

**Foyers Bay Steering Group Meeting – Notes**

**Date: 9th January 2024**

**Meeting time: 7pm**

**Meeting location: The Hub, Lower Foyers**



**Present:** Malcolm Stewart (MS) – Chair,Caroline Tucker (CT), Robbie Burn (RB)

Alfie Taylor (AT), Ken Sinclair (KS), Matt Rhodes (MR), Neil Farnham (NF), Craig Lightbody (CL), Bob Main (BM), Maire Brown (MB), Michael Keenan (MK)

**Apologies:** Russell Bain

1. **Welcome**

* MS welcomed the group to the meeting – good to see so many in attendance.
* The plan is for this meeting to be fairly informal, there is an agenda, but it is loose. We can agree actions at this meeting and move onto more structured meetings going forward.

1. **Site clearance works update**

* MS summarised progress made in recent site clearance works:
* 2 weeks spent tidying
* Abandoned boats moved off the shore
* Site cleared of scrub and vegetation
* Galvanised steel platforms laid out – currently being used for storage of community wood
* Site looks tidier, positive feedback from visitors about activity onsite and improvement to area.
* Discussion had about long-term use for steel platforms – they are not suitable for the slipway but there may be potential to re-purpose them within other projects, for example BM expressed an interest in them to help create a platform on the old bridge at Lower Foyers, and KS suggested that they could be used by the pathways group as a bridge to mend the path through Dell Estate.
* **Action:** *CT to make a note of interested parties.*
* CL asked if the Foyers Bay compound was likely to be the permanent site for processing community wood. Discussion followed about the extent of the land we lease from SSE, and that there may be an option to relocate the wood processing in future to an area of land a little to the east of the Foyers Bay site.
* **Action:** *CT/ RB to identify extent of land covered by lease.*

1. **Next steps:**

* **Signage.** MS suggested that it was essential that we installed signage to ensure that there is no overnight parking by motorhomes/ campervans. Suggested wording – ‘For Community Use only.  This is private land, maintained by Stratherrick and Foyers Community Trust for the use of the community.  No motorhomes, campervans or overnight parking – you will get moved on.  Please respect this community asset.’
* CL suggested that in the short term, the simple black and yellow ‘no overnight parking’ have helped on their site.
* Discussion had on other potential options – installation of night vision/ cctv cameras, signage to indicate that the area is patrolled by the Highland Ranger service, or setting up designated parking areas which are available for a donation – with this option we would need to check the terms of the lease, in case this is seen as ‘commerciality’.
* BM asked whether the slipway would be open to everyone, MS responded no, it is for community use only. Our planning permission supports this as reference is made to the volume of traffic using the access road. If the slipway were to be open for all, consideration would need to be given to the road in its current form.
* CL asked how we would prevent access to the slipway from the water. MS answered that we couldn’t stop folk coming in on manual handled kayaks, but as access is controlled by lockable gates, those with bigger craft would not be able to get through, therefore this would prevent access.

1. **Tender applications for slipway build**

* MS explained that we had two tender submissions for building the slipway, one is within budget, and the other is significantly higher. The higher one has come from Kishorn Heritage, who have recently completed the renovation works on the pier and boathouse at Aldourie, so have local knowledge. CT and MS are meeting with the Quantity Surveyor next week to work through both applications to identify the reasons for the variation in cost.
* MK asked if the variations in water level in the loch has been taken into consideration when designing the slipway. MS responded that he feels that the design that was submitted to planning is very generic so we would need to be very careful that the final design is fit for the conditions – positioning is very important to mitigate extreme weather conditions. We will need to be very careful to stick within budget.
* MS also pointed out that they discovered a significant amount of debris under the surface when doing the site clearance works, this could cause SFCT significant problems further down the line.
* KS expressed his concern – we need to make sure things are done properly here from an SFCT perspective. The plans need to be fit for purpose, and we need to avoid this becoming a money pit.
* MS noted this and said that this was why he and CT were meeting with the QS.
* **Action** – *CT to find finalised plans produced by Fairhurst and confirm meeting with QS.*
* KS suggested that another option could be to leave the gradient alone and instead install a winching system. This would avoid disturbing the debris under the surface, and in turn make it less attractive to the ‘casual’ user.
* MS said that for the money available we need to get the best we can, but whatever is designed it needs to withstand the elements.
* CL asked if we might be looking at withdrawing the planning application and starting again?
* MS responded that this might be an option. He also suggested that we perhaps do not build the slipway now, just spend some time preparing the ground and making the whole site more user-friendly.
* KS said that there was a serious argument for getting a qualified technical specialist to check the design is fit for purpose. MS responded that Fairhurst have been out, surveyed and put together a suitable design on the basis of what was asked of them at the time.
* MS also suggested that we may be able to get a similar outcome by putting out a rolling road.
* KS asked if, in its current form, we have something that is suitable for 90% of its users?
* MS responded no, it is a bit difficult for users with smaller vehicles to get their boats in the water currently, so some improvements to the gradient and existing slipway will be needed.
* MB pointed out that this project has been received positively, and all folk involved have been keen to move it forward. Now that we have a group of people with both enthusiasm and technical knowledge, would it not be a good idea to slow down and look at all the options instead of rushing straight into building a new slipway that may not meet requirements?
* She also asked if this might an opportunity to do another community survey – what do people want to see on the site?
* MR pointed out that ‘the community’ who are interested are around this table, best to lead from this group.
* AT explained that he has been involved in the project since its inception – what the community wants is a slipway.
* MS reinforced this – it is a very well-received project, it is the gateway to Loch Ness, and we need to make it fit for purpose.
* KS asked if there was a different angle we could put the slipway in at.
* AT responded that this would be difficult as it would take you onto land that is used by the local angling association.
* MS suggested that perhaps we could source a small tractor that the community could use to tow boats into the loch – there is a natural slip, and this would assist those with lower/ smaller vehicles to launch their boats.
* NF asked what the interim plan was for this year if we decide not to build the slipway?
* MS responded that it is still important that we make the loch more accessible, ideally this spring – we need to present a solution that facilitates access to the loch, one option here is the purchase of a small tractor as mentioned above. We could provide training to a selection of volunteers who can operate it as required for community members.
* KS suggested we get a specialist in to do a ground survey to check the extent of the debris and what impact this will have on the slipway build.
* MS – we need to be aware that the allocated budget is ring-fenced for slipway build so we need to check what the wording in the funding documentation allows us to do.
* **Action** – *CT to dig out funding paperwork and review what we can do within the guidelines.*
* MS brought up the option of installing floating moorings as an interim solution whilst we work through the options for a permanent slipway. These would allow the bay to be used this year. The moorings could be bought from Gaelforce and installed by a workboat, which is currently in operation at Foyers Pier. These could be leased out to community members through a booking system for a nominal fee.
* KS asked that we check the details of our lease to ensure we are able to install these.
* **Action** – *MS to get a quote for purchase and installation of up to 8 floating moorings*

**Summary of next steps:**

* Engage with a specialist to carry out ground survey
* Meet with QS to discuss plans and tender applications
* Gather quotes for purchase and installation of floating moorings and markers
* Investigate options for improving access to the loch, purchase of a vehicle and volunteer training for example
* Change the focus to more gentle improvements to the area, parking the build of the slipway until investigative works have been carried out and we can gauge demand.
* Improve shoreside facilities – work towards the installation of a shed, think about what this should include.

1. **AOB**

* CL stated that it was important that the yard was used for boat storage, not the dumping of abandoned or unused cars and boats. MS agreed. Discussion had about the future of the abandoned boats removed from the shoreside. Agreed that we need to be more official in terms of disposal of these. **Action – MS and CT to move this forward.**
* NF asked if the hardcore could be used to improve the Foyers Access Path.MS suggested this should be passed to pathways group.

1. Next meeting proposed for a months’ time. Suggested date – Tuesday 6th February 2024.

Meeting closed 9.15pm