with Centre management. The subgroup was made up of the Chair of the Tourist Association, Mr. Scott Ferris. Chair of CCDC, Mrs. Deborah Ferris, Nikol Morrison from the Millport Motors/Cumbrae Economic Group, and Mr. Michael McGowan from Cumbrae Creatives.

Crawford Gillan stated that he was disappointed to read an email from Alex McFie of the Cumbrae Economic Group regarding the meeting to take place with the community groups in connection with the Water Sports Centre. An email from her to members of that group, and sent to them only a couple of minutes before the commencement of the meeting, stated that she had only received notification from the Community Council 30 seconds before the meeting was due to commence. This was inaccurate as Alex herself had confirmed receipt of the invitation issued to CEG and had also sent a confirmation email to North Ayrshire Council the previous day stating that she would be attending the meeting.

CG was concerned that it might lead the public and members of the CEG to believe that the CEG had somehow been excluded by CCC from the process which, as her confirmation of attendance emails highlighted, was in fact far from the case.

The subgroup had inspected the property last Friday. An update hasn't been received as yet. Graham Wallace had written to the subgroup suggesting they consider opening up the tour of the assets to members of the main group and also that they also seriously consider making contact with David Henderson of DTAS/COSS for advice and assistance in considering taking on the asset and the owning/operation of it as a community venture. DTAS/COSS have vast experience of such projects and had been invaluable in assisting the community pursue the Town Hall and Marina projects. CCC has again offered to schedule/facilitate a follow-up meeting of the community groups to which the subgroup can report its findings to date as the matter needs to be moved on as quickly as possible.

Ferry users group meeting.

The next scheduled meeting for the Cumbrae Ferry Group (NAC) is the 27th of November 2020 and it was important that the Community Council continued to attend these meetings. It was agreed that Sharon Hagan would continue to attend on behalf of CCC along with Dr. Charlie Shaw to ensure we were represented.

There was concern that some of the proposals seem to lean towards increasing passenger numbers/car numbers and ferry services (more ferries/larger ferries etc) and it was felt that this needed to be carefully looked at regarding the impact that may have for the island both positive and negative and on its capacity to cope, and that such issues should form part of the detailed considerations for the development of the ongoing Cumbrae socio-economic plan. Cllr Murdoch stated that passenger and vehicle numbers needed to be looked at very carefully to work towards a short-term solution pending full resolution from CalMac and NAC etc.

It was highlighted that some members, not only of CCC but also other island groups, were having difficulty logging on to these meetings using Microsoft Teams. Cllr Murdoch advised that Melanie Anderson at NAC would be able to offer guidance and support in this area.

A consultant's report, commissioned by NAC, detailing options for the handling of the large vehicle and passenger queues which develop at both the Largs and Cumbrae slips – and the impacts on the road layout/parking etc. in Largs – had been circulated to CCC members and required to be studied carefully. CCC chair Graham Wallace suggested a very quick zoom meeting for CCC members to discuss NAC's preferred options which had been tabled prior to CCC's attendance at the next Cumbrae Ferry (NAC led) meeting and the island's next FUG meeting. It was noted that Angus Campbell (Calmac Community Board Rep) had also been circulated and his comments should be read in conjunction with the NAC report.

Cumbræ Community Group meeting (NAC led).

Graham Wallace highlighted to the meeting that NAC was in the process of appointing an Island representative who would be responsible for both Arran and Cumbræ. It was vitally important, in his opinion, to ensure that we will not be subsumed into Arran as the islands were very different in nature and had significantly different issues which needed to be addressed. It was stressed that a "one size fits all" approach definitely would not work. Any updates received regarding this new position and any meetings or discussions will be passed on to the Community Council members.

There had been further discussion around the development of a 10 year socio/economic/environmental plan for Cumbræ and it had again been emphasised that it was essential that factual and accurate baseline information be established prior to moving forward with any proposals for the future and it was again highlighted that many of the quoted figures for Cumbræ included and got mixed up with statistics for Largs.

Police Report

Constable Hamilton submitted her apologies to the meeting as she was on duty at this time but had submitted a written report for the benefit of the Community Council and attendees. The recent issues of wilful fire-raising and arson on the island was a great concern to both the community and the Community Council. These crimes were however being dealt with by Police Scotland and it was felt it would be inappropriate to discuss or offer opinions at this time. CCC was confident Police Scotland will update the council with any further information.

Lisa Christie raised the issue of the lack of recycling facilities on the Island, dumping and fly-tipping of rubbish both around the town and also at the Garrison. Graham Wallace advised that North Ayrshire Council had contacted CCC with a suggestion that a skip could be placed at the pier as this was a central location and easy for islanders to access. This had been circulated to all members of CCC, MPHUG and other island groups and there was a unanimous response that this was not the location for this type of facility. North Ayrshire Council had cleared the site at the Garrison due to the previous dumping of the rubbish but made it clear that as this dump was within the Garrison grounds it was not technically their responsibility to remove. CCC was unsure or unaware of the result of discussions that may have taken place between North Ayrshire Council and CCDC on this matter.

Members of the community had contacted CCC regarding the Monday pickups of large items and that on some occasions the Monday pick up was not happening. Items placed out were left lying for several weeks before collection. It was feared that this may also lead to instances of fly-tipping. Crawford Gillan raised an additional concern regarding the Monday uplifts that if they were not as regular as they should be and items of furniture etc were left outside people's homes that with the outbreak of fire-raising on the Island this could lead to these items being set fire to with unimaginable consequences. There has been a previous incident some time ago where a sofa chair was set fire to in Cardiff Street.

Sharon Hagan stated that Arran already had a recycling/household waste facility in place and it may not be too onerous for a site to be identified and staffed for a few hours twice a week. Lisa Christie reminded the meeting there was a clothes recycling container at the school but this had not been

used for some considerable time. Graham Wallace reiterated his position that we should continue to push for some form of recycling/household waste disposal facility on the island.

Planning issues.

The appeal to the LRB of NAC for amended planning consent for the solar farm at the top of the island had been rejected by NAC and the applicant would therefore need to submit a further full application to the council with associated costs if they wished to pursue this development. Any new application would have to be submitted under LDP2.

The application by CCDC for 20 pitches for motorhomes in the Garrison had been submitted and was awaiting consideration. It was hoped that this application would be successful as it seems to have the support of the majority community. It would hopefully prevent motorhomes being parked overnight along Glasgow Street, Stuart Street, and in front of the Garrison buildings, etc. Crawford Gillan stated that for this to properly work CCC would need to continue the push for some form of parking restrictions on the island as both would need to work hand in hand.

Cllr Murdoch updated the meeting that the introduction of decriminalisation for parking in North Ayrshire had been delayed due to covid-19 and he felt that the current traffic restriction orders should be enforceable and that he will chase up the matter with the NAC.

The proposed Garrison facility does not include electric hook-up at this stage as most motorhomes were self-sufficient and most were only on the island for a couple of days. It may be that additional costs for electricity supply could delay or postpone the project. There were already facilities for touring caravans at Kirkton.

Graham Wallace suggested that in order to fall in line with the majority of other Scottish islands maybe motorhomes and caravans would have to show to CalMac that they are booked onto an authorised site on the island before being allowed to travel. This was felt by the majority to be a reasonable proposition and is already being explored, together with ways of addressing some of the issues around "wild camping" on the island with NAC's Outdoor Access officer.

Crawford Gillan felt it was anomalous that local businesses with larger vehicles or contractors coming onto the island to carry out essential works were charged considerably more on the ferry fares than a motorhome. He highlighted the figures that 9.99m motorhomes travel for £25.90 whilst a commercial vehicle would be charged £133.30.

RiggHill Wind Farm

The matter will go to the planning department in January. Fairlie and Skelmorlie community councils have raised serious objections and wish to be allowed to speak at the planning meeting. Cumbrae Community Council has previously listed their concerns and their support of Fairlie and Skelmorlie councils. The wind turbines being proposed to be sited between Skelmorlie and Largs were, in the opinion of objectors, far too large and powerful to be based on land as they were designed as offshore wind turbines and would apparently be the largest and most powerful to be sited on shore in the UK. It was noted with interest that it appears that turbines of this power/size, whilst manufactured by a Danish company, are not allowed to be erected on land or within 10km of residences in Denmark itself.

Roads Issues

There was still much work to be done around the island but it was encouraging to see work would shortly be commenced on both College Street surface and pavements and also Kames Street.

A meeting with the local Roads inspector has been offered by NAC to tour and identify major issues around the island and this should now be taken up.

Hunterston Parc & Hunterston SSG Meetings. Some of the issues arising from these meetings have been covered above. Full copies of the Minutes/Action Points arising from the last meetings of the Hunterston Parc Liaison Group and Hunterston SSG are available upon request.

Cycle path

Crawford Gillan stated that he was very disappointed to read in the Largs and Millport newspaper that the island had been unsuccessful in their quest for a bicycle path from Keppel to Cumbrae slip. This was despite the recent award of £8 million from the Scottish government for safer cycling projects. He felt it particularly disappointing to read that a spokesperson from North Ayrshire Council had stated the reason the Cumbrae cycle path had been rejected was partly due to the cost of purchase of land from local landowners. Crawford Gillan stated that neither he nor any member of CCC was aware of any landowner that had been approached by NAC to ascertain what the cost of the required land maybe. It did seem bizarre that NAC was continuing to promote the island as a cycle-friendly destination and were supportive of the Coig commercial Enterprise but would not assist in progressing the matter with the relevant authorities and funders. Graham Wallace notified the meeting that he had yet again raised serious concerns about the lack of any progress in developing the much needed safe cycle route between FSC and the Ferry terminal with Claire Fitzsimmons at NAC and was awaiting a response and an update from her. The point has been frequently made to NAC that Cumbrae promotes itself as a safe cycling island for families and it must be one of the busiest cycling routes in Scotland, and especially important in introducing large numbers of all age groups to cycling, yet no attempt has been made to improve safety for the cyclists on what is, during the tourist season, an extremely busy and dangerous road for any level of cyclist but particularly the young and inexperienced. Cllr Murdoch advised the meeting that he would make enquiries with the council as to what costs were quoted for the land.

Friends of Millport Town Hall.

The invited major application to the Scottish Government Regeneration Fund for £1.5 million was submitted on 5 November 2020.

North Ayrshire Council continues to be exceptionally supportive and is helping in every way they can to make this project happen for the island of Cumbrae.

The team of professionals – Architect, Engineers, Surveyors, and Timber specialists are visiting the building to make sure the best possible plan is devised to make this building a viable space for the long-term future.

This is a great opportunity for our community and we are excited and hopeful for the future. Graham Wallace also passed on this thanks to Hagan Joinery for the pro bono work they were currently doing in the town hall.

Millport Marina scheme.

No relevant update for the meeting at this time.

Millport Pier and Harbour User Group Update

Sharon Hagan updated the meeting that there had been a meeting with Alistair Brown from NAC regarding the landing steps at the pier which are not level. Sharon advised that's the contractor Shearwater would be coming back to look at what was required to be done. It is proposed that wire mesh fencing be erected to seal off the wooden section of pier and the maintenance of the fence needed to be kept up.

Sharon also stated that the bollards had been taken away, chevrons were to be placed on the pier, and there were plans to put a ring in place so that boats could tie up at the pier.

Graham Wallace asked if Sharon could provide an update of the work that she had identified as being needed to be done and could that be shared with both the Community Council and the members of the Millport Pier and Harbour Users Group.

Update from CCDC – Garrison House Committee

The issues around the waste centre in the Garrison grounds and also the hard-standing area for motorhomes had already been alluded to in the meeting.

Public Toilets – Now into winter openings and the two blocks which remain open daily are those at Croc Rock and Cumbrae Slip. The site visit took place with Healthmatic on 23.10.20 and was very informative and productive. They now have quotes available based on the structure of each block. The Board can now plan the next steps in relation to the investing of grant funding raised to install 'coin pays' or coin-operated doors, to generate income towards the running cost of these facilities.

AOCB

Graham Wallace ran through the CCC's end of year accounts and stated that he would circulate them to the CCC members for approval at the AGM after which they would be submitted for audit.

Lisa Christie asked what the position was regarding hand sanitizer gel for the local school children. Graham Wallace informed the meeting that a donation was to be made to the Parent Council by the Millport Support Group to the sum of £200. As the Parent Council had already purchased hand gel this was a reimbursement but it was agreed that the issue surrounding the quality of gel provided for the school children was a matter that the Parent Council should continue to raise with NAC.

Crawford Gillan advised the meeting that the current Cumbrae Resilience team under the command of Mr. Bob Campbell had been dissolved due to the retirement of Mr. Campbell. Meetings had been attended by Crawford Gillan on behalf of CCC with both NAC and the Ayrshire County Resilience Committee and to ensure that this valuable work on the island continued that the Community Council would take on the public liability insurance cover for the group and that a further meeting was scheduled with Millport Support Group members with a few to them carrying on with resilience duties on the island. Crawford Gillan took the opportunity to thank Mr. Campbell and his team for the work that they had conducted on behalf of the community over the past few years. Mr. Campbell had been thanked by the county resilience team but CCC wanted their thanks to be minuted.

The date of the next meeting to be notified.