

Assynt Resilience Group

Assynt Development Trust, Assynt Community Council
Community Care Assynt, Connect Assynt working together

Minutes of Zoom meeting held at 5:00pm Monday 1st February 2021

Present: Willie Jack, Sarah-Ann MacLeod ADT, Liam Taylor ACC, Jane Young, CA, Observing: Adam Pellant & Ewen McLachlan ADT

Apologies: Bill Wardley Smith CCA

Any conflicts of interest? None

1. Minutes of last meeting –Proposed LT and seconded SAM and All agreed

2. Finance

- a) **NHI Grant** - WJ advised that the NHI had approved a grant of £1,000 towards the fitting out of the Food Larder shed
- b) **WDB Fund** - LT confirmed that ACC had applied to the Covid-related Ward Discretionary Budget for £1,500 including £580 towards electrical work at the Food Larder. LT also advised that approx. £7k of WDB funding will fall if not spent by 31st March
- c) **HC Grant** - SAM advised that Highland Council have made available a Temporary Closure Grant which can pay out approximately £2K pm although businesses may need to be VAT registered to qualify.
- d) **Visit Scotland Grant** - EM advised that VISIT Scotland have announced a Scotland's Marine and Outdoors Fund which is a £2.5 M fund which can pay up to £15K per company operating in this sector. EM agreed to email the details of this.
- e) **HC Fuel Grant** - It was advised that Highland Council are operating a fuel grant scheme which will pay out £60 for those who fulfil the criteria. The fund closes on 28th Feb 2021. At present the fuel grant is paid out in the form of a voucher code which is sent from HC by email to the recipient. The voucher can be exchanged for cash at a pay point outlet and it appears that the nearest outlet is Loch Broom Garage in Ullapool. WJ agreed to post a notice about the fuel grant voucher scheme on Facebook and to advise that if individuals are unable to complete the HC form then they can apply to the ARG or to the North and West Sutherland CAB or the Humanitarian and Welfare Team at HC.

3. Food bank/ Food Larder

- a) **Expenses** - JY mention the expenses from the CA bus trip to collect food bank supplies which the ARG was unable to fund. LT advised that the Covid related WDB could be used for this purpose instead of the SCF which expired in September.
- b) **Village Hall** – LT advised that the ARG should use the £1500 WDB fund to buy fresh food for the food bank. WJ to email WWS to advise him.
- c) **Food Larder progress** – WJ agreed to contact Hugh McKenzie in Ullapool to see if he could undertake the electrical work in the food larder.

4. AOB

- a) **Connect Assynt** - JY advised that CA cannot operate at present due to Covid restrictions but the CA bus is available to collect people for vaccination. CA is still in receipt of HC funds for bus trips which was agreed in January 2020. However the bus is now five years old and will need to be replaced soon. The next bus may have to be leased rather than owned. There is no need at present for longer journeys and the Dial a Bus can do all the local journeys. JY advised that those residents on a low income relied on the bus for shopping trips to Ullapool. AP advised that the Robertson Trust may have funds available to buy a new community bus.
- b) **Lochinver Harbour** – The French boats may be returning. LT advised that smaller boats landed fish three days ago and it appears that their catch made it to the Continent. With larger boats there is a different process which involves fish being graded on the pier. The situation does however, look slightly more promising. There has been a dramatic decline in activity at the harbour as each large boat takes 50-90,000

litres of fuel every ten days. One French boat is out at present and due back this coming Friday. The Spanish owned boats which operate out of Lochinver don't employ that many people.

- c) **Letter to Scottish Govt.** - LT and EM have been drafting a letter to Fergus Ewing at the Scottish Govt to see if he will address the problems in the NW. The letter will be published in the Press.
- d) **Covid testing** - LT remains concerned about Covid testing locally and wishes to see some clarity about the reliability of the Lateral Flow Tests.
- e) **Broadband** - WJ brought up the issue of the Scottish Govt £300M+ North-Lot contract with Openreach to deliver the R100 programme. He is concerned about the modelling that Openreach will undertake as this may not result in Assynt homes being provided with broadband. ADT will endeavour to produce a case study to show what result of Openreach's fibre broadband investment in Inverkirkaig.
- f) **Communities Recovery Fund** – WJ advised that this is a £5-25k fund which is being administered by SCVO and HIE. The deadline for applications to the fund is Friday 12th February. There is a possibility that there will be a Sutherland wide application made through the Sutherland resilience group organised by HIE; more details will be available in a few days. The meeting discussed the need for such a fund to pay for fuel – including coal, logs, oil and gas and not just electricity top ups. EM advised that certain European countries are now specifying the use of the FFP2 masks which although single use are effective for up to 8hrs. He suggested that we should consider acquiring some.

5. **Next meeting: Monday 22nd February 2021 5:00pm**