



GLENDALE PUBLIC TOILETS

Report Version – 1.06

18-09-2017

Glendale Public Toilets - GCC

Scope

This document has been created to give a background and introduction to the provision of public toilets for the area of Glendale. The aim is to develop a sustainable solution to the issues caused through the total lack of public toilet facilities in the area. This document should be used as a basis to inform any future project to deliver such services as well as provide a basis on which plans can be developed by the community.

Background

It has been raised at various meetings and consultations that Public Toilets are a significant concern within Glendale as there currently no public toilets between Dunvegan and Neist Point and visitor numbers appear to be increasing year on year.

In 2016 the very evident increase in visitor numbers resulted in a significant number of reports that human feces have been found at various locations including but not limited to outside the Church, Café Lephin, the Glendale Hall, the Pier, Neist Point and at the side of the main road through the Glen. Chemical toilets are also being emptied at locations such as the pier and Neist Point.

It was confirmed that the toilets at the Glendale Community Hall are only open when the hall is in use. The hall is not currently a member of the Highland Council Comfort Scheme which could contribute up to £5000 per annum to community/ business organisations who operate and manage public toilet facilities.

Cllr Renwick has advised that the Highland Council does not have a statutory duty to provide public toilets and that plans for community owned toilets are being progressed in other areas on Sky such as at the Storr (The Staffin Community Trust).

Concerns were expressed that community owned facilities are may be unworkable in Glendale. However, examples were cited in the Outer Isles where community facilities have worked well and provided local employment.

A recent report undertaken by the Glendale Trust had found that public toilets would not be commercially viable at Meanish Pier as part of the current pier project. There were also concerns raised at the Trust AGM 2014/15 from a small number of members who felt the pier was an inappropriate location for such facilities.

It has been expressed that toilets currently available in the Glendale Community Hall have not been designed for such high-volume usage and as such quickly become blocked due to the increase in numbers of summer visitors. It has also been suggested that the Glendale Community Hall cannot afford the expense of the frequent unblocking and emptying which would be required if they were kept open.

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Consultation and evidence gathering

To develop a robust understanding of the issues regarding the provision of public toilets in Glendale and the effect of not having any available public toilets a brief consultation was undertaken by direct emailⁱ issued to several of the businesses affected by public toilet use as well as all the relevant community organisations. Each organisation was contacted requesting information about their current facilities as well as a request for concerns / comments about Public Toilet facilities in the area. These included -

- Café Lephin
- Red Roof Café Gallery
- The Glendale Hall Association
- The Glendale Moorings Association
- The Glendale Trust
- Skye Weavers
- The Glendale Hall Committee

Details of the responses have been provided below -

*“Our toilets in the cafe are at full capacity and unable to cope with the increased demand. We are open 6 days and have allowed more than just our customers to use the toilets. Yet, we have still been had to clean human faeces from the cafe grounds on more than one occasion. I have also seen some horrific sights whilst out walking my dogs in and around Glendale. I feel the tourist coming to the area should have access to toilets, I certainly don't want to put tourists off coming and also want to keep the place clean as a resident.” – **Café Lephin***

“We've had quite a few desperate people whom we allowed to use our own toilet, which is far from ideal but preferable to their plan B. A lot of people have commented on the lack of facilities and also on the mess at Neist Point.

I don't know all the issues with the village hall, and I'm sure there are many, but would it be possible to have those toilets for public use from early morning to late evening? Maybe the Trust could try and raise money to run the toilets and upgrade the septic tank/water flow issue? Seems a shame to have toilets and then not be able to use them.

*It seems to work well with the Dornie village hall toilets, which are open late and always clean. Not sure how they organise that, but that would be interesting to find out.” – **Skye Weavers***

*I can vouch for both Neist point and the pier in regard to lack of public toilet provision. I have seen both the result and people going by the side of their cars. Both areas are extremely busy from April to even October this year and it's unbelievable that there are no public toilets this side of Dunvegan. The community hall toilets are now not open to the general public as they are deemed not up to purpose. Personally, I believe new toilets should be provided in the centre of Glendale where everybody goes through. I speak for myself and on behalf of the Glendale Mooring Association. - **Glendale Moorings Association / Greg Lane***

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"I have also been contacted by residents and business owners regarding the issue and understandably they all want something done and soon..... In a recent survey, looking at how we should develop Borrodale School, 87% of respondents said that public toilets are a must. This is a preliminary figure as the survey has not been reported to the board yet. The high demand for public conveniences is, I believe, directly linked to the issues you mention." **Glendale Local Development Officer**

"We have one disabled access toilet to service our cafe of 24 covers. We are right on the limit of toilet capacity for the number of covers. If we expanded the cafe we would definitely have to increase our number of toilets. At busy lunchtimes our toilet is in almost constant use. Staff often have to wait for a loo opportunity! I.e when they are free and the toilet is free!

We occasionally get customers coming in for a cup of tea and to use the toilet, but as we are off the main route we don't get too much of that.

If we had more toilet capacity we would gladly offer free use of our toilets, as I know some high streets business do. But we simply don't have the capacity, especially for busses and coaches.

Personally I think a well sign posted pay for use toilet facility in the Glen would be a good community project. The facility would need good information boards to inform users that it is provided by the community and not the state. So the users know the fee is for the up keep of the facility and any profits go to community projects.

The community however needs to be careful about taking on a financial liability for the up keep of such a facility when it doesn't have steady source of revenue. So despite the popular support for such a project, it concerns me that the community is not yet financially ready to provide these facilities." **Red Roof Café Gallery**

"I've been surprised actually that we haven't had more people asking us for the loo in the shop, but this does happen most weeks. I sometimes send them back to Dunvegan, since our system is a shared house system with Lydia, and not suitable for general use. Sometimes I do let them use my toilet - pregnant women and more elderly sometimes cannot wait so long. It tends to be ladies usually asking, but not always. Sometimes it's local children." – Glendale Shop and Post Office

Dialog with the **Glendale Hall Committee** as well as review of the [planning application 11/01371/FUL](#) | Installation of a pump chamber | Glendale which was approved in 2011 the Highland Council, indicates that the Glendale Hall Facility and SEPA license has been granted for a system which is capable of handling 180 flushes per day or 67,500 flushes per yearⁱⁱ. The current system is however an interim measure which was put in place due to the strain on the original toilets and is not designed for full public use at this stage, however it should be noted that it is capable of dealing with significant levels use.

The Glendale Hall Committee also indicated that some of the key issues about the management of the Hall toilets such as users often placing items that are not suited into the system and/or not allowing adequate time for the system to refill before flushes. These issues cause further strain on the system and often lead to blockages which are difficult and expensive to clear. This has led to Hall Committee taking the decision to not operate the current Hall toilets except when the Hall is in use.

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Feedback from the **Highland Council** directly to the Glendale Community Councils request for support it appears that the only support for comfort schemes will be for Highland Council owned and operated facilities. *“The Highland Council are proposing comfort schemes for existing toilet facilities they own and have no plans to increase the number of public toilets on Skye or any other part of the highlands.”* - Hugh Gardner MICWCI - Amenities Manager (North) -Community Services

In addition to the work undertaken to communicate with organisations it has been highlighted that areas in Glendale affected by the lack of toilet facilities have been publicly displayed on the internet coupled with graphic photographsⁱⁱⁱ. These comments^{iv} have been posted^v on local activist groups such as the very publicly available [Eyes On Skye \(click to find on internet\)](#). There is clearly a significant risk to the reputation of the area not only in terms of health and safety but also in terms damage to the reputation of the area for visitors and locals alike.

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Other successful operating community operated toilet facilities

- **Kyle of Lochalsh** - Through the Community Challenge Fund the Trust took ownership of the public toilet facilities in Spring 2014 from Highland Council. Refurbishment works and the addition of showers and a laundry facility are being undertaken to improve the facilities available for the community, visitors and sailors. This is being delivered with funding from the Highland European Fishery Fund Programme, Highland Council and HIE. Funding restrictions and statutory approvals have resulted in the works being undertaken in June and July. To minimise any inconvenience the Community Trust has provided temporary Portaloo facilities for the duration of the works.

- **Applecross** - There are public toilets located in the main public car park situated behind the petrol pumps. These are provided by the 'not for profit' Applecross Community Company. As a voluntary run organisation donations to help support this service are appreciated and help to ensure its continuance.

The Applecross Trust have operated toilets for about three years. They were in a poor state and the council were intending to close them. They received grant funding to upgrade them but the building had limited potential so there was very little potential to earn additional income. They rely on comfort scheme funding which covers the salary of a part-time cleaner. But Highland Council must be nagged to pay it each year. 2016 was a year they didn't have a staff member whose job it is to deal with the comfort scheme. If the Scottish govt carries on strangling the council budgets we probably won't get it (the comfort scheme) at all.

Donations currently cover the remainder of the costs. Income isn't enough to pay for major repairs or upgrades which will be needed eventually. As there are too many jobs in Applecross for the number of people of working age, we will probably struggle to replace our current cleaner when she decides to give up the job (she is in her early 60s and doesn't have a car so cycles an 8 mile round trip to do her work, so probably not a long term employee). We are lucky that Judith at the Inn provides support to her and someone to fill in over holidays and any other time off covering the costs of that herself. In the longer term, there is a hope for the public toilets to be included in a larger building (possibly a Community Company office) with more scope for income generation.

The council has offered to sell the car park in which the toilets are situated but there would have to be a feasibility study to see if this would be worthwhile. The parking is badly needed so there is limited scope for building something new. There is also the possibility that the local historical society might restore an old farm building- centrally situated- as a museum and there could be a proposal to make the toilets there public toilets. This would mean we wouldn't have to be responsible for providing them anymore and would bring more visitors to their facility. But this is unlikely to happen in the near future.

- **Dornie Community Hall** – Provides free access public toilet facilities.
- **Kinlochleven** - The Board have just decided to close them for the Winter, from November to end of March. The problem we have here is that we do not receive the Highland Council's Comfort Scheme. This was awarded to the Ice Factor (whose building is beside the toilets) when they opened whilst the public toilets were closed. We had hoped that when the toilets were transferred to the Trust, we would have been awarded the HCCS, however as the Ice Factor has better facilities (e.g. showers), we could not compete with them and the Council would not be persuaded. When the Ice Factor was closed between July 2015 and March 2016 due to a fire, we requested and did receive the HCCS (£300 per month) but that ceased once they re-opened.

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- Basically the problem is that we paid a cleaner two hours a day to clean and open the toilets at 8am and close them at 10pm, 7 days per week and relied only on donations from the public. That said, as a charity, we applied for and received exemption from water rates, which made quite a difference to our outgoings.
- So there are some things that can help if you can get them:
 - The Highland Council Comfort Scheme
 - Water rates exemption and
 - We now buy our toilet rolls from Initial who already supply the sanitary units and a nappy unit (this has saved us quite a bit).

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Conclusions and Recommendations

Given the overwhelming evidence and demand for a solution to the issues surrounding a lack of public toilet facilities in Glendale as a priority a solution should be found as soon as possible and before another busy tourist season begins in April 2017. Many businesses and individuals in the area benefit from tourism who may be directly affected due to pollution. There may also be a potential health risk for local people and in particular, for children who often play in and around the areas where human fouling has been found. There are significant concerns not only from local businesses, but the wider community organisations and residents and there appears to be strong levels of support for something to be done to address these issues locally especially as the Highland Council and Government have confirmed they are under no obligation to provide public toilet provision.

It is therefore recommended that:-

- 1) A wider public consultation could be undertaken to ensure that any project taken forward has the demonstrable support of the wider community this should be through
 - a. A public meeting
 - i. Agenda –
 - ii. Should Glendale Provide Public Toilet Amenities
 - iii. If Yes - which site(s) should be investigated and why
 - iv. What resources (such as volunteers and organisations should take the project forward

The process should follow the already proven and established Glendale community project process which can be found by clicking [here to view on the internet](#)

- 2) Any project undertaken should be sustainable in terms of management and resources. A site should be chosen/proposed at which these facilities should be provided. Possible sites for facilities could include –
 - a. Meanish Pier
 - b. Neist Point
 - c. Glendale Hall
 - d. The Churches
 - e. Borrodale School
 - f. Other (Glendale Estate or Common Grazings?)
- 3) The project should be supported by the Glendale Local Development Officer as a resource and be a priority of all the community based organisations such as the Glendale Hall, The Glendale Community Council and the Glendale Trust. One organisation should be responsible for the overall delivery and management of the project and this should be established at the earliest opportunity.
- 4) A pilot project should be delivered as soon as possible certainly in time for the tourist season of 2017 in order that the area remains accessible for visitors and there is no risk of further contamination of the area from public fouling.

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ⁱ Email issued by Elgar Finlay on behalf of the Glendale Community Council (available upon request)

ⁱⁱ Report of Handling submitted with Glendale Community Hall Planning Application - http://wam.highland.gov.uk/wam/files/BFEDD087DB730FD94D4538D4052190E1/pdf/11_01371_FUL-DEL_REPORT-225640.pdf



ⁱⁱⁱ



Brian Smith

23 August

I have just completed the first daily 'Walkround' at **Neist** Point. I am disappointed but, to be honest, not surprised. There are a number of baby-wipes and tissues all the way up the side of the single track road where people park. I will leave their purpose to the imagination. There were five campervans parked there overnight, one left as I was walking up, and the human waste is evident not 30 feet from the small car park area..... an area where visitors walk and popular with photographers to catch the view of the lighthouse.

The 'Star Exhibit' today though is the small carrier bag of human waste. It was neatly tied at the top..... and then dumped at the side of the car park, mere feet from the parking. Why go to the trouble of doing it into a small carrier bag then just leave it where others park and children play ? Truly disgusting.

I will not upload the photographs but I will send them to SEPA and the Highland Council. There are boundaries to decency..... some people need to learn them.

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10 Comments

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Brian Smith

24 August

An evening stroll down Loch Pooltiel pier this evening produced a downside to the fabulous sunset that developed. There are a couple of old store areas on the Minch side of the old Salt Store. The inside of these and the area around them are, well, disgusting is the only word that can describe it. They are being used by the 'wild' campers as a toilet. Whilst we were enjoying the sunset one of them sauntered casually over to the store and proceeded to have a piss. In my book that was simply 'taking the piss'. There have been campfires everywhere and some of the fuel has been CUT from the small stand of trees just to the west of the beach area. Wanton vandalism. I believe that the land is owned by the Community through the Glendale Trust who are managing it. There will be a serious complaint delivered to them in the morning. My grand-daughter was held on a 'tight leash' to save her getting soiled by the filth, she wanted to explore the beach, we simply couldn't let her.

