

Minutes of the Meeting of Durness Community Council, Monday 13th April

at 7.30pm Durness Village Hall.

1. **Present:** Scott Macpherson *Chair*, Neil Fuller, Anne Mackenzie *Treasurer*, Dr Alan Belbin, Bob Silverwood (NHS Area Manager, Caithness & Sutherland), Fiona Duff (Primary Care Manager, North), Maimie Thompson (Head of PR & Engagement), Kevin Arrowsmith and Sarah Fuller *Secretary*.

Apologies: Alan Andrews, Donald Mitchell *Vice Chair*, and Eddie Meyer & Cllr. Hugh Morrison.

2. **Retirement of Dr Belbin.**

Dr Belbin stated that he will be retiring at the end of June this year and went on to outline the current difficulties faced by the NHS in recruiting G.P's for rural practices. Dr Belbin also pointed out that all of the G.P's from Lochinver to Armadale are currently over 50 which may cause huge recruiting problems for the future and that he has attended many meeting which sought to address this issue, but to date there have been few outcomes.

Fiona Duff stated that following the retirement of Dr Belbin; the NHS has a duty of care to patients in Durness and are already looking for future candidates to fill the role.

Scott asked if this would be the same level of care as under Dr Belbin. Neil stated the need for public confidence, especially in the light of the poor level of ambulance cover, which we have previously received. Dr Belbin stated that emergency cover in Durness was vital, due to the nearest A&E Dept. being 80 miles away and that the Doctor is always the first port of call.

The C.C. asked about the retention of evening and Saturday surgeries as these were felt to be an important service? Maimie Thompson responded that the NHS would write to all patients within the practice and try and gauge the level of change that was acceptable to the community, but it was thought that the practice would be brought in line with the Scourie & Klb level of service.

Kevin Arrowsmith made the point that the doctor patient relationship was very important and that a string of locums would not help this and that not replacing the Doctor would be very unpopular.

Bob Silverwood asked if keeping faith with the community would mean advertising the G.P's post, even if it was unlikely to be filled due to the shortage of G.P's willing to work in rural area's. The C.C. responded that advertising the post was seen as essential.

Anne stressed that any future G.P or locum should be based within the village as in the winter the Gualin can be impassable.

A discussion then ensued regarding other models that have been piloted in rural areas where recruiting a G.P. has proved difficult. Fiona Duff outlined some options, which include Nurse Practitioners, First Responders and Paramedics working alongside G.P cover. Scott asked what level of cover would be available after the end of June and Fiona responded that

in all honesty they just don't know yet, but that the C.C. would be kept informed at all stages. A press release will be put in the Northern Times next week and an open meeting to discuss the options has been provisionally booked for Monday 18th May.

Discussion then moved on to the proposed replacement of the Caladh Sona facility. Bob Silverwood outlined the difficulty in providing a rounded approach to care and that ideally the replacement would be Care/ Nursing home so that people could stay within their locality at all levels of care needs. No decision has yet been reached on the site of the new facility and the C.C. hoped that a site in Durness would be considered. Further consultation on the siting and level of provision will take place.

Scott thanked Dr Belbin and the Health Board representatives for attending. Dr Belbin, Kevin Arrowsmith, Bob Silverwood, Fiona Duff and Maimie Thompson then left the meeting.

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting. The Minutes of the previous meeting could not be passed, as the meeting was not quorate. The following minutes are for note only.

4. Matters Arising.

- Ambulance & Air Ambulance Provision. Nothing to report.
- Lynx Bone, Smoo & Borrallie Caves. No Results have been received as yet.
- Puffin Link. A quote has been received for repairing the cabinet.
- M.o.D. A date for the Liaison meeting is to be requested.
- Speed restrictions in Laid. Nothing to report.

5. Reports.

- **D.D.G.**

A meeting with SKS to further the business plan for the Loch Eriboll harbour is to take place this month. The proposition of a Craft Distillery in Laid is being explored and Neil will be the Development Groups representative on the steering group.

- **N.W.H.Geopark**

Nothing to report.

- **Treasurers Report.**

C.C. balance is £ 1375.83. £30 has been paid for the Smoo Cave website domain name and £25 received from sale of phone cards.

- **North West Sutherland Local Health Partnership (NWSLHP).**

Nothing to report.

- **The North West Sutherland Trust,** Creag Riabhach Wind farm. The planning application has been referred to the Scottish Executive.

6. Planning Applications.

Change of use to domestic dwelling for the previous shop opposite Sango Sands Oasis has been advertised.

7. Sheep loose within the village.

A number of letters of complaint have been received about sheep loose within the village.

8. Date of next meeting. Monday 4th May at 7.30pm.