Minute of the meeting of **DACIC** board 18th June 2020

Present: Joan Bishop **JB** (Chair), Paddy Murray **PM**, Jim McGillivray **JM**, Lynne Mahoney **LM**, Alison MacWilliam **AM,** Neil Hampton **NH,**

Apologies: Catherine Moodie **CM,** Jayne Pagan **JP,** Gordon Sutherland **GS,** Shona MacDougall **SM**

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| 1. | Minute of meeting of 21 May 2020 | The minutes were proposed by **NH** and seconded by **JM.** |
| 2. | Matter Arising not covered elsewhere | **JB** has contacted Yvonne Ross (YR) about returning to the Board. **NH** to follow up with **YR** to see whether she would like to rejoin the Board in either a personal capacity or as Youth Officer representative. |
| 3. | Dornoch Police Station | 1. TCF £50k contract can now be added to main contract for best value 2. **GS** met with O’Brien Construction on 9 June. The prices were pegged as low as possible, but costs are continually rising, largely due to health and safety issues relating to coronavirus. The situation is on hold and will be reviewed in August. 3. The National Lottery (TNL) bid was submitted for £40k capital and £108k revenue. **JB** had a discussion with the assessor who informed her that DACIC was unlikely to be awarded it all, but **JB** stressed that our priority is capital. The outcome will be known in July and should this not be positive, there were hopes that HIE may step in. 4. Pot 170 – Developer Contribution for Community Facilities had been received. **JB** passed on her thanks to **JM.** 5. Gym and office space update – **JB** reported that since the Tain gym had to close due to coronavirus, Silverback’s priority was getting that up and running again. Nevertheless, they are still committed to coming to Dornoch. Stephen Pagan still wants office space; DPH cannot commit at the moment; the architect has pulled out; Cameron Warren, Highland Wireless, is still hopeful; one artist has pulled out. **JB** felt that coronavirus may serve to show the importance of having a wide range of small businesses, reducing the focus on tourism. High speed broadband needs fibre installed into the building. 6. Review of West & South garden by JS Gunn and George Clubb: the quote for stone chipping was £1340 plus £250 pa upkeep, whilst grass was more expensive to establish and maintain. The Board unanimously decided to go with the cheaper option. An EOI was submitted to Highland Council for the Capital Grant Fund, to cover the cost of double glazing and hostel (see below). 7. Stage 1 application for Regeneration Capital Grant Fund was submitted to THC for the remainder of renovations. 8. **GS** and **JB** met with Iain Levens on 1 June and the suggestion, subsequently endorsed by the board via email, was to delay further decisions until after TNL ‘last brick’ funding was known. He was aware that Kerri has left, and that **GS** would work with him just now. 9. Macleod Roofing started on 9 June for one-week contract. |
| 4. | Project Curlew | 1. The Solicitor is still working on the Offer to Purchase; there have been difficulties with the boundary. 2. Caintech was on site 9 June to measure it electronically and will tie it in with the title plans to see where the boundary difficulties lie. Part belongs to the late Countess of Sutherland, and 3m either side of the road belongs to Highland Council. 3. Eastern edge boundary advice from C Milligan (solicitor for Sutherland Estates) was that there have been prescriptive access rights to this area for more than 20 years (currently used as Grants car park). DACIC’s lawyer feels that prescriptive rights are not sufficient for our purposes and it would be better to purchase. However, the area is currently in probate, so a decision to purchase could take years. **JB** and **GS** are to have conference call with our lawyer to see what the risks are. The Board unanimously agreed that it was worth taking the risk of prescriptive access due to the finances already being in place for the purchase of the site. 4. RTIF has been put back from July to the end of September at the earliest:    1. £39,760 application to Dornoch Common Good. **JB** has submitted a formal application to be considered by the County Committee on 9 July. The decision has then to be endorsed by the full council, probably in September.    2. £50k application to Beatrice has been submitted, with the outcome expected in June/July.    3. Blueprint Architects have produced a 2nd layout for the car park and a MUGA, although the building outline is incorrect and the MUGA needs to be moved to the west. The architects will ensure that it meets all the regulations regarding coach movement and parking etc. **PM** asked about the proposed MUGA at the school (tennis court) and asked whether it was wise to be going for both. **JM** stressed the need to have the MUGA at school where it would get regular usage by all pupils. **PM** indicated that this would potentially be a huge further expense. **NH** indicated that the RDGC had guaranteed £70k for a MUGA and they did not mind where it goes. (The RDGC would use the current tennis court for future car parking.) The point was made that a MUGA at Dornoch South would be bigger and accessible throughout the day, all year round, whilst one at the school would not be available during the day and not easily accessible to visitors. However, school pupils would not have time to walk into town and back to use a facility there during the short time allocated to sport. **PM** stated that if the cost were twice £70k that may be achievable, but twice £300k would not be possible. **JM** stated that during the six weeks of summer holidays, the school MUGA would hopefully be available residents and visitors. **PM** asked what would be included in the Dornoch South MUGA over and above the £70k version. **JB** responded that there would be two tennis courts, a full-size 5-a-side football pitch and a skating rink in winter (open air, synthetic ice at a cost of around £80k). **PM** suggested that they should look at quotes. **NH** to speak to **GS** who got the quotes initially. **PM** asked **NH** whether he thought that they should focus on both or one only. **NH** replied that if a cost-effective way of proceeding could be found, RDGC could look into funding one of the courts, but they don’t mind which. Once the quotes had been obtained, **JB** would do an options appraisal with **JM**. In the meantime, it made sense to apply for planning for both and hope for funding. 5. Stage 1 application submitted to THC for Regeneration Capital Grant Fund for MUGA on 12 June. 6. **JB** mentioned that at the northern boundary there was a potential difficulty at Shore Road junction. This would need to be examined in further detail. |
| 5. | C Moodie report | **CMs’** report had been received and circulated to the Board. She was contracted until January, possibly longer, working three days a week. If **GS** continues to assist on the project management side, it may be possible to retain **CM** for longer; she had done a lot of positive fundraising for Curlew so it would be good to keep her on for as long as possible. **PM** pointed out that 2/7th of her salary was paid for by the Common Good Fund who are impressed with her success rate. |
| 6. | K Stevens | Kerri Stevens left on 11 June after taking accrued annual leave. Funders have been informed of her resignation. **GS** has taken over some of the project management tasks for the time being. |
| 7. | Approval of Accounts | Approval of Annual accounts, **JB** and **PM** to discuss payment by cheque to Companies House. Money for feasibility studies and survey are capitalised so the accounts show a profit (on paper) of £8k. Tangible fixed assets are depreciated each year. At 31 March trade debtors were £5.5k. The cash position was £86k, though much of this was already ringfenced. There was the buffer of £6.9k in the Courthouse fund. Board members were happy to sign off on the accounts. |
| 8. | Coronavirus | * 1. Visit Scotland has offered a £7k grant against £14k requested. The Pivotal Enterprise Fund then offered the full £13.8k and this has now been paid. **JB** got back to Visit Scotland to explain that DACIC had received this other funding and as a result the VS award was reduced to £5k. Dornoch Hub did not qualify for any funding as the building is not currently occupied, nor used for tourism purposes.   2. Business Group – **JB** had sent out 10 Mailchimp emails and put multiple links on Dornoch.org.uk since the last meeting. There was also a steady on-going dialogue on the What’s App Group. **JB** had hosted a Zoom meeting of self-catering and B&B owners on 28 May and a draft Visitor Charter has been drawn up. No business group fees were being collected at the moment, apart from the two new members who have paid. The Visitor Charter initiative was in response to the community survey, to convey community concerns to visitors and outline safety precautions being taken by businesses. The Association of Scotland’s Self-Caterers (ASSC) have issued very stringent guidelines on safe cleaning and developed an excellent training course; Dornoch’s providers have been strongly encouraged to undertake this training.   3. **JB** reported that she had attended several Zoom meetings, including Social Enterprise Network Community Tourism, Just Enterprise-Furlough, NC500 Business Group and Fergus Ewing’s Q&A session on 15 June; she would attend further meetings tomorrow following the First Minister’s address today. **JB** mentioned that DACIC’s survey had been taken on by other groups and that Fergus Ewing and Kate Forbes want to hear from people/businesses who are falling through the cracks I n the support system.   4. Supporting the community response: 2 Mailchimp emails had been sent out to the members, including the survey.   5. Plans for recovery phase      1. Phase 2: Courtyard, Castle Hotel Beer Garden & Eagle (outside) to be reconsidered on 2 July. Shops not opening until 29 June. Review of face-coverings before 29 June. 2 July: 2m distance and outdoor hospitality to be reviewed.      2. Phase 3 (estimate 15 July). **JB** indicated that some B&Bs had decided not to open this summer. Most self-catering operators and the caravan park have so far confirmed that they will be ready to open on 15 July.      3. Detailed guidelines for Phase 3 were expected on 18 June and would include strict hygiene & safety protocols.   6. **JM** was following up on a possible temporary widening of the pedestrian area in Castle Street. However, because this is a main thoroughfare, it is unlikely to be considered by THC. **JB** mentioned that a suggestion had been made to make Deans Lane pedestrian only, even part-time, to make the area more visitor-friendly and allow for queuing. John Duhigg felt that would be a very positive move at any time.   7. **JB** mentioned that a Survey Monkey survey had been sent to the Business Group to gauge readiness for the season. Four 4 B&Bs had replied, only one of these was opening. One hotel (accommodation & food) replied, 7 shops (St Finbarr’s was not opening), 11 Self-catering providers replied, all of whom are opening. Properties could aim for red, amber, or green cleaning regime – 72 hours / 48 hours / back-to-back cleaning regime. Embo House has invested in a ‘fogger’ to sanitise all areas, but these were not deemed suitable for smaller properties. **JB** mentioned that the ASSC course (cost £30) was excellent and she encouraged all the cleaners to do it and get a certificate. It was an online course, done at your own pace, with multiple choice questions. Participants can also download a cleaning list, risk assessment etc. **JB** to send contact details to **JM** for further circulation. |
| 9. | Membership, Business Group and Stakeholder applications | No new applications. |
| 10. | 2020 Plan | 1. Revised cash flow: **JB** talked through the cash flow; figures assume that the Visitor Centre will open again in September, with the furlough scheme being in place until then. She presented revised figures for business group income. Options will be considered as the year progresses and we have a better idea of income from the business group. 2. **JB** raised the question of the Visitor Centre reopening. She had spoken to Phil Scott (Links House/Courthouse) and now needs to approach THC. **JB** had prepared a risk assessment and proposed various solutions: screen, face-covering, gloves, signage, one-way system etc, but the problem is the tight space. It was hoped that the 2m distancing would be reduced to 1m in July, which would make things easier. It may be possible to set up a one in, one out system. **PM** felt that if the staff were willing, it would be good to have the Visitor Centre open, with face-covering. **LM** has done a similar risk assessment for Historylinks and has another meeting next week. She felt that people have to be responsible for themselves, wearing face-coverings, sanitising hands and maintaining a distance. **PM** felt it was a good idea to have face-coverings for visitors in the visitor charter. |
| 9. | Community Updates | 1. Dornoch Community Council: **PM** reported that the AGM was held yesterday, and all officers were fixed for another year. They would try to get going on the toilets, using Common Good Fund. Money had been set aside but nothing had been done yet. He was hopeful that the new RDGC lease would be agreed soon. 2. DADCA: **PM** reported that this was currently in a holding pattern due to the lockdown situation, with no events taking place and the Social Club closed. The new community hall had been on ice for two years now, awaiting progress on new facility as part of Curlew. Community markets could start up again very soon and it was suggested that it would be good to tie this in with the start of Phase 3 to attract people from outside the local area. **PM** suggested that DADCA could start planning for markets from mid-July onwards, having first referred to guidance on the Scottish government website. 3. Embo Trust: **JM** indicated that there were no plans for the shop to re-open yet. He was encouraging the Board to apply for funds and grants, but the Board is not very dynamic and JM had to do some himself. **JB** mentioned that there were lots of free online training courses available and **JM** replied that he would encourage the Board members to do some courses, including risk assessment. 4. UHI: **JM** mentioned that construction was restarting on Monday and it was hoped that the building would be completed by November. **AM** indicated that the degree courses would be taught online for at least Semester 1 but felt that the hospitality courses were more problematic since students required access to the kitchens, thus measures would have to be put in place to allow safe access. 5. Historylinks: **LM** reported that they were planning to open on 17 July; they were concerned about the safety of the volunteers, many of whom were elderly and more vulnerable. **LM** thought that it was likely that she and Caroline would man it without volunteers. They would have a one-way system, clear signage, sanitising, masks, perspex screen at the desk and so on. The team were meeting on Tuesday in the Museum to see how things could be organised. **JM** congratulated the Museum on archiving the proceedings of the Coul Links hearing. 6. RDGC: **NH** reported that local members are now able to play golf. Most members are adhering to the 5-mile rule, but taking into account our rural location, members from Golspie and Bonar Bridge have travelled to Dornoch to play. **NH** hoped that remaining facilities such as hospitality, the pro-shop and the driving range would be opening on 15 July. The Golf Tourism Industry had recently had a conference call with Fergus Ewing, Tourism Secretary, and asked him to apply pressure to allow golf to open sooner in order to kick start the economy. Whilst Fergus Ewing was very receptive, he was unable to change the 14-day quarantine being imposed on people arriving from abroad, although he inferred that the quarantine was unlikely to last beyond August. It was suggested that a minibus on tour should be considered as a ‘family group’ and be subject to different legislation. **NH** reported that another conference call with Fergus Ewing was planned in early July. A conference call with the golf tourism officer at VisitScotland was also planned and as golf tourism makes up an important part of the economy, **NH** felt that the Scottish Government was taking this seriously. **JB** asked whether the Carnegie Shield would go ahead. **NH** hopes that it will go ahead, that the community and accommodation providers will work together to make it happen. |
| 10. | Financial Statement | **JB** reported that the financial statement looks healthy due to the £26k billed to Pot 170, which will shortly be coming in, but then reserved. Opening balances were received from the accountant. **JB** asked that any queries on the financial statement should be sent to her. There are continuous utility expenses at Dornoch Hub, which is chipping into reserves. Electricity is costing around £180 a month currently, though heating is at a minimum and the oil tank was filled when oil prices were very low. Water charges are £117 per month. |
| 11. | AOCB | **JB** report that the Town Centre COVID fund of £5k should be received by 24 July for ‘high street resilience’. The WhatsApp group came up with various ideas (sanitiser for accommodation providers, signage, rebranding, screens, street furniture); Shaun at Kincraig Fabrics proposed that the grant be used for marketing, which met with favour. The emphasis would be that Dornoch was open for business, safe for business, there was confidence in the local community, not putting them or visitors at risk and that the town was following government guidelines. **JB** proposed marketing through social media, the website, P&J, Scotsman and Herald. **NH** mentioned that Golf social media is getting good traction and he would speak to the marketing person about doing a Dornoch specific boost. **JB** also mentioned that it would be useful to work with NC500 on marketing. **JB** indicated that she had to put a plan together for the Fund, which must be signed off by Phil Tomalin before being submitted. |
| 12. | DOMN | 16 July 2020 at 7pm by conference call |