

Summary of ECC meeting with Calum Gillies

22 July 2024

Present: Calum Gillies, Sara Twaddle (ECC Chair), Alistair Danter (ECC Administrator & former Director)

Apologies: Stuart Whately (ECC Company Secretary), Roddy MacFarlane (ECC Director)

The purpose of the meeting was to further discuss concerns raised by CG in his email of 22 June (attached).

CG summarised his concerns in the following areas:

1. Direction of Board, in particular the desire for ECC to be a business, taking on grants and loans and operating outwith its means. What will happen if the grants fail to materialise as CG observed can have happened?
2. Housing plans for Edinbane that will fundamentally change the village by drastically increasing its size, making it less attractive place to live and devaluing house prices
3. Demolishing of the existing shop and expenditure on a new build
4. Motivation of directors of ECC

ST & AD provided the following comments:

1. ECC's budget is around £100K per annum. This does not allow the types of development that the community has identified it wishes to see for Edinbane, as discussed in consultations and at each Annual General Meeting. Grants are sought from Government agencies and no work would take place without the appropriate processes being followed. In relation to governance responsibilities and "Due Diligence" the Board will only agree to fund projects once funding is secured; the organisation has an annual budgeting process in place to manage ongoing expenditure.
2. ECC's interest is in meeting the needs of the community for affordable housing. There are currently no detailed housing plans and only one meeting has taken place between ECC, the Highland Council and Communities Housing Trust to discuss how we may work together to see affordable housing developed,
3. Professional advice is that the current shop is considered unfit for purpose and demolition is the only option. Plans for the shop have been widely consulted within the community and the AGM decision (with one dissenter) was that the shop development should be prioritised over that of the café and gallery based on a new build.

4. Directors motivation will vary by individual. Directors are not paid for their time and input to ECC. ST explained that she is motivated by an interest in seeing Edinbane thrive and to use her experience to ensure that any activities of ECC are appropriate and meet the needs of the community.

It was agreed that communication is key to avoiding misunderstanding. CG recommended that ECC visit each house in the community to explain any future plans.

Email from CG to ST

Dear Madam Chair
ECC Directors

Thank you for letting me attend the meeting on the 6th of June it was most interesting and informative. I would be grateful if I could attend the next meeting if you could please let me know the date and time.

I left the meeting with many questions and I would like them to be answered.

I would like time on the agenda for questions to be asked and answered if possible.

I have for the best part of my life lived in Edinbane. Coishletter has been my home and place of work for my family for a long time so I am struggling to come to terms with the proposed development's for the village.

Whilst I do wish to express that I am not necessarily against development that is timely and proportionate, I do however take issue with the fact that this will only lead to more development in the future and change the character and demographic of the community drastically. This will not be a slow growth or a natural pace and it concerns me greatly.

It would seem to me that you are proposing a generic model of a village but of whose making and of what substance?

I feel that I would not be doing my forebears and those of us within the community of Edinbane justice if I did not question the impetus and vision behind the Edinbane and Communities Company Ltd .

After looking into CHT and DTAS I can't help but wonder also if it aligns with the underlying principles and guidelines /ethos of the ECC. Does the ECC want to put itself at risk just to gain grants and loans for the sake of self gratification and salaries for individuals and have you as a group done your due diligence on where they acquire their money, how they spend that money and the salaries given. It was a bit of an eye opener for me.

Therefore respectfully I ask that the ECC reconsider their own path and think again about supporting any development of land at Coishletter and scale back on such ambitious plans for Edinbane shop as this is not community based and not beneficial to the community as a whole. Only the select few.

Kind regards
Calum Gillies