**Black Isle Partnership (BIP) – Black Isle Communities Meeting**

**Zoom Meeting 1000 14 September 2021**

**Present:** Cllr**.** Gordon Adam (Highland Council and BIP),Jon Palmer (BIP), Julian Paren (BIP and Minute Taker), Helena Macleod (RANK and Kessock Kindness), Ann Jefferson (Fortrose and Rosemarkie Community Council), Anne Phillips (Fortrose and Rosemarkie Community Council), Vanessa Hallhead (BIP), Cai MacIver (Highland Council), Helen Robinson (Rosemarkie and Fortrose Trust), Alison Petit (Culbokie Community Trust)

**Agenda 1: Minutes of the BIP - Black Isle Communities Meeting on 31 August 2021**

Ann Jefferson’s asked that the sentence “Positive comments about bollards from horse riders and swimmers” be amended to “Negative comments about the bollards from horse riders”. Gordon Adam congratulated Helena Macleod on the minutes. With the amendment accepted, the Minutes of the meeting on 31 August 2021 were approved,

**Agenda 2: Matters Arising: Participatory budgeting and the experiences in Leith**

**Gordon Adam** reflected on the previous meeting that had discussed participatory budgeting with special focus on the procedures in place in Leith. He reminded the group how small a pot of money was distributed this way in Leith and how labour intensive it was. Gordon believed there was a potential for a larger proportion of the Highland Council budget being deployed locally through a participatory process

**Jon Palmer** wondered how feasible it would be to insist that 1% of the Highland Council budget be distributed through participatory budgeting and throw the onus on the local communities on how they would spend it. It would then be solely a Highland Council problem on where to raid to identify a free 1% of budget.

**Cai MacIver** said she had been impressed with the amazing energy that the Leith process had generated. Reaching out to a community was not straightforward; there was so much diversity. There were people in need; how did you capture the information? There were parent councils to consider.

**Gordon Adam** agreed that the objective was to get beyond the group that shouted the loudest. There was a need to create an enabling environment so people know they will be taken notice of. If Community Councils have no power, you will end up with no functioning Community Councils. But if Community Councils had teeth, then more people would want to join them and the Community Council would become a proper representative voice.

**Alison Petch** wondered it there could be a Pilot Programme to test the possibilities.

**Vanessa Halhead** drew attention to the published Programme for Government with mention of the topic Communities and Climate Change. She also mentioned a Scottish Rural Action Conference at the end of November. She wondered if the developments on the Black Isle could be presented as a Case Study for a discussion on local government, exploring the best that was possible with the structures in place.

**Agenda 3 News from the Communities**

**Ann Jefferson** asked for information on the size and structure of the Black Isle Partnership.

Jon Palmer said the Partnership was on a transitional path. There were five Directors and eight groups who had signed up. It had pulled groups together during the Pandemic as it had the role of distributing funds equably, and the continued Tuesday Zooms were meetings of bodies across the Black Isle of which some had chosen to become members. The more members BIP had the stronger its role could be. It would be ideal if each Community Council had a representative member on BIP that could provide a communication between the Community Council and the wider Black Isle community. Jon queried how much the Community Council members and their constituents learned of the discussions at the BIP Meetings.

For the future, what was the best time for the Zoom meetings to reach the most community representatives on the Black Isle? Jon would pose the question in the next BIP Newsletter.

**North Coast 500**

**Ann Jefferson** asked what the communities’ view was of the North Coast 500.

**Julian Paren** said that the Black Isle Tourism Team argued that the strengths of the Black Isle were routed in Slow Tourism, in getting to know a small locality well, while many perceived the NC 500 as a tour with overnight stops where you were always travelling further. **Anne Phillips** thought the NC500 should start and end at Dingwall. **Helena Macleod** acknowledged there were positive and negative aspects to NC500. **Helen Robinson** admitted that the infrastructure was still incomplete to cater for all who undertook the NC500, but that it would bring added prosperity to the area. Most who did the NC500 were appreciative of what they found. She thought the Black Isle should be more positive on the potential of the route. **Vanessa Halhead** agreed that the North of Scotland and the Black Isle needed tourists, but she saw the incentive for community-led tourism rather than the imposition of a marketing strategy that had left all totally unprepared by the deluge of visitors. **Jon Palmer** commented that the Black Isle Tourism Team did have a published Strategy that should be revisited. It was a good focus for discussion. The essential message of the strategy was to encourage visitors and residents alike to value what we have in the Black Isle. **Gordon Adam** said the introduction of the heavily marketed NC500 had been unexpected. The owners of the North Coast 500 Company were not contributing to the infrastructure of the region but had been buying up hotels on the route as a commercial proposition. In contrast, for Slow Tourism to succeed better on the Black Isle, some radical steps were needed, such as closing the road to Chanonry Point.

**Rosemarkie/Chanonry Point**

**Anne Phillips** mentioned that the Rangers would be leaving Chanonry Point later in the week. There would be a path and beach clean up. **Ann Jefferson** confirmed how useful and competent the Rangers had been. **Helen Robinson, Anne Phillips and Ann Jefferson** all commented about the advance publicity/leaflet distribution concerning a meeting the next day on the plans for the one-way scheme on Marine Terrace. **Gordon Adam** said he would seek an official explanation from Highland Council on why all the improvements promised for Chanonry Point and Rosemarkie had taken so long to materialise with some still not happening.

**North Kessock**

**Helena Macleod** said that mediation involving the different groups in North Kessock was now to take place. There had been personal attacks on social media, the bottle bank saga was still rankling and the North Kessock Village Hall no longer had a Committee. Facebook had become a battleground. **Gordon Adam** saw that a resolution of the conflict between different groups in NK was necessary before there could be further constructive progress in the village.

**Killearnan**

**Anne Macleod** was outraged that Springfield plc would be opening a consultation about a development of 1000 houses with a new Tesco Store at Tore without informing landowners or Tore residents. A website would go live just before a public consultation. Such a development was contrary to the proposals in the IMFLDP. There would be major impacts on sewerage and transport and cybercrime. The news was an aggressive push from out of the blue. There was some information on the Black Isle Notice Board.

Anne also noted that the KCC had been sent information on The Centenary of the Poppy.

**Culbokie**

**Alison Petch** returned to the leaflet distribution discussion re Rosemarkie. She said the Culbokie area had been subdivided into 15 smaller regions and each of these had a leaflet volunteer. The system worked well.

At the Glascairn site in Culbokie, the community owned **Culbokie Green** area would be handed over at the end of the month after which volunteers would do some planting. Planning Permission for the site had been approved and a dedicated website created. A Funding Bid had yet to be successful for the next stage.

Alison reported that the **Culbokie Community Market** in the Findon Hall would start on the third Saturday of September and then monthly. The indoor market would run from 1000 to 1200 and the Saturday vans would continue to be on site between 1000 and 1100. There would be social distancing inside the hall where the crafters would be located and the food would be available outside. **Jon Palmer** mentioned that the NK Market would start later in the month.

Alison also mentioned the lockdown quilt that had been created.

**Rosemarkie and Fortrose Trust**

**Helen Robinson** reported that the toilets owned by the Trust were being cleaned proficiently but they still did not know what the running costs of water and electricity would be. Future budgeting was not clear.

**Black Isle Partnership**

**Vanessa Halhead** noted that there was a Scottish Government consultation on boundaries. She wondered if each ward/community council area would comment directly or whether BIP should respond for all. **Anne Macleod** said that this was the first time Killearnan had been asked for a comment.

She asked Gordon Adam for an update on Covid. **Gordon Adam** said the guidance for schools was confusing with some staff absent. Covid case numbers were up, but there were few deaths and hospitalisations.

Vanessa complained about potholes. **Gordon Adam** said the onus lay on the complainant to report the location of potholes, but he noted there was a shortage of some machinery used in their repair.

**Transition Black Isle**

**Julian Paren** reported that there had been progress on the **Avoch to Munlochy Active Travel Multi-purpose Path** as Officers at Highland Council said they would maintain such a path once constructed, and use their powers if required to ensure the path came to fruition. Julian also remarked that Transition Black Isle had played a prominent role in the campaign to ensure that the **Highland Council Pension Fund** was increasingly divested from Fossil Fuels and Armaments. The Highland Council Meeting on September 9 and subsequent documents show that the campaign was a success.

**AOB**

**Ann Jefferson** raised the topic of access to facilities for wheelchair users across the Black Isle.

Date of next meeting – to be decided.

The meeting closed at 11:15am