

Community Association takes on future development role for Assynt

After a lengthy process of many meetings and much consultation with the various communities within Assynt, the Assynt Community Association (ACA) has now taken on responsibility for addressing the varied issues relating to the economic and social development of Assynt. Stemming from a process initiated by the Community Council and undertaken by a 'Development Steering Group' on its behalf, it was recommended that rather than create yet another community body that the ACA should take on this function. This was agreed by an EGM of Members held on 7th December 2016. The existing articles and previous role (from its origins rather than recent functions) has enabled the ACA to expand its Board to take on new Directors with an interest in development.

The new Board now has Nigel Goldie (Chair), Trish Bangor Jones (Minutes Secretary), John Venters (Treasurer), Marianne Hutchinson, Madeline MacPhail, Stuart Gudgeon, Boyd Alexander, Brendan O'Hanrahan, and Willie Jack. The new members have been co-opted until the AGM in 2018 at which point all Board members will submit themselves for election by Members of the Association.

The 2017 AGM for the ACA is set for 7.30 on Wednesday 10th May (venue to be confirmed). This will provide an opportunity for questions and any concerns over these changes and the future of the Association. The new board has already met twice and it has begun to address the many issues it faces that come under the umbrella of 'development' as well sustaining existing community association responsibilities. We are keen to recruit new members from residents of Assynt with an interest in the future of the area.

At the same time as the new ACA has been emerging, a major challenge for the community has been that of the future of the Visitor Centre. With tourism being the life blood of Assynt this matter was not surprisingly, the main item at the most recent ACA Board meeting. The ACA is now centrally involved with responding to the consequences of the closure of the existing centre. Further detail on the closure is reported elsewhere in this issue of Assynt News. It should be noted that the ACA is willing to support in whatever it can any business proposals for this building. It has recently held a meeting with Highland and Islands Enterprises to explore how this agency can assist new business projects within Assynt. The ACA is also actively engaged and willing to explore how the Mission building can be used to provide services for tourists. But in the light of lessons learnt over previous failed tenancies, the ACA Board will be looking for a clear business plan detailing how tourism activities within the building can be sustained and funded over time.

Nigel Goldie
Chair ACA