

**MINUTES of MEETING of FORWARD DUNOON AND COWAL GROUP held in the
CUSTOMER SERVICES OFFICE, 22 HILL STREET, DUNOON
on MONDAY, 14 APRIL 2014**

Present: Councillor Bruce Marshall (Chair)

Councillor Alex McNaughton
Councillor James McQueen
Councillor Gordon Blair
Stephen Doogan, Argyll and Bute Council
Allan MacDonald, Argyll and Bute Council
David Adams McGilp, Visit Scotland
Sue Gledhill Highlands and Islands Enterprise
Carron Tobin Argyll and the Isles Tourism Cooperative
Stewart McNee Mountain Bike Specialist
Colin Moulson BID PA23 Manager
Max Barr Dunoon Community Council

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Brian Close.

The Chair ruled and the Committee agreed to take the Agenda items out of sequence in order to facilitate the attendance of Stewart McNee who had to return to work. This item is recorded as Item 6 of this Minute.

2. MINUTES

The Minute of the Forward Dunoon & Cowal Group – of 3rd February 2014 was approved as a correct record.

3. MATTERS ARISING

(a) BURGH HALL UPDATE

The Chair provided a detailed status update –advising the group that following on from the successful raising of the Stage One funding (15K), the application for Stage Two funding had been submitted in February and it was hoped that this would be successful, leaving a smaller shortfall than had been feared.

The Breakdown is as follows:-

- Creative Scotland has awarded £15K for immediate funding to develop the Stage 2 bid for £480K.
- Heritage Lottery Fund has a recommendation coming to their Board to award £550K+,
- Historic Scotland have awarded £150K and a further £250K has been donated by John McAslan.

Cllr. Marshall advised that this money would bring confirmed funding

up to £1.445M which is just £155,000 short of the required £1.6M and that there is a possible £50K that may come from the Monuments Trust after their meeting in March.

It was also highlighted that the current planning application from Fyne Homes is not seen by some members of the Hall committee as a suitable use of the site in front of the Hall. It was also suggested that the area in front of St. John's church could be used as a public park. However, this would require further consideration, as well as a planning application.

Given that some of the elected members present sit on the PPSL, advice was given that planning issues should not be discussed at this meeting so that there could be no question of members being influenced or being forced to consider matters in an inappropriate forum. The Chair concurred and moved the meeting on to the next Agenda item to ensure that this would not occur.

4. PA23 BID

A Verbal update was provided by Colin Moulson, PA23 BID Manager.

The BID has been extremely active in a large number of activities all of which are ultimately targeting the Promotion of Dunoon and Cowal.

The Foot-golf event mentioned in the previous minute was deferred for a short period, due to weather, but this delay worked partly in its favour in that the sport was on television twice in 3 days which raised its profile. One of the main objectives of the activities undertaken by PA32 BID is that the activities be sustainable, and create an ongoing demand for the product. This is certainly the case with Foot-Golf. The official launch of the project is now scheduled for 24th May. It is intended that VIP packages will be sold in the morning with normal players in the afternoon.

PA23 BID is also organising a Family Fun Run and Market on 31 May on Argyll Street as well as a US themed BBQ style event on 5th July. Most of the advertising for the event has been via Facebook, but Clyde Times and the local papers have also had adverts placed.

Another innovative event is a proposed "Come-and-try-athon" for swimming cycling and running", which is scheduled for late September. Also scheduled for October/November is a ladies day out – a moon walk is provisionally programmed for November.

The official switch on of the Christmas lights will be performed by Sean Batty the weatherman.

The PA32 BID has also allocated some funding to the Cowal Gathering as they go through the process of "reinventing" and re-focusing the games for today's economic climate. Cllr Blair noted that – Colm Docherty, the well-known artist, is considering undertaking a piece of street art for the games. He is also considering doing a Mural at the Stadium.

David Adams McGilp offered to publicise these and any similar events on Visit Scotland site, the Area Governance Officer highlighted that these events could be publicised on the council website- both options being free of charge to the PA32 BID.

5. NATIONAL PARK

The Argyll and the Isles Tourism Cooperative is now completely operational and brings the public and private sector together. The Tourism Cooperative is supported and part funded by Visit Scotland.

At the start of the Cooperative, the local tourism businesses were asked what they wanted from the partnership and one of the first issues recognised by the Co-operative was the need for a joint umbrella brands so that duplication was minimised and there was not a perception of competition between brands. It was decided that the use of the Joint Branding should be focused on specific events, and to this end, two campaigns were arranged, one for Spring and one for Winter.

The Co-operatives Funding for the next three years has been secured- with the members of each co-operative being the local marketing groups. Cowal is currently vacant.

Two complementary suites of leaflets have been produced, one for geographical areas and one for activities, these were very successful at EXPO Scotland the main logo below is a stylised version of the shape of the islands and separates out into its component parts for more localised leaflet production.

There is also a strong online presence which complements the real world branding with the main website located at www.exploreargyll.co.uk which again links to more localised sub-sites. Reflecting the focus on the importance of the “ground up” approach, the website is promoting “explore like a local” which is where a local resident with knowledge of specific attractions is being asked to write a review.

The Current leaflet suite can be obtained from any information offices, but can also be downloaded from the site above. Amendments to leaflets can be made easily either by contacting the local marketing group or by calling Carron directly.

A list of Contacts willing to promote the areas and their specific attractions has been approved and circulated, and this has worked very well and has been extremely well received by service users.

During the year it is hoped that there will be a pilot project focusing on the Benmore trilogy for the big trees. It is also hoped that there may be some scope here for working with the Ardkinglas and Benmore gardens. It is likely that any grant funding will be applied for by the Coast and Countryside Trust.

David Adams McGilp noted that the industry landscape for the promotion of tourism has historically been a bit cluttered- but Carron’s presentation shows that this has substantially improved –there is still a visitor’s centre in the town which is of benefit and can act as a focus point.

Argyll in general and Cowal in particular has suffered in terms of population and economy - but Visit Scotland are now seeing economic improvements which were first visible in Kintyre. Now that Visit Scotland are in contact with the PA23 BID there may be scope for this to be developed further.

6. PROMOTION OF CYCLING ROUTES

(a) PLANNED INAUGURAL EVENT OFF ROAD - COWALFEST

The Chair outlined the history of the proposed off-road route and noted that the historic difficulties in getting such routes promoted should not occur in this instance as it was Nigel Brooks of the LLNT who mapped the route. The Chair also noted that preliminary discussions had taken place, and that Cowalfest may be interested in supporting the proposed launch event in the summer.

Stewart McNee noted that since having been asked to review the route, he had enjoyed cycling it and was of the view that it should appeal to mountain bikers of many levels. Stuart noted that the route had five hostelrys located along it and that this was an additional bonus meaning that riders could easily stop and take rest breaks.

Stewart noted that the "Cycle Scotland" website is the main source of information on all types of cycling in Scotland and that every official race is on this site, it is therefore essential for success that this new route be promoted via this avenue.

Stewart also noted that the Cycle Scotland Organisation also does all the training and awards for Scottish cycling and so are in touch with a ready-made client base.

Stewart is also of the view that there is a lot of potential for mountain bike tracks in the hills behind Dunoon particularly the downhill event. The major issues preventing this as a development are the twin issues of land ownership and permission to use the land for this purpose.

David Adams McGilp noted that the proximity of Dunoon to the central belt could be a major benefit in terms of ensuring that access to a high quality track was affordable.

Sue Gledhill raised the question as to whether local businesses would be likely to support this development noting that historically, there has on occasion, been an issue with small businesses not wishing to see development. A general discussion ensued regarding the various types of business likely to benefit, and it was noted that caravan sites are the perfect type of accommodation for people wishing to participate in outdoor sports events, since this type of accommodation gives good access to drying facilities and does not impinge on other users.

Colin Moulson and the chair both noted that there was a need for a coordinated approach to ensure that the best possible outcomes were achieved, and Colin noted that the PA23 BID was willing to fund a piece of work by the well known mountain biker Paul Masson,

who also runs a cycling events company. This piece of work would address the question “*Why come to Dunoon*” which is the first question which needs to be answered if people are not to be blocked from coming to the area. Paul is to be commissioned to write a report on the initial feasibility of developing a mountain biking infrastructure and how it may join with other related sports using the world class raw facilities which are available in the Dunoon area.

It is still hoped that the official Launch will take place during the summer, but it was noted that work remained to be done regarding the acceptability of unmanned trails and public liability Insurance. It was also highlighted that the need for an outdoor centre to act as a central point could be met by any of the local centres such as Benmore ,and the Ardentinny Centre.

It was noted that Paul Masson’s initial work could lead to a more detailed feasibility study being done for the larger geographical area, but that it was a good first step even if this were not to occur. It was also noted that funders such as the Big Lottery might be approached eventually, but that this would have to be done by community vehicles such as the Coast and Countryside Fund rather than the Council which is not eligible.

(b) LITERATURE TO PROMOTE THE ROUTE DURING THE SUMMER

It was agreed that this should be put on hold until Paul Masson’s initial work is completed, and then it can be launched on the website, as well as having a print run of leaflets.

(c) COWAL CYCLE AND TRANSPORT INITIATIVE

It was noted that since the last meeting the Dunoon Community Council, in conjunction with other CCs, had progressed an on road cycle route in addition to the off road route discussed previously at the Forward Dunoon and Cowal meetings.

The Chair Invited Max Barr to outline the Community Council’s proposal with a view to all involved working together to achieve a positive outcome. Max Barr indicated that the Community Council had been successful in obtaining a small grant to progress a road based route between Ardentinny and Toward. Discussions with the local Community Councils indicate that 5 of the possible 6 CCs between Ardentinny and Toward are interested in progressing the idea of a coastal cycle route. The meeting was advised that Hunters Quay CC do not want involved currently , but it is hoped by the other CCs that they may change their mind if the project progresses.

Max Barr indicated that there may be as much as £150 K available for the project from the Climate Challenge Fund, however, this is still in its early stages and an application and project plan will require to be developed The Area Governance officer was asked to request that Moya Ingram contact Max Barr to clarify the availability and restrictions on funding including details of what Sustrans money can be used for.

(d) **OTHER POSSIBLE EVENTS E.G IRONMAN OR A JOIN UP WITH KAYAKING/OTHER SPORTS**

It was agreed that wherever possible the promotion of the cycle routes should be coordinated with promotional efforts for other events such as the launch of the Kayak trail or the PA23 BID events

7. DISCUSSION WITH SUE GLEDHILL, HIE

Initial discussion took place about the Sandbank Industrial Estate, and the members noted that some of the compounds are really untidy at the current time and are visible from the road.

It should be noted that the units which have been sold do not necessarily have maintenance conditions, consequently the redress available may be limited.

Sue Gledhill noted that as she recalled the Council now occupies the 4 main compounds, but these may be let to others. The Chair requested that the Area Governance Officer contact Estates to ascertain the status of the council controlled units and highlight that Members desired that all sited be tidy.

Sue noted that HIE developed the Industrial estate intending to sell on the units. HIE now only own 7, 8,9,12 and14, the remaining units have been sold with only number 12 of the main units being empty.

Unit 15 is the big database warehouse one and is also empty. The new business park is still largely empty.

HIE are currently planning a single modular building.

The Chair noted his hope that superfast broadband in Dunoon will be a strong economic driver in the near future and that some of these empty units will be filled.

HIE works closely with business gateway, but are concentrating on larger businesses, start-ups are supported by the gateway.

**8. AOCB
Coastal Waters**

The Chair highlighted his interest in the protection of inshore waters particularly from trawlers, David Adams McGilp is on the strategic board which is developing the first planning framework for the marine environment in Scotland. David noted that it is important to ensure that tourism, and other recreational users retain their access to facilities. The Chair highlighted that marine tourism has declined in the area due to the damage to the sea bed and depleted stocks.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of next meeting is 11th August.