

APPROVED MINUTES

Cumbræ Community Council

(Meeting held via Zoom)

12th August 2021 @ 5.00pm

1. Present

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

Also present: Cllr. Alan Hill, Cllr Tom Marshall, Cllr Ian Murdoch (NAC), Jan Wilkie (CCDC), Angie McCallum (MTH), Adam Lyon (L&M) plus 3 members of the public.

Apologies received: Alex Caldwell

2. **Draft Minutes.** The minutes of the previous meeting held on 10th June 2021 were proposed by Lisa Christie and seconded by Sharon Hagan.

3. Police Report

None

4. Matters Arising

- a. Fly-tipping, Recycling/ Bulk Waste Facility:- The sense is that the community is still of the opinion that a recycling/bulk waste facility should be provided on the island and CCC will continue to pursue this with the Council otherwise the island's residents will be at a disadvantage to those for whom there is such service provision on the mainland. **Action** – *to be pursued with NAC.*
- b. Japanese Knotweed:- A Google map showing 22 locations of Japanese Knotweed around the coast road of the island had been submitted to NAC and SEPA. NAC had subsequently treated some of the knotweed on its land at Farland Point. SEPA had responded confirming the invasive nature of the knotweed and that it is a criminal offence to allow its spread onto adjoining land. This means that the Police would be required to take action if it was reported to them that this had occurred. NAC are of the view that it is up to individual land owners around the island to deal with the problem on their land and proposed taking no further action to help eradicate it. It was noted that NAC had cut back verges in locations affected by the knotweed and that this could cause it to spread even further. **Action** – *Matter to be pursued with NAC highlighting the detrimental effect and risks involved in cutting verges contain knotweed. NAC to be asked to contact the owners of affected land around the island to point out their legal responsibilities in respect of the control of knotweed.*

5. Brief Reports of Meetings Attended

- a. Ferry Related Issues & Cumbræ Ferry Users Group:- A long discussion took place about issues relating to the ferry including the increasingly problematic situations being faced by residents at peak times due to the numbers of vehicles and passengers queuing on both sides of the crossing and the lack of suitable facilities and space to accommodate this volume of traffic. The difficulty being experienced by residents and island businesses in attempting to travel to and from the island on what is their "lifeline service" due to day trippers wishing to visit for a few hours of R&R on such days was highlighted as needing to be urgently addressed and that some form of priority

boarding/booking system was urgently required. It was noted that the Cumbrae ferry service is very different to those elsewhere on the west coast and under very different pressures and this should be taken into account. There was discussion about the NAC proposals for altering the road/queuing layout in Largs but it was felt that Cumbrae should identify what its requirements were in terms of the queuing system i.e. avoidance of queue jumping situations, provision of priority/pre-booked lanes etc. but to let Largs decide amongst the options for changing the road/queuing system as long as the requirements were met.

From the discussions taking place and the experiences of recent years it appears that both the Millport terminal and particularly the Largs terminal are not fit for purpose due to the volumes of passenger & vehicular traffic being experienced and this needs to be addressed urgently.

It was noted that the same major issues seem to go round and round without any satisfactory outcomes. Cllr Hill referred to past situations when the FUG had gone straight to management (CalMac and ScotGov) and managed to bring about change. It was suggested that a different operator might be beneficial. **Action** – *Continue to pursue these issues direct with relevant agencies and through the FUG.*

b. *Hunterston SSG – no meeting*

c. *Peel Ports Liaison Meeting – no meeting*

d. *North Coast Locality Planning Partnership – no meeting*

e. Cumbrae Community Group:- A meeting, to which representatives of the main community groups on the island had been invited, had been held earlier in the day (12th August) to discuss the 3 year Islands Covid recovery plan, the 10 year Cumbrae Island Plan and the very recently produced Cumbrae Socio-Economic Baseline Profile which will, together with intensive public consultation and input, inform the island's 10 year socio/economic/environmental plan. There was some discussion at the meeting on shortcomings that had already been identified in the short space of time available such as out of date data, data that included mainland statistics etc. plus references to the detailed data missing from the Profile which would be essential for accuracy in moving forward with any proposals. Each representative was invited to submit their feedback/input on the Baseline Report.

It was again emphasised at the meeting that Arran & Cumbrae are very different islands with very different needs and issues and that a one size fits all approach will not work. It was also emphasised that it is essential that the resident community be given every encouragement and opportunity to take part and provide their feedback on the future direction of the island and that any plan produced take account of the whole of the community's input and that it be based on accurate data and not on past assumptions etc.

The question was asked at the Community Group meeting whether the baseline report could be released for input from a wider audience however it was requested that, until the draft had been further worked on, it remain with the group members only. Dissatisfaction was expressed by the Councillors present that the only elected member to be invited to the meeting was Cllr. Gallagher and that the Draft Report had not been released to them and more widely for information/comment.

A further meeting will be held later in the month to lay out the next steps in taking this plan forward. **Action** – *Request that every resident has the ability to have their say and encourage the whole community to put in responses.*

Copies of relevant Minutes & Presentations etc. are available upon request from cumbraeccouncil@gmail.com

6. Standing Items

a. Planning Applications:-

i. Scottish Water had received approval for the installation of a water fountain to be installed on the Southside of Guildford Street.

ii. the consultation period on the proposed holiday park in the Cathedral grounds had now closed with approx.. 30 objectors v 10 supporters. Cllr. Marshall advised the meeting the application had been called in and would come before the Planning Committee on 1 September.

iii. an appeal against the refusal of Planning Consent for the Riggill Wind Farm had been lodged with ScotGov.

iv. two major applications for developments at Hunterston are subject to pre-application discussions with NAC. The first involves the development of the former coal yard site, the building of a 180 meter tower and associated factory space and the use of the jetty for the manufacture and distribution of large capacity undersea power cables to service solar farms and offshore windfarms by a newly established company named XLCC. The second is a proposal by Highview Power for the development of a 49.9 MW cryogenic electricity storage plant on the former marine construction yard. Further details on both proposals can be provided on request to cumbraeccouncil@gmail.com

b. Licensing – The Pier Hotel had applied for variations to its licence and having discussed the application with the Licensing section at NAC it appears there will be very limited impact on the residents or the public realm.

c. Roads Issues – Complaints had again been received about the overgrown/overhanging condition of roadside weeds/hedges/brambles/verges dangerously encroaching onto, and narrowing, the roadway and pavements at various locations around the island and on the Ferry Road and Inner Circle. **Action** – *Continue to pursue these issues with the relevant departments and via Councillors.*

d. Cycle-Path/s - CCC again expressed its frustration at the lack of any progress and will continue to pursue this issue. It was pointed out that there is signage in place already identifying the prom from the town to FSC as a shared pedestrian/cycle route. A response had been received from NAC to our latest correspondence but it did not address the points raised and a strong follow up has been sent. **Action** – *Continue to press for a full response on steps taken to progress this based on earlier reports submitted by NAC consultant(s).*

e. Millport FPS/Millport Marina/Millport Pier:- A meeting had been held with NAC to (re) kick start the Marina development proposals again and the next steps necessary in the process have been discussed. NAC are in the process of instructing consultants to carry out further work and RHDHV will again be involved. The working group will be re-formed and a meeting called in the near future to progress this important proposal.

The FPS meetings had resulted in NAC introducing some improvements to the scheme but it is still essential that, given the scale of the development, all members of the community take an interest in what is being designed and provide their input at every given opportunity before it is too late. Some queries are still outstanding about the proposed colour schemes and whether they fit in with the streetscape etc. Other issues remain outstanding about street furniture,

planting, access to beaches/seafront, shelters etc. which will be followed up at the next meetings. Public consultation events are planned and residents should look out for the publication of the dates etc. A revised video fly-through had been requested which NAC agreed to provide. **Action** – *Continue to provide feedback to NAC and make every effort to encourage the community to examine and comment on the proposals.*

f. Cumbrae Community Resilience Team (CCRT)/MSG Update - CCRT responded to 2 incidents in relation to passengers who had mistimed the last ferry from the island. On the first occasion, two volunteers were deployed and a family was located at the slip and as a result, two members were taken to LM Hospital as they were due medication. Due to the exceptionally busy holiday period, alternative accommodation was not available but fortunately by the time medical treatment was administered and relevant paperwork completed the stranded passengers attended the first ferry. A volunteer attended to check that all was well with them. A letter of thanks and appreciation was received from the grateful family.

The following evening CCRT also attended Cumbrae slip to a report of three passengers with 3 x under 5yr old children who had misread the Calmac timetable. Fortunately, on this occasion after many phone calls, a holiday rental flat was located and the passengers were accommodated for the night.

Millport Support Group (MSG) – the next CrocTalk Community Newsletter will be available in early September.

- g. Millport Town Hall:- MTH reported as follows “Since the last CCC meeting Millport Town Hall Charity has been successful with funding applications to both the National Lottery and Kelburn Wind Farm. The combination of Brexit and Covid-19 has developed a difficult market for the building trade and developments as a whole with price increases and shortage of materials. The project pushes on, helped by the great support and enthusiasm that comes its way. A second employment opportunity of a Community Liaison Officer will be advertised in September thanks to the funding from the National Lottery.”
- h. CCDC Update:- CCDC reported to the meeting that unfortunately the recently modernised toilets at the Crocodile Rock had been subjected to vandalism. The card payment system funded by HIE via CCC/MSG would be installed in the near future. The toilets at the Slip are to have a coin payment system installed. The bomb shelter toilets were undergoing further works and it was anticipated that they would open in the near future. The campervan site had proved very popular and had been receiving good reports and reviews from its users. **Action** – *Continue to campaign for maximum use of the provided facilities for motorhomes and for responsible camping on the island.*
- i. Watersports Centre Update (The Wave):- Report received “The current volunteer group for The Cumbrae Wave are at the beginning of their journey to secure control of the former Watersports Centre site for the benefit of the community. As one of the first developments that visitors see it’s an important gateway to the island – indeed one of the proposed services for the location is Tourist Information. SportScotland has been liaising with the Wave about the possibility of a Community Asset Transfer and the Wave team has successfully applied to the North Ayrshire Venture Trust for funding to employ a Project Development Officer to assist in the preparation of the feasibility study and business plan. Volunteers from The Wave and the Town Hall projects have been sharing skills and experience which both groups have found really constructive.”

7. Agenda Items.

- a. "Wild" Camping/Campervans:- It was reported that during the summer issues had again been experienced through the numbers of people camping on the island and, in some cases, their behaviour. The majority of the camping undertaken does not meet the criteria of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code (<https://www.outdooraccess-scotland.scot/>) and discussions had taken place with NAC about the issuing of advisory/guidance notices for both those intending to camp or stay over by campervan at the Largs Terminal and on social media etc. Several examples of what has been provided by other Councils responsible for islands had been provided to NAC for information. It was also noted that other Councils had been seeking the views of the community on "wild" camping etc. and it was suggested that a similar exercise should be undertaken on Cumbrae. Unfortunately after corresponding for a period of several months on this (and the cycle path issues) no progress has been made and no response received to more recent correspondence. **Action** – *the matter will continue to be pursued with NAC.*

In respect of campervans it was noted that the Garrison site seemed to be a great success but it was felt unfortunate that after so much time and effort being invested by so many into getting the project funded and completed there was little support from NAC in discouraging those parking along the front street and on the pier. It was appreciated that it was difficult under present legislation to prevent the front street parking, but as the pier is owned by NAC (as the Harbour Authority) action could be taken to restrict overnight parking on the pier as is done elsewhere in Scotland around piers and harbours. NAC had been requested to put up appropriate signage on the pier and this proposal, together with the front street parking issues, had been included in correspondence/discussions which had taken place with NAC with the suggestion of advisory notices/flyers etc. being provided at the Largs Pier Office etc. **Action** – *the provision of signage on the pier to be pursued with NAC.*

- b. Ferry Related Issues:- Mainly discussed under item 5.a above. However further discussion took place on recent press reports and announcements (The Herald and the L&M) about the reduced number of visitors to the island and the amount of income that had been lost by island businesses in May of this year as compared to pre-pandemic levels.

The figures quoted appeared to show a reduction of 45k passengers in May this year and a loss of over £2.5m. It was not made clear that the passenger-carrying figures issued by CalMac are based on return journeys so the figure should therefore have been a reduction of 22.5k. The actual carrying figures, when they were released by Calmac, showed a reduction of 11k passengers (5.5k return journeys) in real terms. The income loss figure quoted in the press was apparently based on VisitScotland data of an average spend £60pp per day (overnight stay). The VisitScotland figures for day-trippers is believed to be £40pp per day incl. ferry fares etc. The loss to the local economy in Millport for May 2021 would therefore be in the region of £220k and not the millions referred to. This represents a substantial loss for the local tourism-based businesses but thankfully not in the millions as quoted in The Herald newspaper and should be seen against the background of a global pandemic.

On a much more optimistic note, it was encouraging to see the quarterly figures for the May/June/July period. Passenger numbers were up, vehicular traffic up 25%, and commercial traffic up 27%. The passenger-carrying figures for July were over 100k (50k when taking the return journey factor into consideration). This is a higher number than the comparable July 2019 pre-pandemic

figures being used as a comparator. Based on the earlier tourist industry quoted figures this would indicate an estimated spend on the island in July to be in the region of over £2m.

CCC would like to record its thanks to CalMac staff for being able to manage and transport this volume of passengers whilst coping with all of the Government based Covid restrictions and protocol they had to deal with and shows that the Island of Cumbrae is still a much sought after tourist destination for both day-trip and weekend tourists.

- c. Cumbrae's Socio/Economic/Environmental Plan:- Covered at 5.e above
 - d. Consultation on the Islands Development Bond – Population decline is a real threat to the sustainability of many of Scotland's island communities. In a bid to combat depopulation from these areas 100 bonds of up to £50k are being made available to help families stay in or move to islands (including Cumbrae). You can have your say on the proposal via this link: <https://consult.gov.scot/agriculture-and-rural-economy/development-of-the-islands-bond> The consultation is open until 25 October 2021.
 - e. Community Council Elections:- The CCC election, due to have been held in October 2020 after the current CC had been in place for 4 years, had been postponed due to Covid-19. NAC are now proposing the elections take place in October or November and it was noted and agreed that CCC would liaise with NAC on fixing a suitable date and safe process to enable the elections to proceed. A call for nominations from candidates wishing to stand will be sought in due course. A question was raised about the meeting time being too early at 5.00 pm however this had been necessary in the past due to the need to vacate the Garrison by 7.00 pm and as any mainland based attendees (mainly NAC Councillors and/or officials) required time to catch appropriate ferries. The new Community Council can re-visit the timings of meetings. It was suggested a minute taker would be of benefit to allow all councillors to fully take part in the meetings. It was confirmed that funding was available to pay for this but previous adverts had no takers.
 - f. Cumbrae Forum Update:- None
 - g. IoCTA Update:- None
- 8. Councillors Updates:-** Councillors updates were covered whilst dealing with the main agenda items during the meeting.

9. AOCB

- a. Bins/Vermin:- It was noted that due to part-time occupancy of many dwellings, bins are frequently put out for collection days in advance and are left on pavements for many days after being emptied. Aside from being unsightly and blocking and causing an obstruction on what are sometimes narrow pavements, rats are more commonly being observed during daylight hours and migrating further into the town than was previously known. Seagulls are also causing major problems by scattering rubbish from bins. Seagull proof bins and bins of larger capacity are required.
- b. Councillors were asked if there was a cap and/or control on holiday homes/properties being used as 2nd home, short term letting accommodation or Air BnB lets. It had been recently highlighted on social media that there are a number of private lets below tolerable standard and that local people are struggling to find long term, safe and well-maintained accommodation. It was noted

that according to recent reports approx. 50% of housing in the town is either a 2nd home or a short-term letting business. It was pointed out that this is the sort of issue that will be considered in drawing up the socio/economic plan for Cumbrae and that residents should make any views they have on this subject and any others affecting Millport and Cumbrae known during the consultation process.

10. Date of Next Meeting - September 9th 2021 @ 5.00 pm via Zoom.