

Hall AGM

The AGM of Durness village hall was held last week. The committee were disappointed that no new members have become involved in the running of the hall and are keen to encourage more members from user groups to be involved especially younger people. The office bearers were returned. Mary Mackay Chair, Margaret MacRae Treasurer, John Mackenzie vice chair, and Lucy Mackay secretary. Risk assessments are being carried out and the results are to be available for the next meeting. The child protection policy requires that certain contact details are displayed and this is to be enforced. Fund raising activities are to continue but for the first time in eight years there has been a review of charges for hall lets. This is to meet the rising costs. The new charges will be displayed in the hall.

Community Council

The last meeting of the current community council came about last Monday. With three members stepping down and only 3 new candidates this makes an election unnecessary. Jock Sutherland, Andrew Marsham and John Morrison will be replaced by Kevin Crowe, Tony Jackson and Nick Hurd. They will join current members, Mary Mackay, Iris Mackay, Anne Mackenzie and Ronnie Lansley. The June meeting held on the first Monday of the month will be the AGM.

Several matters were discussed including the recent proposal from Mr. Ian Wilson Durness Estates regarding the proposed joint formal arrangement required to research an ambitious renewable energy scheme. This requires a signed agreement and with no strings attached he has offered to pay the costs of the legal fees for the community to seek advice before any contractual arrangements are formalised.

News from the Highland Council regarding the possibility of streetlights and a pavement along the back of Sango has been received. This has been long lobbied for by the community Council and a survey is to be carried out with the intention of providing the requested improvements.

Research continues into the feasibility for a small scale community renewable energy scheme.

The Highland Council have extended the car parking facility at Ceannabeinne. It is hoped to have the trial opened in the summer. The community council were updated on the recent consultation findings and the proposed social economic impact still to be carried out as soon as

funds can be secured. Care of the elderly is to be topic at the next ward forum.

Cllr Rowantree informed the council that he is continuing to achieve all party support for a proposal he wishes to present to the Scottish Government on Ambulance cover in the area.

Geopark officer Fiona Mackenzie has been appointed as Geopark officer and the next steering group meeting is in Acheltibuie on the 19th May. Currently Ronnie Lansley is the Durness representative on this group and has continued to express concerns about the cumbersome structure and pressing need to bring ownership to the communities that are covered by the Geopark, matters that were highlighted in the recent report from the revalidation.

The community council are continuing to work with the Lid grazing committee to produce a leaflet for a walk to the wheelhouse.

A working group with Community Council input is being arranged with the residents of Balnakeil craft Village.

Several concerns were expressed about the recent military exercises to the community Council. The late night bombing, carrying on until after midnight, brought a raft of phone calls to the trusted agents. Range officer David Halpin met with Community council chair the following morning and stated that because of the unknown progress of the exercise during the day sometimes the activity would continue in to the night and there was no way of disseminating that information. A report from Balnakeil farm to the Tower at Faraid Head of plumes of smoke coming from areas outside of the range were dismissed as not confirmed. A helicopter landed in a field of sheep and lambs and scattered the animals causing great distress. A bonfire of cordite was burned on Balnakeil beach because it was too dangerous to have the fire in the compound at Faraid Head. Chinook helicopters were low flying over the village late in to the night not using the agreed flight paths out over the sea to ferry troops from Lerinbeg to Faraid Head and causing excessive vibrations in homes.

The helicopters were also landing in undesignated areas at Learinbeg and troops uncooperative with local crofters. The noise monitoring equipment placed at one of the trusted agents' houses was only on for short periods. She reported that the equipment did not run for the full length of the exercise but for sporadic times while batteries were charged and was not functioning during the worst times of noise. It was also pointed out that this effort was not independent as the military were carrying out the activity. The community council are writing to Lord Thurso Mp and minister of defence Des Brown regarding their concerns.

CAPE WRATH RANGE

Cape Wrath range including Garvie Island will be active with various combinations of air bombardment, naval gunfire support and helicopter operations during the following dates: 06 may 2008, times 08:00 to 15:00 19 to 23 may 2008, times 09:00 to 17:00, 27 to 30 may 2008, times 09:00 to 17:00. When the range is active, red flags/lights will be displayed and sentries positioned on the u70 road.

All efforts will be made to keep the u70 road open. However due to the nature of some practices and in the interest of public safety, closure may be necessary. Access advice can be sought from the sentries, who will be in contact with the range officer conducting the firing, or by contacting the freephone number. However, whatever the nature of the practice, under no circumstances is any person to leave the road or proceed anywhere onto the land, particularly the land north of the road within the range area, when the red flags are flying. For further information on the opening and closing of the road and military activity telephone the range Freephone 0800 833300.

Veterinary Surgery

Next Tuesday the visit of the Rogart vet has been cancelled due to the Village Hall being used for the Cape Wrath Challenge. The vet will be in Kinlochbervie at 2pm that day or can be contacted on 01408641352.

Cape Wrath Challenge

Sunday evening is the start of the Cape Wrath Challenge week. The week of activities starts with a "meet and greet" in the village hall. Everyone is welcome to attend to join in the welcome to the village of the runners. From 7.30pm there will be wine and cheeses. Monday is the half marathon, Tuesday the hill run, Wednesday the round Durness fell run, Thursday the beach fun run and Saturday the 17 the Cape Wrath Challenge marathon. Full details of the runs and social events will be available from the administration at the village hall and entries for all events are still available.