

Colvend & Southwick Community Council

Local Place Plan Team

Meeting No.11 on Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> March 2024 at 2:30pm in Colvend Public Hall

Present: S.W.Pain (Convenor), J.Coates, R.Morriss, D.Reilly, P.Shaw, M.Rosindale,

Visitor: Colin Bartholomew (RSPB Mersehead)

1. Minutes of the 10<sup>th</sup> Meeting

These minutes were accepted as a true record of the meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> March

2. RSPB Mersehead

a. Background

Mr Colin Bartholomew reported that the RSPB acquired Mersehead Farm in 1993, and other adjoining parcels of land have been added since that time. The main site including the beach, covers 500 hectares, although the RSPB now also have responsibility for a large area of former Crown Estate land below the high-water mark. There is a visitor hub & car park which cater for visitor numbers of 15-20,000 / year.

b. Flooding of access Road

The U87S road from Southwick Gate to Beck Bridge which is the only publicly accessible road to the RSPB at Mersehead suffers from periodic flooding. Flooding was previously predicted as a 1in10 years event, but since 2015 the number of days when the reserve inaccessible is between 30 -45 days / year. The flooding corresponds to when there is both high rainfall and high tides. The consequence is that water from the Southwick Water is unable to get away and consequently floods. Flooding has been seen to be up to thigh depth. This flooding is an issue preventing the arrival & stranding of visitors, but is also a problem in the event of an emergency particularly for the residents of the cottages at Mersehead Farm.

The solution to the flooding is not clear or agreed. The RSPB stated that the reserve is hydraulically isolated from the adjoining farmland. The Southwick Water breaches its banks causing problems not only for access along the road but for adjacent farmland which belongs to the Southwick Estate. Joint work is carried out on the Southwick Water by teams from Southwick Estate and the RSPB. The RSPB believe that de-afforestation has made the situation worse. The RSPB have approached the D&G Council Roads Department for help, but this has not been forthcoming, although they have indicated that they would not oppose it if the RSPB wished to fund the raising of the road. It is not clear what the effect of raising the road would have on the adjacent hydrology. The RSPB have recently employed an independent environmental consultancy (The Envirocentre) to carry out a survey of the problem. The results are awaited.

### 3. Southwick Church

RM reported that a meeting had been held with the Rev John Murdoch, (Minister of Colvend & Southwick Churches) regarding the planned closure of Southwick Church. The church has been scheduled for closure in 2027 by the Presbytery of Glasgow. This has been done without any meaningful consultation by the Church authorities. Southwick Kirk serves a tight and loyal local congregation in a community attempting to grow and, in that growth increasing the faithful. It is unlike many urban churches which may be struggling financially or with unsustainable numbers in their congregation. Southwick Church is an inspiring building set in a spectacular location. It is in a good state of repair since having its roof repaired in 2018 and is not short of funds or a minister to sustain it into the future. It is also felt that following closure not all the congregation would relocate to Colvend Church. As a result RM, with the agreement of the Minister, has sent a letter from the Community Council objecting to the plans for closure. It is also planned to attempt to get an article into the Galloway News.

### 4. Grant Applications

#### a. D&G Coastal Fund

The application to the Dumfries & Galloway Coastal Fund has been submitted and awaits a decision. The funding, if granted, will be used for the South of Scotland Community Housing Trust to carry out a Housing Needs Assessment and also a Site Appraisal, at a cost of £6000.

#### b. LPP Fund

An application was submitted to the Scottish Government's LPP Fund (administered by D&G Council) initially for the maximum £500. Following a discussion with the application reviewer, it became clear that the Scottish Government have just raised the maximum amount to £2000, but we were advised that we would need to submit a single claim. The initial application was withdrawn, and a new application for £1741.77. This will allow us to fund the display panels of the draft LPP at the Gala, a mail shot around the community, and a year's subscription to Parish OnLine to assist with our map preparations. We have just received confirmation that the grant application has been approved.

### 5. Draft Plan development

SWP had circulated the initial stages of the draft LPP (additions & changes highlighted in red). The original draft had been circulated to D&G Council for comment, & those comments have been taken into account in the latest version.

PS suggested changes to the section 9(c) on "Tourism" by changing

- the 4 major holiday parks – the four holiday parks
- Free range dogs - unleashed dogs

**Action: RM to discuss with Clive Sinclair why the Black Loch path does not appear to be open (the finger board has been removed) and whether it can be reinstated and the path re-opened?**

### 6. AOB

There was some discussion regarding the inadequacy of mobile phone signals in the area. Kippford, Rockcliffe and Portling were all reporting areas of poor reception and the Coastal Path is an issue as signs indicate to call the Coast Guard, in places where there is no signal.

There were questions about whether the Boreland mobile mast had been extended. The Network and Ofcom claims about good reception in our area should be questioned.

**Action: SWP to check with Tracey Roan to see if the mast extension at Boreland has been completed.**

7. Date of next meeting - Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> April at 2:30pm in Colvend Public Hall