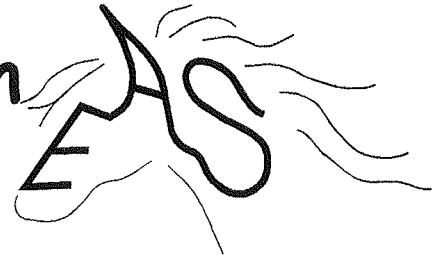


Equestrian Association Of Shetland



Shetland Equestrian Facilities Working Group

**Minutes of the meeting of Tuesday 4th November held in the
Radio Room, Islesburgh at 7.00 p.m.**

Present

Graham Wishart - Shetland Riding Club (Chairman SEFWG)
Elaine Laurenson - Clickimin Open Riding Club (Secretary SEFWG)
Vaila Stevenson - South Whiteness Riding Club (Minute Secretary SEFWG)

Olga Smith - Equestrian Association of Shetland
Susie Nicolson - Equestrian Association of Shetland
Karin Moar - Clickimin Open Riding Club
Sonja Flaws - Pony Breeders of Shetland Association
Marion Slater - South Whiteness Riding Club
Marianne Hughson - Shetland Riding Club
Abigail Robertson - Dunrossness Riding club
Susan Goodlad - Shetland Pony Riding & Driving Group
Dorothy Sales - Filsket Riding Club
Marcia Scobey - Filsket Riding Club
(Dorothy required to leave early leaving Marcia as representative)

Bob Kerr – Shetland Islands Council (in attendance)

Apologies

Helen Thomson – Pony Breeders of Shetland Association
Vikki Polson - SPRDG
Louise Sales – Filsket Riding Club

Adoption of Minutes

It was noted that 2 further amendments to the wording within our Terms of Reference were required to be made, in order to ensure reference to development of Equestrian Facilities (as opposed to an indoor riding facility). These amendments were made and minutes proposed by Olga and seconded by Abigail. The minutes were signed by Graham as Chairman of meeting and Bob as Chairman of previous meeting.

Matters arising from minutes

Dorothy informed the group that she represents Filsket Riding Club and also was an administrator for Riding for the Disabled (RDA). She stated that the latter would be very interested in an indoor facility.

Susie explained that, while she could read her e-mails prior to the meeting, she would appreciate a paper copy of the minutes made available at the meeting as she had problems with her printer. Graham said he would oblige.

Terms of Reference

Graham noted that there was opportunity for a second representative from Dunrossness Riding Club. Abigail will enquire within the club. Sonja is to provide an e-mail address for Helen Thomson.

It was also suggested that Whalsay Riding Club should be represented. Difficulty in attending meetings was cited as the major reason but the point was made that a representative could correspond remotely. Olga is to speak to Roslyn Frazer with this regard.

A representative from each group signed the Terms of Reference

Flow of Business

Graham explained the diagram (previously circulated to everyone) which sets out time-scales and procedures for conducting and recording our meetings. He also outlined key points relating to conduct at meetings, namely: - no swearing; sharing points concisely and clearly; non-interruption of others; alert meeting chairman of your intention to speak; all members being welcome to ask for clarification as necessary. Letters or e-mails should be directed through the Chairperson for approval, ensuring awareness of issues across the Group and a level of consistency in response. The Group were in agreement with these points.

Options Relating to Broonies Tain

Susan shared her recent findings with this regard. Bob was also familiar with the building, having done research for the Archery Club into the building as a possible Island Games venue.

In summary, the building is split into two equal parts – north and south. There are structural girders separating the two areas, which Bob reported that each is 35 metres x 35 metres i.e. an area of 1225 square metres. Full dimensions of building are 35m x 70m, obviously doubling the area. Bob felt there was no possibility of removing the central girders as these are structural.

Susan reported that the south part of the building is currently let (to Mike Collins). The north part is available for lease at £20,000 per year. This area is concreted and flat. The access road is completely tarred and parking would not be a problem. A twelve-year lease would be available. If we wished to purchase the building, the owner would wish to sell both north and south halves and the cost would be in the region of £600,000 to £800,000. Susan

pointed out that to cover the above lease for the north part; we would need to be earning £400 per week.

Marianne pointed out that the minimum dimensions we would require would be 20 metres x 40 metres, allowing us to incorporate a dressage arena. Broonies Taing does not appear to give us the required length, despite its comparable overall area. In comparison, the current riding area at the Girlsta Hatchery is 48 metres x 27 metres (i.e. an area of 1296 square metres.) This does not include the inner section of the building, currently used for storage and tying horses. It was felt that it would be worthwhile for members of the Group to visit Broonies Taing to gauge our own opinion of its suitability. An e-mail will be circulated by Susan, inviting members to attend a fact finding visit. Findings can be reported back to the Group.

Susie pointed out that a minimum building height for horse jumping is 14 feet. This should be included in our considerations.

Current position relating to salmon farm interest in Girlsta Hatchery

Graham reported that he had made contact with the salmon company concerned, Hjatland Sea Farms. Graham's initial enquiries suggest that the salmon company interest is likely to a long process and we are unlikely to have to vacate the hatchery imminently. Graham has contacted the Managing Director, Michael Stark, who is to get back to him, and may provide more information.

Future Development Potential at Girlsta Hatchery

Bob Kerr reported that he had had 2 very successful meetings regarding the Girlsta site. He had met with the SIC Planning Department who were able to provide him with all previous planning applications for the Girlsta Hatchery.

Bob informed the meeting that the Girlsta Water Mill is a listed building and one of 4 such water mills in Shetland, being the only one not restored. The old lime kiln on the site is important historically, as it was the biggest lime quarry in Shetland and is now owned by the Amenity Trust. Bob was able to share a report into the history of the lime kiln and the plan for its restoration. The plan included stabilisation of the kiln, a walkway above to allow viewing and its inclusion in a proposed 'historical trail'. The kiln had been surveyed about 15 years ago but it was felt to be stable and no work resulted.

Bob had discussed the above, as well as the Groups' aspirations with Alan Blain of the Amenity Trust and it was felt that there could be useful and worthwhile links i.e. including the Water Mill, Lime Kiln, an Equestrian Centre and possible cafeteria and Interpretive Centre.

Given the importance of the site historically and in terms of Shetland's heritage a number of grants may come into play such as Historic Scotland, the Scottish Rural Development Fund or possible national money available for heritage projects.

Bob also reported that he had received an e-mail from the Tingwall and Girlsta Development Association (T&GDA) chaired by Peter Glanville, a group established some time ago to develop the area. The T&GDA has responsibility for developing the Girlsta Pier, which also could have potential benefit to a heritage project. T&GDA had advised Bob that they would be interested to hear of any ideas that might be around that could renew interest, and give the Association a new lease of life. We agreed that we should inform the T&GDA of developments.

Bob pointed out that the salmon farm bid would have the advantage of creating economic development but felt that the Amenity Trust would look favourably on the above project.

Graham asked how the indoor school would sit with the Amenity Trust in that we don't particularly want a restoration project! Bob replied that the Amenity Trust had a full quota of projects on stream at the moment.

Bob outlined a number of previous planning applications, as follows: - Planning for shed granted 1995; More recent application for porta-cabins 2004 by Frank Johnson. This runs out in June 2009. As part of this planning application, Frank was required to detail neighbouring land owners/ leaseholders, providing useful information for ourselves. Bob shared a plan with arrows indicating the above neighbours, although many boundaries were not made clear.

Marianne stated that Joanna Davidson, the original landlord of the entire Girlsta and Brunt Hamarsland Estate, had been very open and helpful. Joanna maintains that she owns the land at the back corner of the shed. Frank Johnson pays her a water right, which was obviously important to the previous hatchery, of £12,000 per year and has continued to pay this when water is no longer a key requirement. This agreement was forged with Joanna after the shed was built, Frank seeking to purchase the land in retrospect. Marianne was of the opinion that Joanna would rather see the building put to equestrian use but the salmon company had paid the travel cost of her last visit and were negotiating on the water rights. Marianne felt that Joanna would be prepared to negotiate a lesser cost for us i.e. in the region of £8000/ £9000. It was suggested that a claim to the water right might give us a hold on the building but it was pointed out that this would be worthless if we could not purchase the shed.

Marianne had also talked to the owner of the house above the shed who'd explained that Frank Johnson had relocated the road which leads to his house to best serve the hatchery. Consequently the road does not match that designated by the SIC Planning Department therefore a company buying the site would legally not have the access they thought they had. Obviously this could be another legal stumbling block for a potential purchaser. Marianne was also aware that Frank had received money to regenerate the mill but this had not happened. She did not know whether or not he would have been required to pay this back.

The group felt that, all things considered, if we could secure a claim to the shed, we would have time to pursue the options for the site as a whole.

We are obviously grateful to Frank for allowing Shetland Riding Club to use the shed but, as he had refused to charge the Club any rental, we assume he is aware that this gives no rights to the building. Marianne felt that to date Frank hadn't really seen the Club as a serious contender with regard to purchase.

There was some positive discussion of how best to move forward including hiring a lawyer and requesting Michael Thomson to survey the building. Graham stated that he would feel happier if the EAS was to endorse the current group spending the feasibility money in trying to move this project forward. Bob agreed that it might be advisable to write to Michael Duncan to officially sanction the use of the feasibility money, thus ensuring there is no requirement to pay back.

Details from Orkney Pony Club

Graham had contacted Dennis Bichan, who had been involved in the Orkney Indoor School from the start, and was a wealth of knowledge on the 10 years it took to reach fruition, remaining involved to the present day.

Dennis could tell Graham that the facility was completely funded by fees, which were currently £ 12.00 per hour (though were likely to require to be increased to cover costs). The group were VAT registered during building but were now looking to gain charitable status. Currently Orkney Islands Council allows 100% rate relief for sporting groups, teaching facilities and non profit-making organisations. The building hosts a RDA (Riding for the Disabled Association) event every week and is booked through orkneyridingcentre.co.uk. Graham suggested this website is well worth a look. Dennis had made it clear that he would fully welcome fact-finding visits to the Orkney Riding Centre.

Susie shared the fact that becoming a riding club means you can avoid rates and said that this was the way many organisations were going. She also said that if events were done through the Pony Club you could use their insurance.

AOCB

Alternative Green-field Venues

Susie told the group that previously letters had been sent regarding possible alternative sites for an equestrian venue, such as Staney Hill, Seafield and Cunningsburgh Show Ground. Abigail stated that the Cunningsburgh Show Ground was now not an option. Graham suggested that the above options should be kept on the 'back burner' until the probable future of the Girsta Hatchery was better known and understood.

Possible establishment of 'The Pony Club' in Shetland

Marianne suggested that consideration might be given to the idea of establishing a branch of 'The Pony Club' in Shetland with all its associated benefits. The Group felt this might be best considered through the EAS initially. Abigail and Olga were happy to add it to the agenda for the next EAS meeting due next week.

Course of action towards next meeting

Discussion again centred on our best course of action regarding the Girlsta site. We agreed to write letters expressing an interest in purchase and by means of hand-delivered/ recorded delivery letter, to Johana David and Frank Johnson. In Frank's case we would request clarification on who to refer to regarding potential purchase. It was suggested we also write a generic letter to Pete Glanville and perhaps to local councillors. Writing to the Community Council was also suggested both in terms of support and a possible donation. Susie pointed out that Dean Gilfillan may be a useful person regarding sponsorship, as horse owners provide worthwhile business for him. Marion is to share our current position with Bob Cree-Hay and enquire what advice he would offer.

Date of next meeting

Tues 2nd Dec, 7pm, Hayfield House

