**Errogie Church Meeting – Minutes and Actions**

**Date: Thursday, 29th February 2024**

**Meeting time: 1:00pm**

**Meeting location: The Wildside Centre, Whitebridge**



**Present:** Tony Foster (TF) – Chair, Gareth Jones (GJ), Ken Sinclair (KS),Caroline Tucker (CT)

Fiona Ambrose (FA), Margie Elgar-Bond (ME-B), Alex Sutherland (AS), Fiona Larg (FL) online

**Apologies:** Mark Henderson and Janet Sutherland

1. **Welcome and apologies.**

1.1 The chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and Fiona Larg was introduced to the team. Fiona is an accountant by background and has enormous experience in commerce, education, and tourism. Fiona will represent South Loch Ness Heritage Group

1. **Minutes of last meeting**

2.1. The minutes of the last meeting have been circulated

1. **Errogie Church Re-set – Vision & Purpose**

3.1 The meeting discussed the completion of Phase 1. Making the building wind and watertight and ensuring its structural integrity had been completed successfully. The building had also received planning permission for Phase 2. The meeting discussed the business case for Phase 2, and it was agreed to put the current document on hold to enable a ‘re-set’ of the project.

3.2 The group agreed that the key task is to work with stakeholders to clarify the vision and purpose of the building and what that will mean in terms of the practical use it will be put to. This will enable the development of more robust assumptions about usage, income, and costs

It is not necessary to start from scratch but build on the uses that have been identified and documented during the consultation processes. (The document developed by the Architects summarising the consultation process is attached.)

**Action:**

**Clarify the vision and purpose of the building**

**Develop more robust assumptions to underpin the business case**

**Circulate consultation documents**

3.3 In parallel the Trust will be running a wider consultation process as part of the three-year refresh of the Community Action Plan. This will include working with the community to establish what is required from the land and buildings assembled over the last three years.

Advice was given that it is sensible to re-engage with the community, but not to ask for more ideas this far down the line.

**Action:**

**Re-engage with members of the community who demonstrated an initial interest in the project**

3.4 What is required is an options appraisal, address the issues raised and then take this to the wider community to ask for their input but with manageable expectations It was agreed that detailed research and more detailed data was required to underpin the business case

The options appraisal should cover everything from do nothing, a simple meeting place, an interpretation centre for the wider South Loch Ness area, alternative uses, and disposal

A suggestion was made that the management of the wider consultation process should, where possible, use internal resources

**Action:**

**Conduct an options appraisal**

1. **Governance**

4.1 The chair explained that steps were being taken to clarify the way the steering groups that support major projects operate. Draft recommendations setting out the purpose of the group were presented for discussion. At this highest level, its purpose is to agree the vision for the project and set its objectives, scope, and deliverables.

The purpose also included:

* Ensuring the development of the project aligns with the strategic goals
* Making high-level decisions relating to the project, approving project plans, budgets, resource allocation and major changes
* Assessing and managing risks associated with the project and evaluating their impact
* Supporting the development of relationships with key stakeholders. Building support for the project
* Reviewing and monitor the project’s progress against milestones and objectives
* Assessing and advising on how to address issues and resolve roadblocks

The group discussed the membership of the group and agreed it was important to extend its size to include people who have an interest in different aspects of the project

**Action:**

**Steering Committee members to consider the purpose of the group and arrive at an agreement at the next meeting**

**Extend the size of the group in order that it represents a wider set of interests**

* 1. It was also important to re-engage the local community and those that had expressed interest in the early days of the project.

**Action:**

**Re-engage with members of the community who demonstrated an initial interest in the project**

4.3 The view was expressed that care had to be taken as to how decision-making is devolved to very small groups to avoid making the rest of the community feel disenfranchised.

The proposed responsibilities of the steering group were presented, and these included:

* Provide advice and guidance on how best to win the support of key stakeholders – SSE etc
* Provide financial and technical guidance on how to build a persuasive business case
* Representatives of the activities that the initiative will support – Heritage, Biodiversity, Culture
* SFCT Board accountable for resourcing the project and approving expenditure

**Action:**

**Re-engage with members of the community who demonstrated an initial interest in the project**

4.4 It was agreed that the frequency of meetings should be driven by what group had to do. It was not sensible to hold them for the sake of it

4.5 The proposed roles on the project were described and these included:

* Chair – elected by Steering Group - TBC
* Programme Manager – Tony
* Project coordinator – Caroline
* Trust Team – administration, building maintenance, fund raising
* Lead SFCT director – Gareth

1. **Budgets and funding**

5.1 The chair explained that most of the cost of the project would be provided by third party funding. It was agreed it was important to explain to the community that the project will not require significant further investment from the community benefit funds. The project, if successful, will bring considerable investment into the area.

**Action:**

**Clarify with the community the funding position**

5.2 The chair clarified that there was a £20k annual budget for other similar projects.   Part of the role of the Steering Group is to identify what funding is required and make an application to the SFCT Board. This budget must be completed by the end of May

**Action:**

**Work with interested parties to develop a 2023/24 budget for the project**

**6. Confidentiality**

6.1 It was agreed that the Steering Group’s discussion could be made public except where it was agreed a topic should be kept confidential, for example in the case of sensitive commercial information, and this should be declared at the start of the meeting

**7. Vision & Mission**

7.1 A draft vision was presented. The view was expressed that the list contained everything we had discussed but it needed simplifying. The advice was to engage with the community and present some options to them but to narrow them down

**8. Name for the building**

8.1 It was explained that the building requires a name in order that the address can be registered. Potential names were discussed that included South Loch Ness Discovery Centre and naming it after the range of mountains that run alongside the Strath, The Monadhliaths. It was agreed to confirm the name once the vision had been agreed.

**Action:**

**A holding name will have to be chosen in order that the building can be registered for a fibre optic broadband service**

**9. Communications**

9.1 The need for a communication plan was highlighted to define the positive benefits the

project will bring to the community. Address the perception that rather consuming additional community funds, if successful, it will generate substantial income including third-party grants in excess of £2million

**Action:**

**Develop a communication plan for the project that will highlight the benefits it could bring to the community**

**9. Date of next meeting**

1pm, Thursday 18th April.

**10. AOB**

There was no other business and the meeting closed