**Errogie Church Meeting - Notes**

**Date: Thursday, 21st May, 2024**

**Meeting time: 12noon**

**Meeting location: The Gathering Place/ Errogie Church, Errogie**



**Present:** Gareth Jones (GJ) - Chair,Caroline Tucker (CT), Jillian Barclay (JB), Sharon Ferguson (SF)

Fiona Ambrose (FA), Margaret Davidson (MD), Mark Henderson (MH), Fiona Larg (FL), Alex Sutherland (AS), Janet Sutherland (JS), John Parrott joined temporarily.

**Apologies:** Tony Foster, Sarah Byrne

1. **Welcome.**

* CT welcomed all to the meeting and introduced Jillian Barclay, Communications Officer, and Sharon Ferguson, Fundraiser.
* Apologies from Tony Foster and Sarah Byrne.

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

2.1 Steering group to review Guiding Principle, Vision and Mission and come to next meeting with further suggestions. To be discussed later in the meeting.

2.2 Summary of steering group committee's purpose to be sent to CT. Done and incorporated into Governance part of meeting.

2.3 Ensure minutes are sent to SFCT board. Once minutes approved at this meeting, CT to send to Trust Manager and SFCT Chair.

2.4 Merge health & wellbeing and Culture into one category - community and culture. Done.

2.5 Members of steering group to review feedback from members and suggest themes. To be discussed later in the meeting.

2.6 CT to add option of additional parking in front of church into options analysis. Done.

2.7 Group to think about how to approach Farraline Estate re field adjacent to church. To be discussed later in the meeting.

2.8 CT to meet with group member to discuss potential speakers for events at church. Meeting held.

* Minutes agreed.

**3. Report of activity in April**

* Focus on the ‘three legs’ – biodiversity, heritage and community & culture. Summary of activity in all themes.
  1. Heritage – CT introduced FL, who outlined some possible options for taking Heritage forward:
  + Two members of the Heritage Group are currently working on an exhibition for the Highland Gathering event in July. It may be possible that this exhibition could be moved to the church after this event.

**Action – FL to liaise with SLNHG to identify if this is possible.**

* + Other option she would like to investigate further is scoping out what the nature of a more permanent heritage experience will be by bringing in a consultant to look at options available. Sited Gairloch Museum as something to aspire to – it is much bigger than what we could do, but has a good café, a wide variety of displays (including mobile pulpit) and recordings from local people of Gairloch in days gone by. Also recommended Ben Eighe Visitor Centre as a low-maintenance yet informative option – a wide variety of information available on local biodiversity and also sign-posting to local walks.
  + It was suggested that if we were going to visit these places, were there other community-based options, for example Boat of Garten village hall? This could also be tied in with biodiversity – RSPB locations.

**Action – group members to give venue suggestions to CT of locations to visit.**

* Budget requirements were summarised as outlined on budget slide on slide show. Estimating £25k to pull all elements of this together, which could be achieved with match-funding.
* Speaking to Michelle Rhodes was suggested, who has experience of setting up exhibitions.
* FL also mentioned that there is a need for storage of artefacts – is this possible?
* Suggested options: Forest School building at Inverfarigaig
* Mothballed Foyers school.
  1. Biodiversity – In Sarah’s absence, CT summarised the swift project and the upcoming screening of Why not Scotland? On 15th June.
* MD put forward her thoughts and suggestions of people to engage with:
* Andy Douse, outgoing Head of Ornithology at NatureScot. He could do a talk and possibly co-ordinate some citizen science.
* Get in touch with Trees for Life
* Get the estates on board.
* She is keen to make the biodiversity element wider than just Stratherrick & Foyers – take in the whole of South Loch Ness.
* She asked if she could meet with the Biodiversity group.

**Action – CT to ask Sarah to get in touch with MD.**

* GJ added that it was important that there was a bridge between what MD and the biodiversity group are doing.
* MD also suggested that we engage with Business Gateway to look at potential for employment opportunities in biodiversity.
* GJ introduced John Parrott (JP), who joined us to expand on the swift project:
* Presence at his house, close to the church. Three pairs to start with, one left and with some encouragement, now 6 at the house. Keen to widen the population within the strath and Errogie Church building is ideal due to the height and style of eves. Could also make this the first publicly accessible viewing point of swifts – use technology within the building to watch their progress.
* Two members of the group expressed concern about establishing a bird colony in the church building that could inhibit future works to the building, example given of bat house at Errogie corner, and our own bats.
* JP assured group that this is a starting point – the plan is to erect two temporary boxes, which can be taken down at the end of a nesting season. This is not a long-term solution, discussions to be had about incorporating nesting spaces within the building, which have already begun.
* It was also pointed out that new planning regulations require biodiversity to be taken into consideration.
* GJ explained that concerns had been raised with the project design team and taken into consideration.
  1. Community & culture – CT summarised activities coming up/ recently taken place:
* Wedding on 1st June
* Stained glass window workshop
* Talk on 15th June
* Possibility of exhibition(s)
* Question raised on how the building will be opened for an exhibition, and can we have other activities within the building while an exhibition is on?
* Discussion had about working with exhibition-holders on what their requirements are, but there is an element of trial and error on how we make this work. The outcomes can be fed into future similar events and the next phase of the project.
* JB & CT mentioned Highland & Islands Climate festival, which runs for the whole of September – it might be possible to run an event in conjunction with them highlighting work SFCT is doing on biodiversity and sustainability in the area at the church that fits this bill. Further work to be done to develop this.

**Action – CT and GJ to pull together community & culture themes and identify a way forward.**

3.4 Community re-engagement

* CT updated that an email had been sent to all individuals who have previously been involved in the project, giving them an update and inviting them to become more involved. Positive responses received, with a number interested in being ‘kept in the loop’ on progress but as yet no-one expressing an interest in becoming more involved.
* A letter is also being prepared to update the wider Errogie and Torness community of where the project is and to encourage further involvement.
* Consensus from group is that this letter should be sent to the whole community.

**Action – CT to ensure letter is sent to all members of community.**

* Question was asked as to why people weren’t feeling they want to get involved. CT responded that of the responses she has had it has been capacity issues – work, health, children etc.
* It was suggested evening meetings may help with this.
* GJ said that further conversations will be held with these individuals to discuss their thoughts and capacity. He also pointed out that all communities have volunteer capacity issues, and it is likely that there will be two involvement levels, first being immediate steering group and second being a ‘friends of…’ style group.

**Action – CT to arrange meetings.**

3.5 Themes from questions

* MH summarised his work on previous responses:
* Key pillars of heritage, biodiversity and community & culture are represented.
* Important that the building is vibrant, welcoming, comfortable and relaxed. Important that it is a social space.
* Somewhere to educate and inform.
* Ensure community involvement, get schools on board.
* Start small and let it grow.
* Revise plans, simplify, don’t divide the space.
* To move forward, need to sort out health and safety, bring in comfortable seating (sofas), improve kitchen and toilet facilities.
* Group member asked about whether the suggestion of having a whole community get-together at the church was still on the cards? JB suggested that this could tie in with the September event for the climate festival.
* It was pointed out that it needed to be interesting and attract people in – can we have pictures on display of what has been happening over the last few months? There needs to be someone on hand who can answer some of the wider financial questions that are being asked by the community.
* It was suggested that it was important to remain aware of the other facilities in the community to prevent cross-over. This was supported by another group member, adding that people don’t seem to understand what is different. What is needed is a good article to go into the next newsletter saying that the church is open.
* GJ updated that he is now a member of the Stratherrick Hall committee, primarily to ensure that the two buildings work together. It is important to remember that Errogie Church will not be a community hall.
* Question asked regarding speaking to local caterers about requirements for a café facility. CT acknowledged receipt of email regarding this, not yet actioned but will be taken forward.
* GJ thanked MH for his work on this.

**Actions – CT to take forward discussions with caterers.**

3.6 High Life Highland contact

* GJ summarised TF’s discussions with High Life Highland, which will connect in with their links with museums and heritage for Errogie and also sporting activities for Riverside. The main context here is building relationships with those involved in similar facilities – the Archive Centre, Inverness Castle, Highland Folk Museum for example.
* It was pointed out that it is essential to outline early on exactly what we want from them, they will see SFCT as a money provider.

3.7 Car parking (please note that this element of the meeting is confidential)

1. **Communications**

* CT introduced JB.
* JB talked through current comms activity around Errogie Church – weekly meeting between Comms and GJ to ensure team are kept up to date with what is going on. Aim is to schedule one post every two weeks connected to church activity, and this could be anything from a call to action to publicising an upcoming event or sharing photos of a recent activity. This week for example we will be sharing details of the most recent stained glass window workshop and also continuing to promote the talk on the 15th June.
* In order to do these posts, content is required. JB asked group to let her know directly if they have anything they would like to share. She and CT can create a story if given content to work with.
* GJ asked FA to facilitate story development on behalf of steering group.
* **Action – steering group to forward content to JB or CT**
  1. Sharepoint.
* CT updated that this folder is now ready to use. Thanks to those who have already requested that they are added and to let her know if there are any issues.

**Action – CT to add remaining members and keep folder up to date with required information.**

* 1. Facebook and WhatsApp groups
* JB updated that there is now a private Facebook group set up for the steering group to use to chat about the project, ask any questions informally. As a private group you would need to be invited. Let JB know if you would like to be a member.
* WhatsApp group not set up but has been discussed as an option. Discussion had about being involved, consensus of group is that this would be ok – staff members would act as moderators and also be able to help answer questions. Not appropriate to share documents here – this can be done on Sharepoint.
* Group given option of Facebook or WhatsApp. WhatsApp preferred.

**Action – CT and JB to take WhatsApp Group forward.**

1. **Fundraising**

* SF updated current activity of herself and SB – working with groups on funding applications and managing the process. Happy to help with Heritage group application discussed earlier in the meeting, and interested in climate festival activities, can possibly help with application here too.
* She also highlighted that the current work that the group is doing to get the building used, and how it is being used will feed into the bigger funding applications for phase 2. It is also important that the building and the activities are sustainable – this will attract funding.
* Group member suggested bringing on board a ‘sponsor’. Some larger organisations (such as SSE) may be interested in a longer-term relationship.
* Highland Renewables was also mentioned - they are under the umbrella of Highland Tourism, which one of the group is involved in.

1. **Governance**

* Update on Governance slides from previous meeting:
* Guiding principle unchanged
* Vision – group asked for further comment, none received.
* Mission – group asked for further comment, none received.
* Steering Group responsibilities split into two slides – summary as noted by FA and in practice by MH.

**Action – CT to share with group and group members to notify CT if any issues.**

* Steering group responsibilities diagram – GJ talked through this.
* Vote taken on whether we were a group or committee. Consensus was ‘group’.

**Action – all references to steering committee to be updated.**

* Points raised by the group:
* Need to be clear who decision-makers are.
* Make sure Board is completely aware of everything that is going on.
* All finance decisions have to be made by the Board.
* Please add an arrow between Heritage and Community & Culture.
* Funding applications needs to move to Staff responsibility

**Actions – Group to look at diagram and feed further thoughts back at next meeting. GJ and MD to work together on Actions aspect of diagram.**

1. **Budget**

* GJ Summarised position so far. Heritage discussed earlier.
* Biodiversity - CT and GJ meeting with SB on Thursday to discuss budget requirements from biodiversity group.
* GJ asked for suggestions from the group on community & culture requirements: sofas. Suggestion made that these could be bought second hand from New Start – this is promoting recycling and will also save money.

**Action – MH to develop a plan for social area. Budget requests to be forwarded to Board ahead of next Board meeting.**

1. **Appointment of Chair**

* Pointed out that this had been missed off the agenda. CT to discuss suggestions with FA outwith meeting.

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

Tuesday 9th July, 12noon at Errogie Church.

1. **AOB**

* None.

Meeting closed.