



CREICH COMMUNITY COUNCIL

**Minutes of meeting held
on Tuesday 19th February 2013 at 7.30pm
in the Invershin Village Hall**

Present: Pete Campbell, Chair (PC), Russell Taylor, Treasurer (RT), Sandy Chalmers (SC), Russell Smith (RS), Norman MacDonald (NM), John White (JW), Lily Byron (LB), Sally Williams (SW)

Secretary: Mary Goulder (MG)

Invited guests: Ruth Liddicoat, Fiona Pogorzelec, John MacDougall, Karen Anderson all of SSE

Also present: PC Katy Hunter (KH), Highland Councillor George Farlow (GF), Colin Gilmour (CG), Mark White (MW), Ron Boothroyd (RB), Brenda Bailey, Shona Paterson, Chris and Roger Oliver, Angus MacDonald (AMac)

Apologies: Claire Bruce, Vice Chair, (CB) Brian Coghill (BC), Keith Williams (KW), Post meeting: Kay Smart (KS)

Item 1. Welcome/Apologies (as above) /Police report. Pete Campbell opened the meeting with a warm welcome to everyone especially the members of the public. He invited Ruth Liddicoat of Corporate Affairs to begin the SSE presentation, explaining that there would be an interruption for the police report when PC Hunter arrived.

Item 2. SSE Renewables regarding the proposed Glencassley windfarm development. Ruth introduced her colleagues detailing their roles within the company which included development, liaison and the geographic information services. The brief history was given that the project began with a bird survey in spring 2010, followed by the erection of anemometers for the wind survey to allow the first design plan of a layout to be made. The first proposal was for 47 turbines, each at a height of 137m. Scoping work and feedback from public exhibitions etc lead to a reduction in turbines to thirty with a further reduction to twenty-six 2 or 3MW machines at the reduced height of 126m after the Environmental Impact Assessment had been circulated. Due to the size of the development the planning application is made to Scottish Government. Maps were passed round showing the original and the most recent development plans and also the access route which will be through the existing Achany development; no construction traffic will use the public road network through Rosehall. There will be 6km between the outer turbines on the boundaries and the neighbouring developments of Sallachy (if approved) and Rosehall. A new road will be put in through the Glenrossal Estate connecting Glencassley to Achany. Operations and sub-station buildings will be built which will cover both Glencassley and Achany windfarms; the existing buildings at Achany will be used the substation and a new building will be built for staff/administration within the Achany site. More staff will be needed. Currently the company awaits the date for the Highland Council Planning Committee debate. If approved there, the application passes to Scottish Government, if not approved a public enquiry has to be arranged. Once approved there would be a further two years before construction begins to allow for further planning of routes, purchasing, etc. Construction would take approximately eighteen months. Grid connection is expected to be from 2017- 2020.

SSE held an 'Open for Business' event in Lairg to encourage local companies to register as available, if approved, to work on the development. A web 'portal' has been set up through which such companies can register to tender for work and also advertise positions they wish to fill. It is hoped this portal will help raise public awareness of the various aspects of power production in which SSE is involved. There was also a 'Meet the Buyer' event in Lairg on the same day at which

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people could meet the procurement team and networking was encouraged. In general the feedback was very good. Asked about the company's policy on giving preferment to local companies for sub-contracts, Ruth confirmed this is stressed throughout the tendering process and is written into the contracts when awarded. SSE has entered a partnership with UHI to seek a way to improve skills, training, etc, particularly aimed at bringing young people into the various aspects of the industry through apprenticeship schemes. Overall the company takes on around one hundred apprentices throughout the UK each year. The issue of foreign companies building and transporting the turbines, blades and control equipment was raised. Ruth advised that at present the towers are being made in Campbeltown but that there is not yet the capability in Scotland to provide the blades and the control equipment. Fiona stated that it is the manufacturers who insist on which companies provide the drivers and transportation. Very strong feelings were expressed from the floor and CC members alike regarding the use of foreign drivers who have no experience of the single/narrow double track roads here and also the almost complete lack of local employees on any of the now operational windfarms. Ruth clarified that the site supervisor for Achany windfarm lived in Bonar bridge and the equivalent for the Gordonbush windfarm near Brora lived in Brora. From the Chair it was stressed that SSE must maintain a publically visible policy of local spending through employment and use of local businesses. Fiona provided figures to the CC regarding the number of jobs given to locals during and post construction at Achany and agreed to email the projected figures of employment for Glencassley. After some further lively discussion the Chair brought this session to an end inviting the SSE representatives to stay for the next agenda item which they agreed to do.

Item 1 (c) Police report. PC Hunter arrived at 7.35 and the SSE presentation was interrupted to allow her to make the report. Fifteen incidents were reported in the last calendar month with one remaining under investigation. Speed patrols have been operating but not many offenders noted. Asked her opinion about siting the 'Smiley Face' sign at Spinningdale or Invershin, Katy felt that this would be inappropriate as the legal limit is 60mph. It is expected that five more officers will be in place in Sutherland and Easter Ross after the national force comes into being in April. The control room is now situated in Inverness with all telephone calls routed there initially. The new national 101 number will be introduced later in the year. With thanks from the Chair, Katy left at 7.40pm after which the SSE discussions continued (as above).

Item 4. Broadband in Rosehall. As so many Rosehall and Altas residents had attended the meeting regarding this issue it was now brought up to this point on the agenda. Ron Boothroyd, who is moving into Altas permanently after Easter, had approached the CC last year with regard to the possible improvement to the Broadband provision which had been indicated to the CC early in 2012. Recently Ron has been in discussion with BT and has been reliably informed there are no plans in place to upgrade the Rosehall exchange. In its present form the exchange cannot support any improvement in the service and is now at capacity, meaning no new connections can be made. This is obviously detrimental to the communication network and to any steps made to encourage new businesses or 'home workers'. Ardgay, Invershin and Lairg all receive a higher internet connection speed than Rosehall. Discussion revealed that there are many fibre optic cables in place in the area already, often passing the doors of people whose equipment apparently cannot be connected to them. It was suggested to Ruth that this would be an ideal opportunity for SSE to do something valuable and worthwhile for the community should it find itself able to help fund an improvement. Ruth agreed to take this back to the company and report back to the Chair. Ron and Mary will work together to take the matter forward by writing to the MP, MSP, BT and any other influential bodies. **RB/MG Action.** The SSE team and some of the members of the public left the meeting at this time. 8.30pm.

Item 3. Minutes of January meeting/matters arising. The minutes of the January meeting were approved, as being a true and accurate record; proposed by Norman MacDonald; seconded by Russell Smith. **(1) Carbisdale Castle.** Nothing further has been heard from Keith Legge of SYHA. Angus gave his opinion that the repairs required could be done for far less than the sums previously mentioned providing modern materials were used. This would entail a change to the Listed status of

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the building. Pete mentioned Lachlan Stewart who lives locally and is an expert architect specialising in castle renovations. Cllr Farlow offered to speak to Highland Council's expert and try to have her liaise with Mr Stewart, perhaps arranging a meeting with them and two CC representatives. Angus has had reason recently to visit the castle and fears that little or no supervision has been in place during repair work. **PC/SC Action. (2) Balblair woods parking at Invershin.** PC apologised as he has not yet submitted the application to the Ward Discretionary Budget to help with the costs of this project. The application to the Beinn Tharsuinn Windfarm Community Benefit Fund for additional project funding remains to be completed also. **PC/RT Action. (3) CC Notice Board.** PC has discussed this with Colin Morris of the Hall Committee. He will follow it up. **PC Action. (4) Information pamphlet re Community Benefit Funds.** PC has still to do this. **PC Action.**

Item 5. Regular updates:

- (i) **Planning & licensing.** (RS). Nil of note
- (ii) **TEC Services.** (SC) Lairg Football Club, which has several members from Bonar Bridge, has offered to undertake some of the local environmental tasks required in return for a donation to their funds. SC has received quotes to attach hand/safety rails to the railway footbridge at Invershin/Culrain. Kyleside Walk and the seasonal floral displays are projects also in need of funding and execution. It was agreed that application should be made to the Beinn Tharsuinn Fund for £5,000 to set up an environmental improvements fund to handle these and future similar issues. **SC/NM/RT Action.** Speeding at Invershin, especially past the hotel, remains an ongoing concern. The limit at this point is 60mph. Agreed to write to Simon Young, Senior Engineer for Highland Council to suggest double white lines at least and 'Slow Down' advisory signs if it is not possible to have a speed limit imposed. It was felt that both here and at Spinningdale the 'Smiley Face' sign might aggravate the problem rather than encourage safer speeds. **MG Action.**
- (iii) **Financial report.** (RT) Russell passed round the current bank statement showing a balance in the Treasurer's account of £1430.34. The No.2 (now called Rock by Sea) account stands at £6750. RT advised that he, like many other groups with 'Treasurer's Accounts', has been approached by the Bank of Scotland to provide details of CC members including their personal bank accounts. If this information is not received by 28 March a hold will be placed on both accounts. RT has tried to talk to the relevant Bank representative but so far without success. LB advised that all the committees she has contact with have been given the same instructions. Russell (T) has also discovered that the copy of the constitution he has is three years out of date. The generic constitution produced by Highland Council is available online (GF to send the link to RT) but Ward Manager Andy Mackay should be able to locate the signed copy and forward that to RT. Once located it will be placed on the website by Key Commercial Services. Approval was given to the payment of the recent KCS invoice. **RT Action.**
- (iv) **Spinningdale.** (SW) Sally advised that the burn at the old nursery on the Fairy Glen road is overflowing onto the road where earlier damage remains unrepaired. SC will advise John Clark. **SC Action.**
- (v) **Police Matters.** (NM) See Item 1(c).
- (vi) **Environmental/health.** (KW) Keith Williams has submitted his resignation from his Associate position. The Chair has written a letter of appreciation for his service to the community and the CC over the past years. PC put forward Angus MacDonald to take the vacant place. This was formally proposed by Sandy Chalmers and seconded by Norman MacDonald. Angus agreed to co-option as an Associate; this position holds no voting rights.
- (vii) **Youth.** (KS) Nothing in Kay's absence.
- (viii) **Education/schools.** (LB) Nil of note.

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- (ix) **KOSDT.** (PC) Projects currently being managed by the Board as they await confirmation of funding to begin advertising the Development Officer post.
- (x) **Rosehall.** (JW/LB) John White asked on behalf of the Rosehall Youth Club how they could apply for financial support as there are insufficient members to generate enough to cover the costs of hiring the village hall. PC advised that Ann Markey should contact him with a view to applying for a micro/full grant from the BTWF.
- (xi) **Invershin.** (SC) Nothing other than the parking at Balblair (see Item 3).
- (xii) **Highland Council Local Area Committee.** It was agreed to drop this as an agenda item. In future Cllr Farlow intends to provide a monthly report, either in person or by email a week before each meeting. **GF Action.**

Item 6. Carbisdale Castle. See item 3.

Item 7. Ronnie McNeill's presentation. Collection boxes have been placed in the Kyle Bakery, the Bonar Bridge Post Office and Matheson and MacLeod's butcher shop. No date has yet been fixed for the lunch and presentation at the Bradbury Centre.

Item 8. Guidelines for Beinn Tharsuinn and Rock-by-Sea funds. The Rock-by-Sea guidelines were approved last month and can now be made available on the CC website. Due to time pressure the proposed new guidelines for the Beinn Tharsuinn fund should be finalised/approved next month. The documents with the amendments shown in red and purple have already been circulated by email. Anyone in need of another copy should contact MG ahead of the meeting. PC will have an information pamphlet made up which will give details of both funds. These will be circulated throughout the CC area to help publicise the available funding. **PC Action.**

Item 9. Beinn Tharsuinn community benefit applications. Application to the micro grant: Alison MacInnes: £117 to attend two courses on food hygiene/first aid and baby/child care. Approved due to the time factor involved but MG to advise Alison to apply to Ardgay CC in future. **MG/RT Action.** Hayley Bangs has written to find out if the Youth Club would be given £500 again this year to finance the required purchases for, and care of, the floral decorations. It was agreed that this should come from the soon to be set up environmental improvements fund. MG to advise Hayley that the Youth Club would receive the financial support once the fund is established. **MG Action.**

Item 10. Windfarms. PC had received a request from WKN asking that the CC write a letter of support in respect of the Sallachy windfarm proposal. This was rejected by the members; PC will advise WKN. **PC Action.**

Item 11. Community Council notice board. See Item 3.

Item 12. Correspondence. Community Council Scheme Evaluation. RS agreed to submit a response to this in time to meet the stipulated deadline. General opinion was that the changes had caused many problems with no benefit to Creich CC. RS will circulate the completed form before submitting it. **RS Action.**

Item 13. Any other competent business. None raised.

Item 14. Date, time and place of next meeting. The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, 19th March 2013 at 7.30 pm in the Bonar Bridge Hall. MG has booked the room.

Meeting closed at 9.35 pm.