

CREICH COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Minutes of meeting held on Tuesday 17th February 2015 at 7.30pm in the Invershin Village Hall

Present: Pete Campbell, Chair (PC), Sandy Chalmers, Vice Chair (SC), Russell Taylor, Treasurer (RT), Norman MacDonald (NM), John White (JW), Russell Smith (RS), Brian Coghill (BC)

Invited Guests: Peter Marshall, Muirhall Energy Caplich Windfarm (PM)

Also present: Highland Councillor George Farlow (GF), Richard Franklin (RF), Nigel Baird, Lorraine Askew, Lippy Ross

Police representative: PC Angus Morrison

Apologies: Ron Boothroyd (RB)

Secretary: Mary Goulder (MG)

Item 1. Welcome/Apologies (as above)/Non-agenda item. Chair Pete Campbell opened the meeting at 7.30pm. He introduced Peter Marshall of Muirhall Energy. This item was not on the agenda having been arranged late in the day. Mr Marshall outlined the proposal for the twenty turbine development and gave some background regarding Muirhall Energy which is a small private company based in South Lanarkshire. The Planning Consultation period for Caplich is open until 2nd March. The site sits within the allowed windfarm development areas and out with the Wild Land area, between Clashmore and Ben More forests on land privately owned and managed. The company is aware of the concerns regarding contamination of the River Oykel, the possible effects of siltation, and will work to minimise issues. Details were given regarding the possible community share in the development with 10% of the company proposed for local ownership. Community benefit will be paid at £5,000 per installed megawatt. £104,000 would be an expected annual payment to the two nearest CCs, Creich and Ardgay. A recreational enhancement fund will be in place and used to improve walking paths, bothies, signage, website and promotion of the area for tourism. A development budget is in place with part allocated to help alleviate fuel poverty through insulation and fuel provision for those who qualify. The company is seeking support to include electricity provision in this scheme. Stone required will be sourced on site where possible but there will be increased traffic through Rosehall bringing in supplies. The turbines etc will be brought in via Lochinver and Ledmore Junction with appropriate upgrading of the roads. Existing forest tracks will be utilised where possible with every attempt made to minimise disruption. Asked about the grid connection Mr Marshall indicated that this was not expected before 2020. He stated that the cabling would be underground. Discussion covered some detail of possible community buy-in with direction given to Local Energy Scotland, the Renewable Energy Scotland Investment Fund, and the Local Energy Investment Fund which can help with upfront costs pre-development. A project manager will be appointed. The offer to buy-in is by invitation only and is restricted to CCs which in turn could appoint another organisation, eg. KOSDT, to manage it on its behalf. Potential for visual, noise and environment impacts were raised, especially by RF who owns Craggie Cottage, the nearest residence at 2.5km. RF has serious concerns regarding the impact on the local economy with the possible loss of tourism brought about by the loss of the unique and unspoiled landscape. In addition to the many hill walkers and climbers, anglers provide a large amount of local income. The potential for damage to the river is a matter of great concern. PM agreed that the turbines would be visible from the summits of the surrounding area and stated that the turbines would be of a darker colour than those sited on skylines. When asked he also stated that tests show that peat depth at the site is very shallow, less than one metre. PC stressed the importance and sensitivity of the fishing to the local economy, bringing around £4m per year with seventy-five full time jobs, all of which must be safeguarded against adverse impact. PM advised that the report by Kyle of Sutherland Fisheries Board was included in the Environmental

Assessment. He also agreed to meet RF and any others for further discussion at any time. With thanks for attending, PM left at 8.05. CC agreed it must make its Planning decision on this issue this evening and a vote was taken with the result: in support of the application – none; against – 4; abstentions – 4. RS will draft a letter with MG to submit to THC. **RS/MG Action.**

Item 1 (3) Police report. PC Angus Morrison arrived at 8.05pm to attend briefly between calls. He will email a report with updating details of any incidents to MG. PC thanked him for taking the time out from a busy evening to call at the meeting.

Item 2. Minutes January meeting/matters arising (if not on agenda). The Minutes of the January meeting were approved as a true and accurate record, proposed by Russell Smith, seconded by Sandy Chalmers. (1) **Parking at Bonar Bridge Primary School.** The main issue with regard to use of access road to the Golf Club and two other properties is that it is soft ground, easily churned up by vehicle use. There are also many potholes. GF will speak to Gavin Steele (SSE) to enquire if the contractors working in the area could improve this ground for access and parking. **GF Action.** (2) **SSE Resilience Group.** A meeting is scheduled between SSE and KOSDT for 24th February. (3) **Invershin phone box.** This is to be discussed next month. **Agenda item. MG Action.** (4) **Christmas lights in Bonar Bridge.** Mentioned in AOCB January, this letter was not sent following a meeting between PC and members of the committee. A storage problem exists but may be resolved by use of a container at the Football Club. SC will liaise. Also a dangerous hole in the ground where the village Christmas tree is sited needs to be covered throughout the rest of the year.

SC Action.

Item 3. Regular updates:

Planning & licensing. (RS). Nothing relevant.

TEC Services. (SC) Nothing relevant

Financial report. (RT) RT passed round copies of the report which shows a balance of £3,844.77 in the Treasurer's account. The Rosehall Community Transport Account has £969.50 and the Rock by Sea account has £9,574.00. Members are to come to the next meeting with ideas to promote and utilise this account. Use of the Bradbury Centre for training sessions was suggested. **Agenda item. MG Action.** Both Dial-a-Bus and the Bradbury Bus are underused; public should be made more aware of these and how to utilise them better. Posters should be displayed, especially in Rosehall. **MG Action.**

KOSDT. (PC) Nil of note.

Rosehall. (JW) JW expressed the view of many residents that expenditure on Gaelic signage should be stopped. GF advised that this is THC policy and will continue. Deep sympathies were expressed by the CC to the family of Lady Jean Gilmour following the tragic fire at Invernauld. A letter of condolence will be sent. **MG Action.**

(vi) **Invershin.** (SC) (1) Cycle ramp. It would appear that funds are now in place and it is hoped that this issue will soon be resolved.

(vii) **Highland Councillor's report.** (GF) Pre-gritting policy is to be discussed at the next full THC meeting. Road works to repair damage to the bridge rampart and wall at Sleastry should be covered by a weight restriction till completed. **GF Action.**

(viii) **Broadband in Rosehall.** (RB) Nothing in RB's absence.

(ix) **SSE Loch Buidhe update.** (RS) Nil of note.

Item 4. CASPLAN. (RS) Letter from CC has been submitted.

Item 5. Scottish Water. The report received from Joanna Peebles was read to the meeting. It states there has been investment in the network to reduce leakage and this investment will continue. The leakage programme has freed up enough water to allow for any future development needs in area without the need for Scottish Water having to build a new water treatment works at Bonar Bridge. Points raised in reply included the complaints that tankers are still going through the village nightly and will they now cease? Also has Scottish Water anticipated drought conditions with a contingency plan? These points to be put to Joanna Peebles. **MG Action.**

Item 6. Carbisdale Castle/ Falls of Shin update. It is thought that Carbisdale has been sold.

Awaiting confirmation of details. KOSDT is still working towards Phase 2 Big Lottery Grant for redevelopment of Falls of Shin.

Item 7. Windfarm updates. Braemore. THC asked local councillors for their opinions; their refusal of the application still stood. Now expected to go to PLI in due course. **Caplich.** See above.

Item 8. Beinn Tharsuinn community benefit/Rock by Sea Fund applications. BTWF.

Application by Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust was discussed resulting in an award of £2,000 towards consultancy costs prior to Planning and Big Lottery submissions re Fall of Shin redevelopment plan. BTWF Company Secretary will be advised. **MG Action.**

Item 9. Community Council notice board. NM is no in possession of the board with a fitted plastic front. RT will arrange for a joiner to erect the board. **NM/RT Action.**

Item 10 Correspondence. (1) Dornoch Academy has written seeking a contribution towards its French exchange trip. A £50 donation from the Rock by Sea fund was approved. **RT Action.**

Item 12. Any other competent business. (1) JW presented a request from Lairg CC for a donation from Creich towards the costs of lights for the new air ambulance landing site in Lairg. As air ambulance helicopters already land in Bonar this was felt inappropriate. **(2)** Service Point consultation. CC opinion will be submitted in support of retaining the service as it is. Limited savings will be negligible with many elderly being greatly challenged by the change to an access point only. Lack of computer skills and fear of technology could result in some residents not seeking help when required. **MG Action. (3) E.ON fund.** Further details are sought regarding a fund open to people on benefits who may apply for grants for unexpected issues, eg washing machine replacement. KOSDT has leaflets. PC will follow this up and report back. **PC Action.**

Item 12. Date, time and place of next meeting. The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, 17th March 2015 at 7.30 pm in the Bonar Bridge Hall. MG to book the room. **MG Action.**

Meeting closed 9.30pm.