



CREICH COMMUNITY COUNCIL

**Minutes of meeting held
on Tuesday 20th May 2014 at 7.30pm
in the Invershin Village Hall**

Present: Pete Campbell, Chair (PC), Russell Smith (RS), Norman MacDonald (NM), Sandy Chalmers (SC), John White (JW), Ron Boothroyd (RB), Lily Byron (LB)

Secretary: Mary Goulder (MG)

Apologies: Russell Taylor, Treasurer (RT), Brian Coghill (BC)

Also present: Highland Cllr George Farlow (GF), Highland Cllr Graham MacKenzie, Richard Evans and Simon Young, THC Roads & Transport (RE; SY), Julian Fryer (JF) and Graham Johnstone (GJ), Forestry Commission, Colin Gilmour (CG), Marion Turner (MT), Phil Olson (PO), Alan Archer, Joan Matthews, Wendy Robinson; **Police Scotland:** PC Angus Morrison, Dornoch

Item 1. Welcome/Apologies (as above). Chair Pete Campbell opened the meeting with a warm welcome to the invited guest and the members of the public who had come to listen to and discuss Item 2.

Item 2. Cllr MacKenzie, THC; Julian Fryer, Area Operations Manager Highland, Forestry Commission – use of/dangers and damage to the Struie road. PC outlined the concerns regarding the Struie which include road and verge damage, bridge damage, convoys of log lorries, lack of white lines and the major fears that a serious accident seems inevitable. The CC has previously requested that a weight limit should be placed on the road in hopes of alleviating some of the wear and tear as well as easing traffic. CG asked what briefing and training is given to drivers of log lorries and what action is taken to those drivers who flaunt the rules and recommendations for courteous use of local roads, especially the single tracks. SC gave details of a recent incident involving Mrs Matthews when she was tailgated by a log lorry from Invershin station to Lairg at 6.30am on 14th April. It was stated that at the exit junction from Invershin station, the sightlines are obscured which aggravated this incident. JF confirmed that the numbers of trucks taking out timber has been increased by the urgent need to harvest trees infected by disease in order to contain/eliminate the problem. Once the standing trees are sold it becomes the responsibility of the timber merchant to employ haulage contractors. JF agreed that there are shortfalls in the quality of education and training given to drivers in some cases although a code of practice is in place; the need to address this factor was noted. 65% of trucks are operated by the Forestry Commission with the rest being run by private contractors over whom the Commission has little or no control. The statistic was given that only 0.5% of trucks are found to be overloaded, overloads are not paid for and therefore pointless, and by the nature of their appearance fully laden trucks do appear threatening even when driven within the speed limits. As the laden trucks are coming from various locations it is inevitable that some will converge on the Bonar Bridge/Ardgay road network causing a convoy situation. The incidence of convoys of trucks on the single track roads was highlighted as this often means other traffic cannot overtake for the full length of the journey from Rosehall to Lairg/Bonar Bridge, on the Culrain road, and on the Struie. A weight limit on the Struie would eradicate this particular issue on that route. It was suggested that the contracts issued to haulage companies should include driver behaviour and the code of practice with penalties being enforced for proven infringements. CG confirmed that the Lairg road was strengthened by the Forestry Commission fifteen years ago specifically to allow its use by the laden trucks and to ensure passing places were suitable to permit the trucks to pull in to ease traffic flow. JF stressed that the Forestry Commission investigates all complaints and he encouraged members of the public to report incidents as soon as they happen, giving as much detail as possible although even simply the date,

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time and place is enough to pin down the truck involved. He undertook to thoroughly investigate the incident reported by Mrs Matthews.

Richard Evans, Head of Roads and Transport, THC, has been in post since April. He confirmed that the Highland Transport Group continues to function with THC as the Chair. His department aims to resolve community issues and consult with communities where possible. There are categorised routes agreed with the timber industry with three levels – agreed, restricted and excluded routes. The Forestry Commission website shows maps with all routes indicated. Consultation routes exist where the industry must confer with THC and the communities involved. Where a road is considered weak, technological measures can be taken to ease damage – tyre pressure controls are widely used. Control of speeding is a matter for the police. The Northern Safety Partnership manages cameras and speed monitoring. JF will provide a list of contact information which the public can use to report issues and he will also provide the CC with a six monthly updating report giving feedback. Improved liaison with Police Scotland will also help. Although the Struie road is inspected every three years, with a lot of work carried out in this year, it was stressed that white-lining is essential and that a weight limit would be the most appropriate method of dealing with a number of the issues. Cllr MacKenzie will take all points back to THC but stated that budget restrictions will seriously affect road works and maintenance. The representatives all agreed to feedback details of this meeting to their organisations and to keep the CC informed of actions taken. With thanks from the Chair, the representatives left at 8.25pm as did many of the members of the public.

Police report. PC Morrison had arrived during Item 2 and kindly waited to give his report. There were few reported issues in the last month; PC Morrison will check over the March – April period as well and get back to MG. There was one road traffic infringement, one firearm infringement, one road traffic accident, one breach of the peace and one theft in Bonar Bridge. The Road Policing Unit has greatly increased in size since the start of operations by Police Scotland last year. With regard to wood lorry issues it was suggested that the CC should write to Inspector Lumsden, O.I.C. Northern Division, with copy to Inspector Beeston locally, in an attempt to increase police awareness of local difficulties. **MG Action.** PC Morrison left at 8.30pm.

Item 3. Minutes March meeting/matters arising (if not on agenda). The Minutes of the March meeting were approved as a true and accurate record, proposed by Russell Smith, seconded by Norman MacDonald. **(1) Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust** was commended by Cllr Farlow for its ongoing success. **(2) Kyle of Sutherland Youth Development Group** has received Planning Permission for its proposed ‘hub’ on the South Bonar Industrial Estate. **(3) Roadside tree/bush cutting.** The dreadful condition of the roadside vegetation was highlighted once again – the cutter appears to have been used indiscriminately on many roads locally, leaving the roadside devastated. In previous times a crew would follow the cutter to tidy up by hand but there is no money in THC budget for this service.

Item 4. Regular updates:

- (i) Planning & licensing.** (RS). Nothing relevant.
- (ii) TEC Services.** (SC) The cattle grid at Craigton will be fixed. A proposal has been made that an experimental type of road surfacing may be laid on the Glen Cassley road from Badentaggart to the road end. The car park at the Balblair woods Invershin entrance is again fit for purpose. TECS locally has advised that some areas are so badly affected by dog fouling that grass cutting cannot be undertaken. It was suggested that the local TECS office could liaise with the Dog Warden to increase public awareness of the offence. Also waste bins for this purpose should be erected at particular sites where this occurs. A request was made for a dog waste bin at both Cassley Drive, Rosehall and at the entrance to the Rosehall trails. The road surface of the Loch Buidhe road, especially the section between the loch and The Mound is in very poor repair. All issues will be passed to TECS. **SC Action.**
- (iii) Financial report.** (RT) Prior to his absence RT had furnished copies of the accounts to year end 05/04/2014. These were approved at this stage and RT is

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submitting them for auditing. Full details available on request from the Treasurer. A payment of £500 has been made to the Youth Group to provide and maintain the village floral displays this year. £80 was approved as an award to the Invershin floral displays.

- (iv) **Police Matters.** (NM) Nothing to add to the police report at the end of Item 2.
- (v) **KOSDT.** An update from the Development Officer had been circulated and is available from the Trust office. Catriona Hill has been appointed to work on the administration of the Post Office project. Congratulations were expressed to the Trust for its excellent day of celebrations for the 40th anniversary of the Bonar bridge. The KOSDT AGM date will be announced in due course.
- (vi) **Rosehall.** (JW/LB) Nil of note.
- (vii) **Invershin. Cycle ramp.** It appears that this project has stalled at THC. Ardgay CC has written to the CEO THC asking for an update and prognosis. Creich will do the same. **SC/MG Action.**
- (viii) **Highland Councillor's report.** (GF) The Chief Executive of THC will be spending one day in the Ward on 4th July. Restarting the Ward Forums seems the best way to improve communications but a new formula for each forum needs to be found to allow proper dialogue between communities and officials. CC should write to CEO in support of this. **MG Action.** THC Budget consultation will be held in Bonar Bridge on 28th May at 6.30pm; interested parties are encouraged to attend this or one of the other locally arranged meetings. Details on THC website www.thehighlandcouncil.gov.uk Major savings in budget expenditure are still required and no service will be safeguarded. Where possible a change of operation rather than cuts will be utilised. The Customer Service Review will consider over a fifteen month period how best to operate with particular regard to Service Points. Currently it appears that 80% of the population do not use Service Points. A review of Community Councils will also be undertaken which may result in some amalgamation where small CCs often hold meetings when not quorate.
- (ix) **Broadband in Rosehall.** (RB) No update from BT. Meeting soon with Tara Morrison with regard to her survey/findings

Item 5. CC website. It was agreed that the KOSDT quote of £30 per month to operate the website on behalf of the CC should be accepted and that the Trust should begin work on the updating asap.

MG Action (RT note).

Item 6. Caithness and Sutherland Local Development Plan (CASPLAN). (RS/GF)

Consultations may take place in June. Development Officer at KOSDT should be kept informed/included in discussions especially in regard to Highland Small Communities Housing Trust involvement. **GF Action.**

Item 7. Carbisdale Castle/ Falls of Shin update. Carbisdale. Nothing new. SYHA had previously agreed to update the CC in Feb/early spring. CC will write to Chair of SYHA as nothing heard from CEO. Possible delisting of the building fabric is in effect if the listing actually applied to the statues/paintings which have been removed. Concern as to their whereabouts expressed. **MG Action. Falls of Shin.** Awaiting information from Balnagown Estate on future plans.

Item 8. Beinn Tharsuinn community benefit/Rock by Sea Fund applications. Application by the Bradbury Centre for £2,000 towards the cost of replacing their minibus was unanimously approved. Applicant and BTWCLtd Company Secretary will be informed. **MG Action.** At the recent Board meeting, directors of the company were informed that THC plans to cease operation of its arms-length companies, of which BTWCLtd is one. CC approved investigation of costs of having KOSDT administer the Fund on its behalf. The Trust would undertake the duties currently carried out by THC but all decisions and awards would remain in the control of the CC. NM/PC will discuss with KOSDT and also attend the next BTWCLtd board meeting next week and report back to CC next month. **NM/PC Action.**

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Item 9. Windfarms updates. Achany. Russell Taylor has resigned as CC representative to the Panel. Ron Boothroyd was proposed for this post by Pete Campbell and seconded by Sandy Chalmers. After the unanimous vote, RB agreed to accept the nomination. JW agreed to become the CC representative to the **Dalchork** Windfarm Community Liaison Group and also **Caplich** CLG should one be formed in due course. Marion Turner of Ardgay CC will be informed with contact information for JW given. **MG Action.**

Item10. Community Council notice board. Ongoing. **NM Action.**

Item 11. Correspondence. (1) Letter from John Boocock, Chair Kilmuir & Logie Easter CC. While agreeing the need for good communication and liaison between CCs and THC it was felt that these areas are currently being well dealt with thanks to Cllr Farlow's involvement and the links with Ardgay CC. A reply will be sent to Mr Boocock. **(2) Information regarding the setting up of a Cold Call Control Zone** was received but this is not felt to be a significant problem in this area. Reply will be sent. **MG Action.** **(3) Bonar Bridge war memorial refurbishment.** It was noted that this is underway; SC will write with CC comments and encouragement. The bench opposite the Post Office will be repainted soon. **SC Action.**

Item 12. Any other competent business. (1) Bus shelter Bonar Bridge. Recent damage to the bus shelter needs urgent repair. SC will report this at the Service Point; John Clark TECS is aware of the damage. GF will support repair action. **SC/GF Action.**

Item 13. Date, time and place of next meeting. The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, 17th June 2014 at 7.30 pm in the Bonar Bridge Hall. This will also be the AGM; posters will be made and CCs asked to distribute them on local notice boards, etc. MG to book the room. **RT/SC/MG Action.**

Meeting closed 10.10pm.