

BERRIEDALE & DUNBEATH COMMUNITY COUNCIL

The Village, Dunbeath, Caithness. KW6 6EG

November 10th 2021

At This time the Berriedale and Dunbeath Community Council does not support the application by Dunbeath & District Centre to acquire the land south west of 9 Neil Guinn Rd.

In 2016 the community council looked at purchasing the land with a view to extending the sheltered housing availability given the long term ageing population. The Highland Council put a number of conditions on the purchase and the only organisation that satisfied those conditions was the Dunbeath & District Centre so we asked them to investigate the possibility. The last we heard was they were looking at the FIT system as practised in Invergordon.

On the 6th September I was sent by a member of the public a link to a survey. I looked at it on 7th September and forwarded it to the members on the 8th September. When they went to look at it it had been taken down. I asked for a copy of the survey but did not receive it. I then put on the next Community Council agenda "housing at Achorn Rd". On the 2nd October the Saturday before our meeting on the Monday we received a 26 page business plan for a new centre on the land at Achorn Rd.

On the 5th October we received a request to write a letter of support for the project. On talking to members of the public the community councillors discovered that most people other than centre users knew nothing about it. We then wrote to the centre and asked them to give a presentation to a public meeting before the community council meeting on 1st November. They declined.

In their letter declining to give a presentation they talk of it having been a managed and inclusive process. It has been a managed process but it as someone said has been done under the radar and mainly their users were the people that knew about it. The second half of that sentence more accurately reflects their viewpoint when they say they will inform the general public of their plans at their convenience.

As a result it is the view of the Community Council that the land should not be transferred to the Centre until a proper community debate about the plans has been undertaken and that probably independent outside consultants should be taken in to assess the communities views on the project.

Yours Sincerely

Signature redacted by Highland Council

Neil Buchanan
(Chair Person)

To whom it may concern

11/11/2021

Regarding: Letter from Berriedale and Dunbeath Community Council

May I clarify a few points Quoted in this letter from our Chairperson Mr Neil Buchanan.

I am a Director of Dunbeath and District Centre and The Secretary of Berriedale and Dunbeath Community Council.

At a meeting on Monday 1 November 2021 held in Dunbeath Community Centre, I along with all of the members of the public was asked to leave the C/C meeting leaving four members to come up with this decision.

At **NO** time was I asked for my views or opinion. Had I been able to participate I may have had input to the discussion, I well understand that had the discussion gone to a vote I would have to declare an interest. I am very disheartened with the tone of the letter and want to have nothing to do with it. I have supported the Centre since it was first mooted, serving time as Chairman in the last 30+ years and is a great asset in our community now out growing our premises.

Yours Faithfully,

Mr John A Gunn

Secretary Berriedale & Dunbeath Community Council
Director of Dunbeath & District Centre

Personal contact details & signature redacted by Highland Council

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John a Gunn



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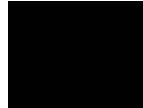
14th November 2021

Dear John

Thank you for your letter of 11/11/2021. You are a valued member of the community council and I am sure the same is true of the day centre, however this does produce a conflict of interest scenario. Your statement that at no time were you asked for your views is untrue. At the meeting I informed everyone we would be going into private session to discuss the day centre and asked if anyone would like to say anything about it before we did. A member of the public then spoke saying that apart from day centre users people knew nothing about the plans. There was no block to either you or Frank speaking at this time. It is known to the community that you serve on both groups and that you would not be involved in any decision making involving the other.

However this has raised some questions and I am sure that more will follow. When the change from building new sheltered housing to a new day centre was first discussed as the representative of the community council did you advise the directors that they should advise the community council of the change in plans ? If not why not. If you did given your response recorded in the community council minutes of 07/10/2021 that it was the chair persons responsibility mean that you had been instructed to say nothing. I also have to add that you are not the only one who has responsibility for the current situation as I believe that there are people in the Highland Council who new what the plans were and they should have informed the community council as well.

Yours Faithfully



N. Buchanan,
Community Council Chair

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The Directors, Dunbeath & District Centre. 7 Neil Gunn Rd, Dunbeath.

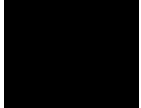
Ownership of the Dunbeath & District Centre

The Centre was built by the Berriedale & Dunbeath community council and set up as a limited company. The residents of Berriedale & Dunbeath community council area were the effective owners of the centre. I am not a legal person but can you tell me who owns the centre at the moment. I have a feeling that as a result of Covid and the commercialisation of the centre that this is no longer the case and even if it still is it is likely to cease to be. Can you also tell us who the owner of the new centre will be.

Exit Strategy

There is no exit strategy in the business plan. What is the exit strategy if the centre gets built and then cannot generate enough income to survive. The original centre's exit strategy was to turn it into 2 sheltered houses to join the 6 that were built at the same time. It is obviously going to be a large building that the community will be expected to maintain.

Yours Sincerely



Neil Buchanan
(Chair Person)