

# ROYAL BURGH OF WICK COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Location: Meeting held via Zoom.

Date: Monday 8<sup>th</sup> February 2021.

Time: 7:00pm.

**Meeting to discuss the current situation and proceedings with the Common Good fund (CGF) with Highland Council.**

## **Present:**

**Elected members:** Joanna Coghill (*JC*) Chairperson

Allan Bruce (*AB*)

Wendy Campbell (*WC*)

Doreen Turner (*DT*)

Frances Purves (*FP*)

Kimberley Miller-Rosie (*KMR*) Treasurer

**Co-opted members:** None in attendance.

**Ex-officio members:** Cllr Andrew Sinclair (*Cllr AS*)

Cllr Raymond Bremner (*Cllr RB*)

**In attendance:** Jayden Alexander (*JA*) Secretary

Sara Murdoch (*SM*) Highland Council

Roy Mackenzie (*RM*)

## **Apologies:**

Alastair Ferrier, Allan Farquhar, Cllr Willie Mackay.

## **1. Welcome and apologies.**

JC welcomed everyone to the meeting and gave a special vote of thanks to Sara Murdoch from Highland Council for joining who is taking a lead role in the developments of the future common good fund for the Burgh of Wick, also to Roy Mackenzie who has carried out and is still carrying out vital and important research into the “lost” and misplaced artifacts and items from Donald Horne Collection and items which play a large part in Wick’s history.

## **2. Introductions.**

JC kindly introduced everyone and their positions.

## **3. Proposed list of Common Good land and artefacts from The Highland Council and consultation date.**

SM explained the outline of and gave an overview as to what common good actually is, and how things are identified as being common good.

A number of areas in the Highlands regions already have established and operating Common Good funds. These areas have gone through a consultation process of where things are considered, then investigated and finally decided as to whether it is classed as Common Good; this forms a Common Good Asset Register. Common Good items range from buildings, land, artwork, regalia and funds. The Asset Register is a living document which is reviewed regularly in accordance with Highland Council’s guidance. The items on the Register can be amended if any new property or items are discovered as being Common Good, or is disposed of, or reclassified. If items are identified as possibly being Common Good in a Burgh which at the time does not have a Common Good Fund then a stand-alone consultation will be conducted. This is what Wick is going through currently. SM stated that for anything to be classed as Common Good, then the asset transfer must be prior to 1975. However, if an item is classed as a statutory requirement or is held in Trust then it can never be classified as Common Good.

The following list of property and land which is proposed not to be Common good was discussed by those present, with a brief explanation as explained by SM:

- Caithness House (Council Offices)  
*No longer Royal Burgh property, therefore it is not Common Good.*
- Wick Carnegie Library  
*The titles for this was held by Wick Town Council, however, it was posed as a statutory requirement, therefore is not Common Good.* RM explained that during his research on the Carnegie Library and the Bruce building, Andrew Carnegie who gifted the library drew in “very tight requirements” for the building, RM advised for this property to be investigated again, by looking into minutes and record held at Nucleus. SM confirmed that she would be happy to look into any property or item that RBWCC have concerns about.

JC enquired about the consultation deadline which is 12<sup>th</sup> March 2021, and asked SM if this deadline could be extended to give a chance for more research to be done for these “lost” items and properties to be confirmed. SM confirmed that the Common Good Asset Register is a living document and even though the consultation closes on 12<sup>th</sup> March, items can be amended, reviewed or removed at any time, even when the fund officially opens and is operative.

#### **4. Other areas in the Royal Burgh which we think should be investigated.**

SM explained the situation for the following locations:

- Harmsorth Park (formerly Harrow Park)  
*This is trust property, therefore is not Common Good. If for example anyone wanted to build on this land then they would need to go through the Court of Session (which is extremely difficult). It clearly states in the history “books” etc that this park is for the benefit of the residents and community.*
- Riverside Park  
*Some areas of the park is Common Good and other areas aren't. The area containing the caravan park is Trust land. The area in which the fountain sits on and the fountain itself is Common Good.* RM enquired about the Dr. John Alexander monument adjacent to Wick Railway Station. SM explained that this land was given to the council by Highland Railway Company and is not classed as Common Good and neither is the statue itself, therefore its upkeep is in Highland Council’s hands. *The piece of land known as the Hough came to the council in 1903 from Duff Dunbar and it is held in Trust, therefore is not Common Good.*

- Rosebank Playing Fields  
*This was purchased by Highland Council in 1987 and is to be used for public recreation. This is not Common Good.*
- War Memorial  
*This is a statutory power, therefore is not Common Good.*
- Army Cadet Hall  
RM confirmed that the erection of this building was paid for by the funds from a Bizzare. SM said that there is a clause in the deeds which states that if at any time should the company disband then it becomes property of Wick Town Council. *The company did not disband until after 1975, therefore it is not Common Good and is in the Highland Council's possession.*
- Wick Swimming Pool (former)  
JC enquired to SM about this not being Common Good as this was built with monies raised by the community. *This wasn't built until after 1975, therefore it is not Common Good.*

## **5. Historical artefacts and items.**

RM gave a short insight as to what his investigations were about: RM originally started investigating the locations of the items which are a part of the Donald Horne Collection (father of Rev. John Horne). RM looked at all of the libraries and archives and had discovered only 10% of the collection. RM received permission to have a look at the paintings from Carnegie library and items from the Bruce building and created an inventory of everything within the store-rooms. RM had looked through old issues of the John O' Groat Journal at Nucleus and found out that lots of items were actually donated to Carnegie Library.

SM stated that if items were donated to the library which is classed as being statutory, and not to the Royal Burgh then they would not be classed as Common Good. RM suggested SM to look further into the Royal Burgh of Wick Town Council minutes held at Nucleus to see if there is any further and deeper information which would clarify.

## **6. The Bruce Building (and AOB regarding Common Good).**

SM confirmed that following the consultation end date on 12<sup>th</sup> March, HC will publish the list of queries raised by the public along with HC's responses. The proposed list will then go to the Caithness Committee for review and will go through a quarterly monitoring process, then accounting process for

finance etc. SM also revisited the fact that the Common Good Fund will support its own assets and that all Common Good assets are HC property. SM also confirmed that although the consultation ends on 12<sup>th</sup> March, there is plenty of time for investigating to be done and research to be carried out into the historical artefacts and items, and properties from the Bruce building as the Asset Register is a living document which can be amended at any time.

Cllr AS and JC explained that funding was recently secured from the Beatrice wind farm for renovation works to be carried out on the Riverside Fountain in order to get it back up and running again. As the fountain has been recognised as being Common Good, JC asked if this would restrict the recently secured funding from being used to pay for the renovation works. SM stated that it shouldn't be a problem as all Common Good assets belong to HC, and HC agreed to the funding being secured and for the works to be carried out.

All in attendance were happy with what was discussed. JC once again thanked SM and RM for joining, and Cllr AS. The meeting was brought to a close.

**These minutes were confirmed and approved by a proposer and seconder on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2021.**

*Proposed by: WC | Secoded by: FP*