



CREICH COMMUNITY COUNCIL

**Minutes of meeting held
on Tuesday 17th October 2017 at 7.30pm
in Bonar Bridge Hall**

Present: Pete Campbell, Chair (PC), Ron Boothroyd, Vice Chair, (RB), Russell Taylor, Treasurer (RT), John White (JW), Norman MacDonald (NM), Brian Coghil (BC)

Apologies: Russell Smith (RS)

Police Scotland: PC Tracy Murray (TM)

Invited guests: Angus Elder (AE) and John Moisey, Muirden Energy

Also attending: Highland Councillor Kirsteen Currie (KC); approximately 25 members of the public: remaining for CC meeting: Colin Gilmour (CG), Steven MacKenzie (SM), Owen Llewellyn (OL), Alexandar Campion (AC)

Secretary: Mary Goulder (MG)

Item 1. Welcome/Apologies (as above)/Police report. Chair Pete Campbell opened the meeting extending a warm welcome to all who had arrived for the presentation by Muirden Energy regarding their proposals for the Meall Buidhe windfarm on Croick Estate. Prior to the presentation PC Murray gave the police report which covered twenty-two incidents. Six road traffic made up by two of speeding, one RTC, one driver behaviour, one seatbelt and one other. The remaining number were three advice calls, one medical matter, two animals, two false calls, one civil matter, two domestics, two children/youth, one missing person, one destruction of firearms and one housebreaking with intent. This latter was a poor attempt made to break into the Falls of Shin Visitor Centre. The building was not accessed. An alarm system has been installed and a CCTV system is being researched.

Item 2. Presentation by Muirden Energy. Chair introduced Angus Elder and John Moisey. The proposal is to site the windfarm on the Strathoykel ridge line on Croick Estate. Feasibility study is currently underway; the company is seeking input from all quarters. The site was identified as having high average wind speeds and the company states the landlines will help screening to reduce the visual impact. It is at a distance from residential properties and has existing access via forestry/logging tracks. Twenty-one turbines, minimum 3mgw capacity are proposed at present, 69-78m tower heights are anticipated. The EIA was completed in September 2016 with Scoping report submitted to Scottish Government in June 2017. Public consultations will take place throughout autumn 2017 and spring 2018 after which the findings will be incorporated with an application to Scottish Government expected in autumn 2018. The visual presentation showed maps of the overall area of the Estate, the site of the proposed windfarm and the viewpoints used for visual assessments. More information will be available at the public exhibitions. Chair encouraged that the exhibitions be held in the relevant villages, e.g. Rosehall, where the greatest impact will be felt. The company wishes to involve local communities in shared ownership schemes. Two models will be considered; a smaller scale co-operative for individual investors and a larger scale for local trusts, etc. AE offered to meet anyone who might wish to discuss this aspect further. 10% of the income generated is expected to be the share available for investment. It was agreed that uptake of shared ownership locally will be considered favourably by Planners when considering applications. Investment is not precluded by registering an objection to the planning application. The company believes that there is an ever-increasing demand for electricity making such developments viable. Figures for the total cost of the development, the value of the company being able to guarantee its development, number of short and long-term jobs, market price of electricity, were not available tonight but AE advised those wishing more information to arrange a meeting with the company. Discussion covered how the electricity would be transported from the site, presumably to Invershin Power Station although it

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is understood that that is already being decommissioned by SSE. AE stated that discussions with SSE are at early stages. Strong public concerns raised by residents of Rosehall, Altas, Linside and Inveran who believe the windfarm will be highly visible from all parts. This area is already overlooked by Rosehall and Achany windfarms; the Meall Buidhe one would enclose it. The affects will be felt though all aspects of the community, in the tourism sector, and on property values in particular. It was suggested that the development should be on the other side of the ridge where it would be seen by no-one other than the landowner. AE stated there are Wild Land restrictions though this was disputed. Asked about constraint payments when turbines are turned off due to lack of/too strong winds, AE said that discussions will be held with National Grid regarding upgrades which should ease these situations in future. Concerns regarding Croick Church were voiced on several occasions with AE stating the company is well aware of the local and historic importance of the Church. Local opinion regarding the development will also be gathered via surveys sent to residential properties and all public feedback will be considered in the feasibility study. The dangers to wild life were highlighted with particular reference to white tailed sea eagles which use the area as wintering grounds and already have to run the gauntlet of the existing developments. Favourable support was expressed from the floor, siting the socio-economic benefits to the local community from the existing windfarms which have brought jobs and quality of life improvements through local projects. Careful use of future community benefit could see reduction in fuel poverty, support for local transport schemes, etc. In summary Chair said there was some support indicated tonight but also great concern. He stressed it is essential for the company to listen to the local community as the development could be disastrous for those with the windfarm in full view. AE thanked the assembled company for attending and urged further discussion and attendance at the public exhibitions. Advertisements and posters for these will be published in the coming weeks. The presentation finished at 8.20pm at which time most of the public left.

Item 3. Minutes of September meeting/matters arising. The minutes of the September meeting were approved as a true and accurate record; proposed: Ron Boothroyd; seconded Russell Taylor. (1) TECS issues reported last month have so far not been addressed nor responded to. These will be resent to THC. **MG Action.** (2) RT has not yet approached the Editor of the A&DCC Newsletter to discuss possible CCC involvement. He will do so; RB will attend a meeting if arranged. **RT/RB Action.**

- (i) **Planning & licensing.** (RS) Nothing relevant this month.
- (ii) **TEC Services.** No word received from THC regarding issues raised last month; these will be resubmitted, including issues of the Lochies Bump, where it is understood that a vehicle sustained a damaged sump recently causing oil to leak over the road, deep potholes in Glen Cassley road where two tyres on one side of a vehicle were burst, trees overhanging the A837 at Invernauld Farm and the cemetery gate at Invershin. KC will liaise with JW to visit the site in Glen Cassley and photograph the potholes. **KC Action.** KC will also attempt to follow up on all other TECS issues, including the suggestion to move the recycling point in Bonar Bridge to a point further from The Hub, and to enquire about extending the speed limit past The Hub and Ardgay Game. **KC Action.**
- (iii) **Financial report.** (RT) The Treasurer's account balance stands at £978.72 with the Rock-by Sea account standing at £8,316.00. Following email discussions agreement approved to increase the hourly rate paid for secretarial work. RT has been approached by a Rosehall resident enquiring if the Rosehall Taxi service, supported by funds from the CC, can be used to transport help from Lairg to cut wood for him while he recovers from an operation in hospital. While appreciating the difficulties, CCs agreed that this does not meet the criteria of the scheme which is already stretched by meeting transport costs for those which do. RT will advise the applicant. **RT Action.** After raising the ongoing issue of the lack of public transport through Rosehall JW left the meeting at 8.40pm.
- (iv) **Police matters.** (NM) Nothing to add to report at start of meeting.

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- (v) **Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust.** (PC/RB) all projects proceeding on time and budget. KC was invited to attend the upcoming Board Meeting on 10th November.
- (vi) **Rosehall.** (JW) Nil of note.
- (vii) **Invershin.** (PC) Nil of note.
- (viii) **Highland Councillor's report.** KC made her apologies for being unable to attend the last meeting as she was in Cumbria as part of her involvement with the Caithness and Sutherland Redevelopment Group dealing with decommissioning at Dounreay. She reported that HCs are very disappointed with the draft plan by THC especially the poorly considered priorities for transport. An £80m active travel budget has been established to encourage cycling, walking, etc. Relevant projects, for example Safer Routes to School, footpaths, can apply as money is available. BT finally attended the County Committee but gave a poor presentation and failed to answer the many questions posed. KC is excited by three upcoming science events in Sutherland schools before Christmas, working with the Edinburgh and Orkney Science Festivals, including input by a Slovenian astronaut.
- (ix) **Broadband in Kyle of Sutherland area.** (RB) Discussions are progressing well. RB will update CC as more information is to hand.

Item 5. Plaque for Sandy Chalmers. RB and PC will meet at the cycle ramp to assess siting the plaque and exact size. Quote will be sought for plaque of stainless steel, laser etched. **RB/PC Action.**

Item 6. Laying of CC wreath on Remembrance Sunday. NM volunteered to do this again this year. Wreath has been ordered via British Legion (Fiona Porter).

Item 7. Village Officer. KC is aware of some sort of Village Officer in place in Lochinver but unsure of details. The concept as required locally was discussed and KC will look at the possibilities.

Item 8. Garden area at end of bridge in Bonar. KC has drawn a blank so far with this, and the area opposite the Post Office, both originally set up by THC. Will enquire further. **KC Action.**

Item 9. On agenda in error. Matter dealt with last month.

Item 10. Windfarm updates. CG confirmed still no decision on Braemore, two years after PLI. MSP Edward Mountain enquires monthly. If Braelangwell and Croick developments go ahead forty-nine turbines will be erected, many visible from the Rosehall side of the Kyle. SM stated that if the Croick site was moved only 300 yards over the ridge it would not be visible to Rosehall.

Item 11. Website. The site is up to date.

Item 12. Correspondence. All relevant correspondence circulated by email.

Item 13. Any other competent business. (1) RT reported to KC problems with THC Blue Badge system. Lengthy delays. **KC Action.** (2) Discussion agreed to MG proposal to create small archive area at her home, sharing space with Lairg CC (agreed) and Ardgay (if interested) to store files held by her. Some weeding out of old files would also be undertaken. Costs of materials and time would be shared by whichever CCs take up the offer and would include a small annual storage fee.

Item 14. Date, time and place of next meeting. The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, 21st November in Invershin Hall. MG to book room. **MG Action.**

Item 15. Private session. Beinn Tharsuinn community benefit/Rock by Sea Fund applications/SSE & E.ON Community Fund. BTWF. An award of £146.47 was approved to Invershin Hall towards costs of Balance Bike sessions.

Names given by members of the public attending for Item 2: Peter Orrell, Tracey Smith, Ashley Smith, Joan Gammie, Murray White, Michael Baird, Colin Gilmour, Peter Squire, Phil Meldrum, Jennifer Moffat, Robert Moffat, Alan Archer, Gary Stevens, Shona Paterson, Steven MacKenzie, Michael Keates, Phil Robinson, Wendy Robinson, Alexandar Champion, Owen Llewellyn, Betty Wright, Andy Wright.

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Meeting closed 9.40pm.