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

**Zoom Meeting 1000 15 June 2021**

**Present:** Becky Richmond (Host and Black Isle Tourism Team), Helena Macleod (Kessock Kindness and Residents Association of North Kessock), Julian Paren (Minute taker and BIP), Sarah Macdonald-Taylor (Avoch and Killen Community Council), Sheila Currie (Transition Black Isle), Nigel Shapcott (Cromarty Development Trust), Vanessa Halhead (BIP), Ann Mackay (Killearnan Community Council), Angela Morris (Culbokie Community Trust), Megan Mackenzie (Black Isle Cares), Ann Jefferson (Fortrose and Rosemarkie Community Council).

**Agenda 1: Implications of successful Black Isle bid to Think Health Think Nature Fund**

Becky Richmond had circulated the submission in advance of the meeting and Agenda 5 of the Minutes of the Black Isle Communities Meeting on June 8 also summarised the details.

ACTION ALL: READ THE SUBMISSION AND MINUTES OF BLACK ISLE COMMUNITIES ZOOM MEETING ON JUNE 8.

Becky explained one objective was to target people who were disinclined to leave their houses and show them they could enjoy the outdoors. The secondary focus was on unpaid carers.

**Get to know your village walks**

A series of “Get to know your village walks” were planned over a Black Isle Festival weekend. It was hoped the programme would appeal to and connect both those who had lived locally for years and to recent incomers to the area’s new housing.

Volunteers were needed to devise and lead the walks and bring the village’s past and present to life through engaging with the participants. An objective would be to look critically at the village infrastructure (benches, toilets, kerbs, pavements etc) to understand the limitations that could detract less mobile residents from taking local exercise. The objective was to instil confidence in exploring the immediate area. One end result could be local maps.

The funding could support a Summer Festival with a hope that eventually there could be further Festivals in Autumn, Winter and Spring.

Clearly the festival could not succeed without volunteers. Becky asked those present to consider who could be approached. Could they encourage new people to come forward to spread the load?

ACTION ALL: IDENTIFY LEADERS AND KNOWLEDGABLE PEOPLE FOR RUNNING THE WALKS

Becky explained that the concept had already been trialled in Culbokie. Penny Edwards and Becky Richmond had taken walks with attention on the past, on the new community and Tulloch development at the Glascairn site, and on the Active Travel Route proposed across the village.

Helena mentioned there were problems with different groups in North Kessock acting independently. There were differences too in attitudes between younger newcomers and those established residents who resent change. She felt that if a social walk had occurred, it could have catalysed some reconciliation, and would have provided an opportunity for all to know what was going on.

**The proposed dates for the Festival was the weekend Saturday 31 July and Sunday 1 August.** The proposal was for a morning and afternoon walk each day, each with a different route and focus where possible.

Sheila Currie offered to be involved with the walk programme at Cromarty.

Ann Mackay mentioned that Alasdair Cameron of the local Historical Society had written up a series of walks around Killearnan. He was a potential leader.

Ann Mackay mentioned the potential of the old Muir of Ord to Fortrose railway line especially in the vicinity of Redcastle Station (owned by the Nansen Trust). The buildings were intact and might be available as a toilet stop. Anne Mackay regretted that parts of the line were not accessible to wheel chairs and other parts not even accessible to pedestrians. Nonetheless part of the line could be incorporated into a walk, and at the right time of year there could be some apples to pick. Helena Macleod mentioned that the Black Isle Men’s Shed were having a talk on the Black Isle Railway on November 3. Jack Kernahan, the author of the book, *The Black Isle Railway*, was talking. Maybe he would be happy to be involved?

Julian Paren mentioned the walking leaflet of Munlochy village produced by Archaeology for Communities in the Highlands (ARCH). See for example <http://www.archhighland.org.uk/knockbain-heritage.asp>. Julian said he would be happy to lead a walk based on it. The walk was short! Becky reminded all that these walks were for those who would not normally walk for pleasure.

Nigel Shapcott suggested Simon Gunn from Rosemarkie would be a knowledgeable leader.

Vanessa Halhead queried whether the intention was for walks from the doorstep. Resolis did not have a centre and required some car travel to reach a start location. The same was true of Ferintosh other than around Culbokie. What could be planned for these areas that were more likely to contain more isolated people? Becky thought such remote groups would be a topic for a later stage in the programme if its launch were to be successful. Nigel Shapcott mentioned the existence of a small motor coach that once was funded for communities on the Black Isle.

Angela Morris (Culbokie Community Trust) mentioned that Roger Piercy could perhaps play a role in Culbokie, but she saw the main problem to be how to reach the people who could benefit from the walks. Helena said there was funding for publicity – for printing posters and leaflets.

Helena and Becky had agreed to split the Black Isle in two and each play a coordinating role for half the Black Isle. The division in responsibilities would be announced soon.

ACTION: BECKY AND HELENA TO SPLIT RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE BLACK ISLE BETWEEN THEM AND INFORM ALL WOULD BE THEIR CONTACT.

Becky mentioned rock-pooling as an introduction to Nature. Nigel liked the idea of a gentle walk along the sea front. Helena said at North Kessock such a walk could help a discussion on the lack of dolphins and local issues combined with some litter picking.

Sheila questioned that we probably all see the place we live differently. For example it would be interesting to walk around and see the village in the eyes of a young person, or a parent with a pram, or as a person with limited mobility.

Nigel suggested that each community publicise and launch their own Festival segment with flyers and leaflets, rather than this being done centrally. Helena explained there was a £50 budget for a gazebo for each community, but (Covid permitting) the event could be an excuse to get village halls open again. Helena explained there was funding of £50 for the lead volunteer in the community.

Ann Mackay reminded the meeting that Highland Council Rangers used to explain the natural world across the Black Isle at programmed events. Ann thought that Susan Cord, the Minister of Killearnan and Knockbain, might wish to be involved as she was very community orientated and might well know who were carers and who were isolated.

Vanessa Hallhead recommended Paul Thompson for knowledge of Udale Bay and Jim Mackay for Kirkmichael. Her continued concern was how to get folk to participate in the weekend especially when you have become entrenched in your way of life.

Ann Jefferson asked whether there would be a guideline on the length of a village walk. Feasible suggestions mentioned were a 30-minute walk, or perhaps a two-mile walk with break off points and flexibility built in. Becky reminded the group that there was a budget for training 15 Health Walk Leaders, who would get guidance on such issues, and being trained would be amenable to continuing similar walks into the future.

Helena said the budgeting also included for some refreshments on the walk. Event management plans would need to be submitted to Highland Council and there would need to be insurance.

Sheila Currie thought it important to frame the weekend in a very positive way. The weekend offered far more than just giving isolated people an opportunity to get out.

Nigel said that each Community Council would need to know the outline of the event and in particular the budget. Becky Richmond said she would write a formal letter to each Community Council, outlining the plans for the weekend and her hopes of what each community could aspire to.

ACTION: BECKY TO WRITE FORMAL LETTER TO EACH COMMUNITY COUNCIL

**A focus on unpaid carers**

Funding was available to target unpaid carers with a series of weekly walks and other inducements to enjoy the outdoors (Ecoventure’s Dolphin Trips, Cycle Trails at Learnie Red Rock, Trike Trips etc).

Vanessa Hallhead asked how the carers targeted in the funding could be identified. Becky Richmond said this was difficult. Helena said it was essential to raise the profile of unpaid carers. There was no money in the Community Development budget and Helena had raised the issue with Ian Blackford. Nonetheless there was a need for paid resources in the community. There was a potential of some NHS funding.

The Meeting closed at 11:12.