

Minutes of Public Meeting

to discuss the possibility of setting up a Heritage Group with a view to creating a museum or heritage centre space within the village.

Held at Ballachulish Village Hall 5pm Sunday 13th March, 2016

Present: Brian Dickie, Lorna MacAskill, Mel MacAskill (joint chair), Evelyn MacColl, Vance MacDonald, Philip MacLean, Sheila MacLean, Frances McLetchie, Alistair MacMillan, Iain MacMillan, Iain MacMillan, Michelle McPhee, Rob Malpas (taking minutes), Jenna Rose, Ruth Sime, Kath Small, Kevin Smith (joint chair), Jeanette Watt, Morag Watt, Peter Watt, Robert Watt

Background

There have been discussions within the community for a number of years about creating a Museum or heritage space within the village. These were brought to prominence in November 2015 with the successful exhibition held in Ballachulish Village Hall to commemorate a number of important local anniversaries, including the Bridge / Ferry, Railway and Village Hall.

As such, the community council and community association agreed to hold a public meeting to gauge public opinion and move the matter forward, if agreed. The meeting was advertised via social media and door-to-door leafleting throughout the Ballachulish community council area.

Note

These minutes are arranged under discussion points rather than strictly chronological, as the discussion moved back and forth during the course of the meeting.

Premises - Options Available

Three options were initially mentioned, with a fourth noted later in the meeting.

- Short Term - Former RBS building
Owned by a leasing company, believed to be ultimately owned by RBS. Recently vacated by bank, and future uncertain. RBS (Bank) may not have concluded the lease, so could be available to lease, or may be sold on open market. If put up for sale, the community could put in a note of interest.
- Short Term – Barrs Stores
Karl Griffin has recently bought the former Co-op Building (Barrs Stores) and is converting it. There will be one third of the old shop space available to let as a separate self-contained unit. Karl has approached the community council to offer the premises for use as a museum space. Barrs Stores has a historical connection with the quarry etc.
- Long Term – Build in Quarry
For a number of years it has been a long term aim of the community council to build a museum space in the quarry itself. The quarry is owned by Highland Council.
- Long Term – Village Hall extension
The trustees of the village hall have a long term aim to build an extension on the hall to provide more, better facilities for the community. A museum space could be included within any extension, and would open up additional funding to cover costs.

It was agreed that one of the short term options should be progressed as a trial. This would allow the project to be trialed with minimal commitment (if the project failed), whilst also proving the value of the project before a longer term solution is sought.

Funding

There are a variety of funding sources that may be available, albeit many only offer small amounts. Those discussed included:

- Highland Council grants – would need to meet strict criteria

- Highland Council Discretionary fund
- Heritage Lottery Fund – can include approx. 1 years staffing costs.

Funding for core/running costs, such as rent, utilities and staffing is restricted, if provided at all. Set up costs and costs relating to artefacts / displays / research are more readily covered by funding.

Funding for a long term construction-solution would be easier to gain if evidenced by success of short term plan.

Representatives from Glencoe Museum present at the meeting were in favour of supporting the project, but would need to discuss at full meeting for full approval. They have expertise and knowledge that would be invaluable.

It was also noted that Easdale Heritage Centre may be able to offer some support to the project.

Monies could also be raised through entrance fees and gift shop sales.

Trial duration

It was initially suggested that a 1 year trial in leased premises would be the next step. However, after allowing for setup time, and time to adjust displays etc, it was felt that 2 years would provide better justification for pursuing a long term solution.

Content

The question of material for the museum was raised. It was pointed out that the community were able to fill the village hall for the exhibition, and that it is more than twice the size of either potential leased premises.

Iain (Skiggs) MacIntyre has offered his collection of material to the community if a suitable (safe & permanent) long term storage / display space can be provided. Other members of the community have made similar offers. Any materials gained in this manner would need to be carefully recorded so that they could be returned if it became necessary.

The Glencoe Museum were asked about Ballachulish items in their collection, and they said that whilst it would need to get full approval from the committee, they were not averse to the idea of loaning items. Ownership would remain with themselves.

Due to the volume of artefacts potentially available, the idea of changing displays every few months was suggested.

Museum or Heritage Centre

The difference between a museum and heritage centre was queried.

- Museum
A Museum is characterized by having artefacts in preservation – climate control – having a qualified curator and actively undertaking research etc within the remit of its subject.
- Heritage Centre
A Heritage centre is more focused on display panels, and these days interactive items.

Due to the additional costs of operating a museum, and the greater knowledge gained by the research there are considerably more funding sources for a museum over a heritage centre.

It was commented that the bank building is likely to have a more stable environment for preservation needs.

Despite initial discussions describing a heritage centre, museum status looks like the better option.

Next Step

The meeting was asked if anyone disagreed with pursuing this project. There was no reply. It was therefore verbally assumed that all were in favour, and no one disagreed.

In the first instance, the short term options need to be progressed and compared.

Morag Watt to speak to Karl with regards Lease terms etc.

Kevin Smith to continue contact with RBS for same for bank.

It is hoped that one of the premises could be secured for approx. 2 years on a nominal rent, but accepted that the landlords would ultimately dictate terms.

A small sub committee was formed to discuss the premises in more detail once more information is gained. Those who volunteered at the meeting were:

Jenna (Glencoe Museum)

Morag Watt (Glencoe Museum)
Rob Malpas (Ballachulish Community Association SCIO)
Frances McLetchie
Iain Dickie (not present, but had expressed desire to be involved)

Report to be given back to Ballachulish Community Council (and Community Association) for further consideration, but their judgement is to be trusted. Relevant details of discussions and findings to be logged on Community Council Website. There will be a lot of work involved in this project, and a dedicated team will be required to progress it. Consideration needs to be given to a constitution and applying for charitable status. In the short term, the project can operate under Ballachulish Community Association SCIO if charitable status is required.