

**MINUTES of MEETING of FORWARD DUNOON AND COWAL GROUP held in
22 HILL STREET, DUNOON
on TUESDAY, 31 MARCH 2015**

Present: Councillor Bruce Marshall (Chair)

Shirley MacLeod, Area Governance Manager
Ian Ross, Benmore Outdoor Centre
Colin Moulson, PA23 BID
Catrina Craig, Visit Cowal
Sue Minns, Cowalfest
Nicola Porter, Caledonian MacBrayne
Peter Griffiths, Caledonian MacBrayne
Eric Smith, Caledonian MacBrayne/Argyll Ferries
David Robertson, Forestry Commission
David McKenzie, Secretary of Argyll Mausoleum
Stewart McNee, Local cycling group
Alasdair Marshall, Local cycling group

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were intimated from:
Councillor Gordon Blair
Councillor James McQueen
Councillor Alex McNuaghton
Councillor Dick Walsh
Councillor Michael Breslin
Peter Wilson, Ardentinnny Outdoor Centre
Virginia Sumsion, Fyne Projects
Ailsa Cunningham, Amenity Services Technical Officer

2. MINUTES

The minute of the Forward Dunoon and Cowal Group 18th February 2015 was approved as a correct record.

3. MATTERS ARISING

(a) COWAL OUTDOOR CENTRES - LINKING WITH LOCAL TOURISM

Councillor Marshall in the absence of Councillor Blair held a discussion with the head of Benmore Outdoor centre regarding linking in to the local tourism market, with the following points noted:

- Councillor Marshall asked Ian Ross if in the event of the Forum or a third party being able to produce literature, would he be willing to send this home with visiting school children to which Ian Ross replied that he would.
- 3 Cowal Councillors have met with Actual Reality along with the Head of Centre for Ardroy to discuss ideas in relation to tourism and they are currently very keen on the idea.

- Councillor Marshall asked Catriona Craig if this was something that the Cowal Marketing Group could help with. She responded that there was a possibility that they would be able to assist but it would depend on numbers and available funding.
- It was suggested by the Group that a leaflet could be pulled together containing information and contact details of all third sector organisations that promote tourism in the local area.
- Councillor Marshall asked Catriona Craig to raise the potential leaflet at her next AGM which she agreed to do. Sue Minns was also asked to take this possibility forward through the Cowalfest group
- David Robertson informed the group that he had forestry leaflets that could be given to the group.

(b) PEDESTRIANISATION OF ARGYLL STREET - UPDATE

Councillor Marshall provided an update on pedestrianisation of Argyll Street following on from February Area Committee where it was taken as an agenda item on the request of the Forum. It was highlighted to the group that it had been agreed that this would need to be put out for consultation as an initial starting point.

Action

The Group agreed that a letter would be sent by the Chair of the Forward Dunoon and Cowal Group to Community Councils and the business community (via PA23BIDS) asking for views regarding possible pedestrianisation of Argyll Street.

(c) UNSIGHTLY BUILDINGS

A discussion took place surrounding several unsightly buildings in the area and the steps that the Group could take in regards to approaching the owners of the buildings to engage in conversation regarding what could be done to make the buildings more aesthetically pleasing.

Action

Unsightly Buildings to be taken as an agenda item for the next Bute and Cowal Business Day on the 5 May 2015.

(d) FREE WIFI IN DUNOON TOWN CENTRE

No information was provided on this item and no discussion took place.

Action

Put on to the next Forward Dunoon and Cowal Agenda on the 23 June 2015

(e) ARGYLL GARDENS MUSIC CONCERT

No information was provided on this item and no discussion took place.

Action

Put on to the next Forward Dunoon and Cowal Agenda on the 23 June 2015

(f) **CAMANACHD CUP**

Councillor Marshall informed the Group that Cowal had lost out to Oban to hold the Camanachd Shinty cup on this occasion and noted his disappointment in the decision.

4. DISCUSSION WITH LOCAL CYCLE GROUP AND FORESTRY COMMISSION SCOTLAND RE THE NO FUSS EVENTS TO BE HELD IN COWAL

Councillor Marshall led on this item and invited views from Alasdair Marshall and Stewart McNee in regards to the no fuss events that are to be held in Cowal this year, the following points were noted:

- The cycling events held at Cowalfest in 2014 had a small attendance but were successful.
- Cowalfest and No Fuss are currently in conversations regarding future events.
- The inaugural Dunoon Ride and Run event held on 28th March was well received by competitors, and generally well attended. It is the expectation of PA23BIDS that this will have been the first of a series of such events, and noted that No Fuss events were very impressed with the area and routes, and the untapped potential for their type of events to be held in Cowal.
- It was noted that Alasdair Marshall and Stewart McNee are currently also in talks with No Fuss and that the company are quite keen to tap into the cycling potential in the Cowal area.
- A discussion took place between members of the Group and David Robertson from the Forestry Commission regarding the use of forestry tracks, it was noted that No Fuss are looking to offer money to improve some of the forestry tracks. David Robertson said that he was quite happy to look at this, but advised that due to the legal process the Forestry Commission has to comply to, more information would need to be obtained and this would be discussed with Alasdair and Stewart.
- Ian Ross informed the Group that he had contacts relating to the Scottish Cycling Association and could ask them if they would be interested in looking at the tracks in Cowal as potential new venues.
- Colin Moulson informed the Group that PA23 BID are looking to establish a road cycling club in the local area.
- Sue Minns also mentioned that it may be worth looking at tapping into the Dunoon Hill Runners group.

5. CALEDONIAN MACBRAYNE - REGARDING TOURISM MARKETING IN COWAL

Eric Smith, Peter Griffith and Nicola Porter from Caledonian MacBrayne provided the Group with a verbal update regarding what they produce in relation to marketing tourism in Cowal.

Eric Smith provided a verbal update on the legalities of how Caledonian MacBrayne and Argyll Ferries are two separate companies with two separate contracts and that legally one contract cannot support another public sector contract.

Argyll Ferries do have a budget to provide marketing to the Cowal area but it is small.

A discussion took place regarding the Go Explore brochure and it was noted by the group that there is now a significant improvement in the brochure regarding marketing services in the Cowal area.

Peter Griffith took the Group through the number of ways that Caledonian MacBrayne currently support the Cowal area in terms of marketing, these included:

- A dedicated info@ email address for Argyll Ferries
- A refresh of the Argyll Ferries website.
- A twitter account has been set up for Argyll Ferries.
- Potential to set up a facebook page.
- Looking to build up a good list of local contacts.
- Electronic message boards set up in Gourrock office.
- Electronic screens in the Porta cabins at the Dunoon pier.
- Currently in negotiations with Scotrail to advertise Argyll ferries on the trains.

Sue Minns informed the group that she had approached Argyll Ferries to have permission to put posters up and she was told no. Eric Smith passed Sue Minns his contact details and said to contact himself to get the posters up.

Nicola Porter took the Group through the number of ways that Caledonian MacBrayne are currently looking at to provide more marketing support to the Cowal area in the near future, which includes:

- Currently working on what's on guide, and an events calendar.
- Can look at linking in to other groups such as Cowalfest.
- Looking at putting up blogs promoting the area.
- Possible newspaper feature, with a promotion attached such as a ticket giveaway.
- Putting the What's on guide into a poster format that can be displayed out with the local area.
- Postcard drop round Inverclyde to promote Cowal as a day drip destination.
- Potential deal with the local swimming pool.

David McKenzie raised a point to the Group that it is not possible to purchase a combined ferry and rail ticket from Glasgow to Dunoon at central station. He also raised the point that the tickets issued on the ferry cannot be used at the turnstiles in the train station.

Eric Smith replied that he was unaware that a combined ticket could not be purchased in Glasgow, he also informed David that the ticketing system is currently under review and that the new tickets will include bar codes enabling them to be used at turnstiles in train stations.

Councillor Marshall informed the Group that he felt Argyll Ferries provided an excellent service and thanked the representatives from Caledonian MacBrayne for attending the meeting and providing an update.

Actions

1. Councillor Marshall to Liaise with Nicola Porter regarding event promotion.
2. Sue Minns and Catriona Craig to provide Nicola Porter with a list of upcoming events.
3. Peter Griffith will contact Catriona Craig with an emphasis of working closer together.
4. Eric Smith to look at the ticketing problem from Glasgow to Dunoon and feedback to the Group.
5. Eric Smith agreed to display Cowalfest posters in the Argyll Ferries waiting rooms.

6. BRAIN STORMING SESSION FOR REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE FORWARD DUNOON AND COWAL GROUP

Members of the Forward Dunoon and Cowal Group produced the following potential ideas to help boost tourism in the local area:

- Look at approaching West Coast Motors to see if they would provide a day ticket that would allow travellers to jump on and off buses at various locations.
- Look at holding a local tourism conference with invites to West Coast Motors, Argyll Ferries, Forestry Commission, ITC, Visit Cowal, Cowalfest, PA23BID and any other local organisation that has a focus on tourism.
- Compile a list of appropriate contacts that could reside with one point of contact such as Visit Cowal.
- It was suggested that Visit Scotland should allocate a full time development officer to the Cowal area.
- Shirley MacLeod emphasised the benefits of the group being more strongly linked to/aligned with the local Community Planning Group and agreed to take this work forward over the next few months.

7. PARTNERS UPDATE

(a) HELP PROJECT

A representative from HELP was not present at the meeting, therefore no update was provided.

(b) COWAL MARKETING GROUP - FORTHCOMING TOURIST SEASON AND MARKETING

Catriona Craig from Cowal Marketing Group and Visit Cowal provided a general verbal update on the following:

- 2015 is the year of food and drink and off the back of this, two events have been arranged, one is a food trail through Cowal and the other is a month long celebration of food through the month of September.

- Visit Cowal are planning to re-launch another social media competition.
- Cowal Marketing Group have agreed to take a neutral stand regarding the PNE wind farm planning application in the local area.
- Cowal Marketing Group's AGM will be held on the 28th April at Hunters Quay Holiday Village.

Action

Catrina Craig to enquire as to whether Historic Kilmun are members of Visit Cowal and feed back this information to David McKenzie.

(c) PA23BID - SHOP FRONTAGES

Colin informed the group that 38 businesses have or are in the process of improving and brightening up their shop fronts.

Colin Moulson provided a verbal update on the BID's current position and achievements to date which included:

- Recent Ride and Run event seen as a success
- There will be a mountain bike event on the 10th and 11th of October 2015 as part of Cowalfest.
- Sportify event planned for mid August.
- Revival musical festival will take place again this year, preferably during the summer months.

(d) COWALFEST

Sue Minns from Cowalfest provided the group with a verbal update on forthcoming Cowalfest events, with the following points noted:

- Cowalfest had previously been awarded a grant to purchase 3 mountain bikes to use in demonstrations, these bikes will now be donated to the HELP project.
- There are currently 60 walks scheduled for this year's Cowalfest
- A Market will be set up in the West Bay area this year and Sue is hopeful that this will come under the Food From Argyll Banner.

8. AOCB

David McKenzie informed the Group that they were in receipt of a grant from the Joanna Lamont Trust for the Faith Heritage and Tourism Project and that the money will allow the documentation of 5 faith history sites in the Cowal area with an estimated completion date of the end of 2015.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 23rd June 2015, 10am, 22 Hill Street Dunoon.