**Errogie Church Meeting - Notes**

**Date: Thursday, 18th April, 2024**

**Meeting time: 1:00pm**

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



**Present:** Gareth Jones (GJ),Caroline Tucker (CT)

Fiona Ambrose (FA), Margaret Davidson (MD), Mark Henderson (MH), Fiona Larg (FL), Alex Sutherland (AS), Janet Sutherland (JS)

**Apologies:** Tony Foster, Ken Sinclair, Jillian Barclay

1. **Welcome.**

* MD, former leader of The Highland Council and Director NatureScot, was introduced and welcomed. She will provide strategic guidance and support on the biodiversity element of the Errogie Church project.

1. **Minutes and actions from last meeting**

2.1 Clarify the vision and purpose of the building & develop more robust assumptions to underpin the business case. Progress being made on this, business case currently on hold. MD asked where documents could be found, CT updated that work was going on to open up a file on Sharepoint that would allow the steering group access to documents.

Circulate consultation documents – documents circulated after last meeting.

* 2.2 Re-engage with members of the community who demonstrated an initial interest in the project. Successful meetings and conversations had over the last 6 weeks, more to be scheduled.
* 2.3 Conduct an options appraisal. The committee was updated that this is the next large piece of work to do for the project – currently the focus is on widening the group and resolving governance issues. It was pointed out that this is important in order to re-engage with the community. It was suggested that it was important that the options presented are realistic.

The question was asked if this would take us back to the consultation phase? It was explained that at last meeting it was agreed fundamental purpose remains the same. Suggestion was made that the simplest thing to do is open up the building to allow people to come in and experienced it. The focus must be on engaging the community.

It was mentioned that there was an open day at the end of last year. It was suggested that we must update the community on progress and hold further open days to encourage engagement. The suggestion was made that specialist speakers was a great way of encouraging different audiences.

* Minutes agreed.

1. **Complete governance discussion**

* 3.1 – Guiding principle, Vision and Mission.
* The committee discussed the guiding principle as on the slide, suggested by one member of the committee.
* It was suggested that the immediate priority was communication.
* Consensus on the vision was positive, but make it clear that education included heritage, biodiversity etc. The three core elements of the building are heritage (past, present and future), biodiversity and community & culture.
* It was pointed out that all these elements interlink, so we need to demonstrate this.
* It was said that it is important to see Errogie as a signpost to other activities and areas within the community, like heritage sites, walks and other community buildings. It was pointed out that the church is not actually a very good location in terms of local walks. The point was made that the building would be seen more as a gateway to direct visitors to other areas of the community.
* It was mentioned that it is likely that the jobs of the future will be in energy and biodiversity, so this is a good place to focus on. Start with education and entertainment and build the project from there – engage with young people, what we are doing is not for us around this table it is for the next generation. Get a good selection of people in for talks, music etc, and let it evolve.
* It was pointed out the need to be careful not to overlap with Stratherrick hall and Wildside.
* It was suggested the focus should be on improving the facilities and getting folk in through the door.
* **Action – Steering group to review Guiding Principle, Vision and Mission and come to next meeting with further suggestions.**
* 3.2 Role of steering committee, sub-committees, and interest groups
* Thanks were extended to one member of the steering group to improve the description of the purpose of the steering committee and pinning down the roles and responsibilities of the above, as outlined in the slides.
* It was suggested an overall summary of the Steering Committee’s purpose would be useful. It was agreed to use the summary followed by the fuller description of the roles. **Action – Summary to be sent to CT.**
* Discussion had about potential overlap in the different roles and the need to have a ‘doing’ team (SFCT staff) separate from the steering group.
* It was recommended that the terms of reference for the project should be developed further.
* Discussion moved on to sub-committees slide. It was explained that these groups should form part of the steering group, with experts coming from the community. The group that takes the strategy and makes it happen are the SFCT staff.
* It was suggested that the slides should be transferred to a diagram and suggested that the SFCT Board are included on the diagram. A request was made that the minutes of this (and future) meeting(s) are taken to the Board. It is important that there is regular reporting by the steering group to the Board as it is their responsibility to monitor whether the project is on track.

**Action – ensure minutes are forwarded to SFCT board.**

* An explanation was given about how the three core strands (biodiversity, heritage, and community & culture) would be supported. They included GJ subject experts supported by community champions and community groups. These groups are still emerging and evolving.
* The aim is to identify ‘leaders’ within the steering group to take actions on behalf of these groups forward.

**Action – merge health & wellbeing and culture to create one group – ‘Community and Culture’.**

* The proposal for South Loch Ness Heritage Group (SLNHG) to put together an exhibition for this summer was welcome. It was highlighted that if there is to be space for an interpretation centre, some work should be done on what the current state of the art technology is – get expert advice on this, ensuring that whatever we have here is interactive, dynamic, forward-thinking and entertaining. A question was asked where the funding would come from for this – would it be through the steering group or independently through the SLNHG.
* The role of the fundraisers was described and how they will be able to determine the best route to take on this depending on wider considerations for the funds applied for.
* The input from experts was discussed and the need to bring people in to do this, for example an Ecologist and Archivist. This would need to be reflected in the budget for the next year.
* It was suggested that we could possibly link in with the work NatureScot are doing on baseline surveys.
* It was suggested that it would be good to link in with Inverness Castle and the Highland Archive Centre in due course.

1. **Report of activity in the last period**

* CT updated group on conversations had with members of the steering group and other stakeholders, referring to the printouts. More still to be arranged, but a few themes coming out strongly already. **Action – group to read through those already complete and identify what they feel the main themes are ahead of the next meeting.**
* CT informed the group of the interim name of the building as ‘The Gathering Place’ as there was a need to register an address for the building to enable the installation of broadband.
* The question was asked what the Gaelic was for this – consensus was that use of Gaelic in the name may be problematic. Worth considering if we are careful.
* Heating – Work is being done on a small hut for the heater, once this is complete, heater can be operated safely.
* Stained glass window – one further workshop to take place with Stratherrick PS, being arranged for early May.
* Car parking – CT explained the images on the related slide, and the different options that may be available. **Please note that this part of the meeting is confidential, for circulation within steering group only.**
* It was suggested that it may be possible to shore up the land where the extension of the building is to go in phase 2 now and use this for parking – this could create up to 10 more spaces. **Action – CT to add this to the options analysis.**
* Consensus is that Greenbank and field adjacent to the church are most logical options. Discussion had on how to bring how to bring Farraline Estate owners into the project.
* **Action – group to think about how we can approach both landowners to take this forward.**

1. **Communication**

* It was noted that this was being worked on – developing a communications strategy with the aim of keeping the community up to date with what is happening with the project.

1. **Event Calendar**

* CT talked through the event calendar, CT highlighted that some of the options listed were suggestions, not set in stone and encouraged the group to think about what they would like to see in the building.
* A member said that she would get in touch with CT to suggest some possible speakers for talks in the church.
* **Action – CT to meet and invite speakers**

1. **Budget and Fundraising**

* Due to the meeting over-running, there was no time to cover these topics fully in the meeting.
* **Action – CT to meet group members to discuss thoughts on budget for 2024/25 financial year.**

1. **Date and time of next meeting**

* Tuesday 21st May, 12noon at Errogie Church.

1. **AOB**

* None.

Meeting closed.