

Strathnaver Museum and the Bettyhill Café

Consultation meeting

24th October 2017, 7pm, Bettyhill Village Hall

There were about 30 attendees including 4 Board members and Bob and Lindsay (current proprietors of the Café) – these 6 did not complete any of the questions below.

Attendees were split between 6 tables. Each table was handed three of the five question sheets to complete and took a little over ½ an hour to do so. (The sheets can be identified in this report by the **CAPS LOCK** headings).

Businesses represented at the meeting included proprietors and / or former proprietors of Bettyhill Hotel, Far Bay Inn, Bettyhill Café, Post Office, The Store. There was a marked sense that the businesses in particular recognised the need for the café to remain as a café – it was good for Bettyhill and good for their businesses: - if the museum does well, and the café does well, they will do well.

In plenary the following points/questions were also raised

- Surely Highland Council is required to put the property on the open market. The answer given to this was no.
- Please communicate results of consultation to residents
- NC 500 enhances the opportunities
- Consistent opening times was deemed essential and folk harked back to the days when a trip from Caithness or East Sutherland to the Café was a done thing.
- Suggested a Crofters themed lunch
- Money would be needed for furniture and fittings
- There was a call for a bigger plan for businesses to cooperate and maximise the opportunities presented by NC 500
- Lots of discussion around flood risks and insurance etc.

Responses to the questions are **coloured**.

KEEPING THE CAFÉ IN BETTYHILL

If the museum takes on the café it will remain as a café and that is a good thing. What do you think of this statement, you might agree, or disagree or you may qualify your agreement (for example – *This would only be a good thing if....*)

- Yes
- I think this is a good thing
- The museum would make a better job running the café
- This would be a good thing if the café hours linked with the museum hours including Saturdays
- Good thing if managed to ensure opening hours are adequate and consistent
- It is a wonderful idea for the Museum to take over the café and for it to remain as a café
- The café and museum worked in conjunction with each other when it was Elizabeths Café and kept to the stated opening times – both benefited

The Café keeps being flooded – (several times over the last few years) – this means Highland Council would find it difficult to find a buyer for the property and it is a good thing that the museum is willing to take it on because otherwise the building would quickly fall into disrepair.

- The current flood alleviation seems to be working therefore less risk

- In the event of future flooding who would incur the loss?
- Since the last flood (5 yrs ago) major flood prevention has been carried out – the risk is now minimal

One advantage of the museum taking on the building is that as a charity we should be able to raise funds to improve the building, including flood protection measures, to ensure the building remains in use.

- This would be good
- Agreed
- Excellent Idea
- Should? – Has any research been don't to establish adequate sources of funding?
- Yes - agreed

STRATHNAVER MUSEUM

Strathnaver museum is a charity run by local volunteers with limited support from paid staff. Did you know this? How do you feel about it?

- YES FINE
- Yes we knew and are happy about this

Strathnaver Museum runs a lot of events in the community and is a valuable asset in the local area

- Agreed
- Totally agree with this
- Yes most definitely

The fortunes of the museum and of the café are linked – each feeds customers to the other.

- Agreed
- YES
- NC500 has brought more visitors to the area and need a regular facility
- Agree

More could be made of the café as a 'gateway' to the museum.

- Agreed
- Agree
- YES – if the café was open when it stated as its opening hours

How would you like to see the museum develop?

- More staff
- More projects
- Sustainable opening hours
- To continue to hold more events and creating more opportunities for more ages

RUNNING A VIABLE CAFÉ IN BETTYHILL

Cafes in rural Sutherland make loads of money

- Potentially
- I don't believe it
- This Café should be viable especially in the summer months
- Surely this depends on commitment and consistent opening hours
- Not loads of money – small amount of profit preferable

What do you think are the key things that make a successful café in Sutherland? (think about opening hours, nature of food available (quality, price point, snacks, light meals or substantial meals, vegetarian options, local produce), setting and views, motivation and friendliness of staff, cleanlinessand anything else!)

- Reliable opening hours;
- seven days a week;
- alternative to a dinner menu in the evening;
- opening earlier and closing later
- Good Quality
- Snacks
- Light meals
- Vegetarian options
- Local produce
- Gluten and dairy free options
- Improvements needed to the toilets
- Sunday opening is essential.
- All of these
- All important – opening hours is paramount.

Which of the above would be appropriate for the Café in Bettyhill?

- Exclude substantial meals because the facility isn't suitable and there are other places to eat a substantial meal in Bettyhill
- Good Quality
- Snacks
- Light meals
- Vegetarian options
- Local produce
- Gluten and dairy free options
- Improvements needed to the toilets
- Sunday opening is essential.
- All
- Particular concerns about inconsistent opening hours – suggest 7 days a week in season, longer season with NC500
- Longer opening hours during season
- If you would like a nice café all of the above is very important

It's important that the café continues to open in the evenings (Fri and Sat) for carry-outs.

- YES
- YES
- YES
- It would be good to be open most evenings for snacks & light bites
- Continuing with carry-outs would be good but to have a functioning café of whatever kind is most important

MANAGING AND STAFFING THE CAFÉ IN BETTYHILL

Running a café is a challenging business – there needs to be someone in charge who knows what they are doing.

- Yes
- Yes
- Definitely
- Yes
- Agreed
- YES

The café should have a local paid staff

- Preferably
- That would be good
- Aspirational
- “Local” would be fine but that should not be required (what if no locals wish to work there?)
- YES

It would be good if the staff in the café were local volunteers

- Why? Not practical.
- Minimum wage should be paid to WORKERS
- Maybe it is too big a commitment for a voluntary approach
- Definitely not
- Restaurant work is hard. You cannot therefore depend on unpaid staff – there may be none willing to work
- If the opportunity was available people could volunteer if they wanted
- If run by volunteers there needs to be some sort of commitment to ensure they cant pull out at the last minute

What are the pros and cons of each the following approaches?

- **The museum keeps absolute control and runs the café itself using a mix of paid and volunteer staff**
 - Maybe the volunteer staff should be confined to the museum?
 - Whoever gets it should keep it open 7 days a week
 - No, could be friction
 - No, could be troublesome
 - This could have an impact on the workload and expectations of the museum volunteers
- **The museum keeps some control but leases the building to someone else to run the café**
 - With stipulations in the lease regarding opening hours etc
 - Not sure
 - YES
 - There could be interest in this proposition
 - Best option
- **The museum leases the building to someone else to run the café and lets them make all decisions about how the café is run**
 - NO
 - NO
 - It's a possibility

OTHER USES OF THE BUILDING

It is important that the 'Tourist Information' function continues in the building

- It is important that there is a tourist information centre in Bettyhill but not necessarily in the same building as the café. In fact, that would give more space for the café. (Maybe the Museum)
- Local People with Local Knowledge
- Tourist Boards in the village for out of hours
- Not necessary – transfer to Telecentre
- TIC may be closed anyway, moving it would open up another room in the café.
- Yes – very – if it is a reason for visitors to the area to stop
- Yes – most important that the TIC continues – it benefits the whole community

It is important that the Café continues to sell local crafts

- It is important that the community has a place to sell local crafts:-
 - What about a local pop-up craft fair or market?
- At the discretion of the manager?
- What additional crafts could be offered
- Selling crafts means greater diversity of business – a good thing – reduces dependence on a single line of business
- Museum sells local crafts – More space may be available with fewer items in café
- Alternatively, both outlets could carry different stock/similar items
- YES – of good quality eg weaver.
- Space may be better used for café purposes
- Is there opportunity for crafts to be moved to the museum?
- YES

It would be very popular with the community if the building could be used for more community activity (if you agree with this please suggest ideas about what this community activity could be)

- Not needed. There are sufficient other facilities in the village – eg Knit and Natter using Farr Edge during the busy summer months.
- Could be rented for a café church one evening a week
- Yes+
- Knit and natter
- Themed evening for food
- This is not important – there is the community hall in Bettyhill and Farr Edge

How else might the building be used?

- Funeral Teas
- Craft units
- Space rented for meetings etc
- Parties – childrens birthday parties, tea parties etc.