



Approved Minutes: Ordinary Meeting of Creich Community Council

16th September 2024, Invershin Village Hall

- 1) **Present:** Scott Veters, Chair (SV), Caroline Munro (CM), Hayley Bangs (HB), Colin McFarlane (CF), Iain Bowles (IB), Shona Patterson (SP), Russell Smith (RS), Norman MacDonald (NM), Cllr Michael Baird (MB)

30 members of the public were in attendance incl: David Watson, Manager of KoSDT (DW), Pete Campbell, Chair of KoSDT (PC)

- 2) **Apologies:** Iain Maclean, Oberlanders Architects
- 3) **Minutes** of the June Meeting, proposed by HB and seconded by IB that these be accepted with no matters arising.
- 4) **Allt an Tuir Wind Farm.** Sheena Mann (SM) and Matt Partridge (MP) to present. Several photocopied pamphlets were distributed and the council was advised that it could be shared electronically and exhibition boards from previous consultations were available online [[Public Consultation | Allt an Tuir Renewable Energy Park Proposal](#)]. SM explained the project was a joint venture between two well-established companies, REG Power Developments (UK), and ESB an Irish company. The scoping report was submitted to Highland Council in December 2023, no comments received from the community council. Two public consultations have been held since then.

Key Points:

- Proposal is for: up to 9 turbines: 200m to tip height, 1 at 118m, solar panels, and battery storage, search area 22 hectares, not looking to build the entire area with solar panels.
- Site chosen for available grid capacity and landowner offered land for development.
- Grid connection secured (DNO)
- Photo montages will be available to show what the scheme will look like from different viewpoints.



- Battery energy storage included, designed up to 20-megawatt capacity: 12 shipping container size units.
- Over 4000mgw already operating in the UK
- HSE not objecting to battery storage developments as design includes safety provision; spacing, fire suppression systems reduce risk.
- Timeline: section 36 to be submitted by the Nov/Dec 2024, estimate a year for planning application to go through, construction could begin in 2027 if no public enquiry, grid connection/operation 2030/2031
- Issues from public consultations will be submitted with the application.
- Community Benefit Fund to be discussed with the community council going forward.
- Grid connection (Inveran) underground cabling along the road.

Concerns from Members of the Public

Battery storage safety (including thermal run-off) fire, and ecological hazard.

MP: lithium-ion batteries were very rare, now we have them in our pockets, laptops etc. Cost has come down with global growth in renewable energy, battery storage helping enormously with power storage, not a new technology. There is a degree of risk with batteries, HSE will be consulted, Scottish Fire Services will be consulted. There is a good evidence base of these installations operating safely for years with safety procedures and provision in place.

Member of Public: There is more peat in Scotland. Thermal runaway can set fire to peat. Impossible to put out a lithium battery fire, only way is to douse it in water – 1.1 million litres of water needed per 10mgw – 20 proposed here. Will your storage have 2.2 million litres of water on site?

Alternatively, you let the fire burn which produces toxic gases/plumes Site proposed is near a burn which feeds into the main rivers with the potential to destroy the ecological environment, people depend on the river system for livelihoods. What fire arrangements will you have, the local Fire Department has been told they're not allowed to attend such a fire – where will the fire department come from? Does this application need to include a fire and chemical safety assessment?

MP: I'm sure it will and will clarify that [MP unable to answer Qs re Thermal runaway – lack of knowledge] Neither sites in Scotland have been told they need water storage. Batteries will be self-contained, each cell will have its own monitoring system. Ability



to immediately switch that battery system off. Inside each battery is its own thermal management and fire suppression system. They will take these points away and come back at a later date.

SP: Why should so much of our local environment be destroyed if you have a development 35 times bigger?

MP: The purpose of battery storage is to help the national grid, it can respond in milliseconds to demand from the Grid. We need an awful lot more batteries and wind and solar power, need all we have now and a lot more besides.

SP: Why not have the energy storage closer to the end user. Why should the Highlands be destroyed for energy to be shipped south?

MP: Scotland is the windiest place in Europe so it's an obvious place to put wind farms. It's sunnier in England so more solar farms.

SP: If you were in Cassely Drive, would you want to be surrounded by 200m turbines and battery storage?

MP: If battery storage was put within 1km of my house I probably wouldn't notice – this is why we have a planning system, to make these difficult decisions. I've worked in this field for several decades and have seen how people's fears present before projects, when I have spoken to them after the project, they have accepted the situation.

Access and location

Member of Public: Concerned about the route to the site. How will the turbines be transported? A839 is a dubious route, there are 2 important bridges, Rosehall Bridge is Grade 2 listed, people's houses and dwellings, the old post office, not suitable for sharp turns - you can't do it with turbines. I've been told it's not possible to come in from Lochinver as the road is too bad.

MP: Going in through Forestry land is a possibility. Access roads, through Balnagown Estate, using existing road. We are in discussion with the estate about modifications that may need to be made to existing routes – may need to widen the road. We have a Transport consultant working on structural surveys of adjoining roads to offer best solution for access.



HB: Have any changes to the plans been made since the first consultation?

MP: We have carried out ecological surveys, peat surveys and have shifted the turbines to avoid peat land. The design work done to take us to scoping reduced the number of turbines from 13 to 9.

Member of Public: There is an appropriate place for turbines – we are faced with over 200 in our valley that has SSSIs that need protecting, roads and thoroughfares are being ruined. We have weather events several times every year. Each of you sent your own plans but never look at the cumulative plan.

MP: There will be a visual representation submitted with cumulative visual effects included.

Member of Public: At the previous consultation I raised a question about the siting of the wind farm and was told the wind farm and battery storage would be 2.8km from our property – now it is 8-900 metres.

MP: The wind farm is on top of the hill (2.8km) and the substation lower down (8-900m)

NM: There has been a 300% standing charge increase for electricity for every property in the Highlands, we are overcharged and paying through the nose for electricity we produce – raped and paying for the privilege.

5) Secretaries Update

- All organisations awarded CnC annual funding were contacted, and payment details sent to the treasurer for paying.
- Liaised with Website host how to make changes and add information. Made updates as appropriate. This is still ongoing. CM, HB & SV are admins on Facebook.
- Sent email links to SV & IM with passwords for full access to CC email.
- Draft Minutes of June meeting, typed and sent for approval. Published on website.
- Beinn Tharsuinn fund awards approved notified to Phil Tomlin.
- All CnC annual fund awards email to recipients, payment details sent to treasurer.
- Info sent to Phil Tomlin for investment fund payment.
- Email sent to rejected Rock by Sea applicant sent.
- SPV questions sent, and reply forwarded to CC.



- Information sent to HC to release CC funding. This has required several emails with additional information payment delayed but should be released this week.
- SSE Hydro Survey published, and paper copies requested. Sent the CAP plan to them.
- Circulated, and then sent approved reply to Kosdt regarding the SPV confusion reported by Kosdt.
- Replied to Kosdt re LLP and funding options.
- Notified applicants for Minutes secretary of outcome. MJ appointed.
- Created funding document to monitor awards and reporting.
- Reviewed Rock by Sea and BT funds with CC comments/approvals via email. Updated on website and Facebook.
- Drafted CnC guidelines and emailed to cc for discussion at meeting.
- Contacted Mary to get previous funding information.
- Registered the CC Achany reps, SV & SP.
- Invited Allt An Tuir battery storage to the next meeting and follow up emails.
- Contacted Foundation Scotland re the Investment fund, circulated portfolio – this is still ongoing.
- Contacted SSE re logger lorries. This is ongoing.
- Arranged for links to be sent to SV & SP for the Sallachy Liaison meeting.
- Attended 2 LPP consultations with SP.
- Circulated and sent CC comments re LPP draft V2.
- Posted draft agenda onto website and Facebook. Sent to LC (HC) & Cllr MB
- Attended SSE Renewables Hydro webinar with IM. IM is now a panel representative.
- Circulated Kosdt email re draft agenda. Sent approved cc response.
- Sent all papers for meeting to CC.
- Sent as requested to all CC email from IB re windfarm planning.
- Sent email to list of 8 as requested by CM re pylons.
- Checked cc emails daily and forwarded those relevant or that CC members may wish to pursue further.
- Did some preliminary checks on issues reported by community members for discussion at CC meeting under correspondence.
- Replied to Balblair windfarm regarding CC feedback to occur after second community consultation.



6) **Financial Report**

CC a/c 1 £147.68 (not received HC grant – chasing up £500)

CC a/c 2 £50, 496.77 (£24, 522 CNC £23,622 RBS)

Beinn Tharsuinn £36, 286.62

7) **KoSDT –DW**

SPV purchase update.

Potential for community shared ownership of Sallachy wind farm. 2019 Westminster Govt. changed rules and effectively stopped community ownership of turbines and hydro's (no feed-in tariffs). Scottish Govt. changed the recommendations in their guidelines to include a recommendation for developers to offer community shared ownership.

Sallachy Wind Farm, in addition to community benefit funds, decided to offer the opportunity to the community to take a 5 or 10% stake of the wind farm. We are one of the first 2 communities in Scotland to get this far with community ownership.

Sallachy WF have decided to offer community benefit and community shared ownership not just to Lairg, Creich, and Ardgay, but also to Kinlochbervie, Scourie and Durness. (Farm is sited in Lairg CC area)

Prior to planning being consented it is almost impossible to understand what the potential benefits of community shared ownership will be. Planning consented 2022, now going through process where an offer has been made to take between 5-10%. That will cost £3-6million. Rules state you have to have someone that's FCA accredited to be able to advise re share proposition.

Community councils cannot invest, a Single Purpose Vehicle (SPV) would have to be created. That SPV would take on the investment of £3-6million. The SPV would need shareholders from the communities. Yet to be decided who will benefit and a what percentage e.g. Lairg, KoS and NW have 1/3 each.

Proposition is a huge risk and opportunity may be too risky to take but potentially could offer decent income into the community over 25 years.

Offer is unusual, it's not equity, it's not owning a turbine, it is Junior Debt.



Offer dependent on interest rates you can borrow against, need to get advice re what % we can borrow at before we can get the figures. If we can only borrow at 8% it will not be worth it. 6% may be possible but it all depends on what the market says. So we are looking at that at the moment but potentially it could be a share of money coming in from the wind farm over a 25yr period. We did negotiate that if the community decides that the opportunity is too much of a risk, then Sallachy Wind Farm will pay an enhanced community benefit. Will not impact on the community benefit the community councils receive.

Grant funding or social lending may be a possibility, advice from FCA is paramount.

General Update KoSDT

KoSDT recently circulated a questionnaire re Crofting – 99 responses, mostly people between 21-40yrs old (55%) Interesting data e.g. people are willing to pay higher rents per year than is traditional, this gives an incentive to landowners to create new crofts. Crofting commission found data useful, they are looking at areas for crofts that were once common grazing but no longer.

KoSDT currently speaking to a landowner regarding creating 3 crofts.

The Community Garden in Bonar Bridge has been officially opened by the Deputy Lieutenant of Sutherland

Community Café is very busy – 70 attended on Monday gone.

Community Larder also very busy – excess food from the bike race available just now
Currently looking at childcare and nursery issues in Ardgay

5-year strategy for the Trust nearing completion, based on depopulation and creating new homes and opportunities for people. AGM in Oct/Nov all welcome to attend. Date will be announced 4 weeks in advance.

Support work for Sutherland Community Partnership really important from the perspective of homes, employability, childcare. Through them we get opportunities to engage and represent this community directly at a high Govt. level.

Continuing to deliver Westminster Fund - Cash for Kids for people in hardship.

Helping Hands Fund and fuel poverty- clearly with recent changes demand is going to be higher than ever.

HB: What's going to happen re the delay in funding from Ardgay CC for that?

DW: Hopeful that within the next couple of months we will be able to get some funding from Ardgay as there will be an election soon. KoSDT has enough in the Ardgay pot to see us through. Previously have had money from Edderton and they are looking to engage with KoSDT again.



Final request is that we have previously asked someone from Creich Community Council to come on to the KoSDT Board. This is really important to us as it helps build good transparent relations, communication, and ensures the community council is a part of the governance. The offer is still open to become the nominated director, it has worked well in the past.

Resilience

HB: We need to be looking at the changeover from analogue and how that may affect some people particularly with older people who may not understand the process.

DW: That's a good example of why resilience is a separate item on the agenda, to spot things like that and bring them up. Trust will have a look at that and see what they can do.

SP: Are you any further on with the defib situation in Rosehall?

DW: No, that needs replacing. We will look for a pot of funding, Edderton also needs replacing, very important to get these purchased. Defibs are about £500, so looking for funding £1500 to purchase and fit.

KoSDT can add on to community heartbeat system. DW will liaise with tearoom re getting a defib there.

Local Place Plan

HB & SP attended 2 consultations. First was for representatives from community groups and organisations, village halls etc. who had been involved in the community action plan. The second was an open meeting with displays. People were able to submit comments it was felt that the timing of the consultation meant people unavailable during daytime hours were unable to be involved in this consultation. CCC have submitted their feedback to Oberlanders, who sent in a report. (see appendix 1) which HB began to read through.

DW interrupted part way through stating The Trust were the lead on this.

HB stated confusion around an email received from them regarding the Trusts position on the LPP and offered for DW to provide an update.

DW: Plans for the Local Place Plan will be on the KoSDT website and are able to view at the Barn in Ardgay.

DW: We have tried to gather as much information as we can, there's a really short time-scale to work in. We have discovered that the plan covers an area that extends in to Wester Ross, easter Ross and Easter Sutherland which means that we have to



consult with every Councillor and Community Council in those areas. Draft 2 will be sent out very shortly.

8) Planning & Licensing

RS explained to the public present that he gets a weekly email of all planning applications for the area that he circulates to the other councillors. No issues with any applications received this week.

9) Energie Kontor scoping, no action required as out of area.

10) Coille Beath Wind Farm scoping. In the past CC not commented on scoping applications, comment in detail when it comes to planning applications.

Member of Public: As a statutory consultee what we should be looking at the cumulative impact and should be commented on, otherwise it's an afterthought.

PC: I urge the community council to look separately on the business of getting community benefit alongside whether you support or don't support the actual application. With a united front and early negotiation, the benefit figure can be a lot bigger. There's a likelihood these applications will get through, you need to get together to maximise the benefit to the community regardless of how you feel about the development.

If power plants get going here it's a very big source of wealth, our countryside will only survive with an increase in wealth. The Community Council has a duty to get as much community benefit as possible.

ACTION: Before the end of September respond to Coillie Beith

11) **Rosehall, Bonar Bridge & Invershin updates/matters raised.**

Rosehall. Concerns about the local place plan, wind farms. Concerns around the speed limits around Rosehall, speed of traffic is a major issue. Slow sign needed, enhanced signage. Rosehall Church, elderly citizens crossing a road with no footpath.

DW: Need to manage expectations re speed limits, if there is no threshold of incidences/traffic volumes, then police won't support the reduction of a speed limit, because they can't enforce it.



Bonar Bridge. Balblair Wind Farm – on agenda to be discussed. Erosion on bottom of bridge (LHS as coming from Bonar). Cllr Baird to take up with relevant officers at HC. Several people have said they would like to thank John Robertson for his work tidying up the village.

ACTION: HB to write a letter of thanks

Invershin Speed limit - there is only one sign at one end of the village and not at the other end. Both bridges, railings need clearing up.

12) HC Councillor's report – Cllr Michael Baird

Bridges and footpaths issues submitted to roads team. Footpaths are at bottom of shopping list. They will be done at some point, just when finances allow. Altass is on the list.

Trees issue has been raised (Rosehall) will hopefully do something Sept/Oct.

Road line-marking – HC decided not to outsource but use in-house people. Team from Ross-Shire with the equipment has been training up Council in-house team. Surveys have been done on A86 on 4 areas out of Invershin into Balblair Estate. Roads team did not release the information so MB submitted a Freedom of Information request that now he has received it clearly shows that there has been excessive speed beyond 60mph. Emails have gone to new Chief Inspector Smith who will negotiate with Road Traffic Police, Highland Council's Safety Unit and Police Camera Teams.

Signage for Invershin approved by Dep Chief Exec of HC but there is no money for it. Can use Ward discretionary fund, wind farm, and match funding, Highland Council will install. MB to let CC know the cost of signage and send the figures re speeding etc to the CC.

MB will ask Chief Inspector Smith if a representative from the police can come to a meeting.

13) Wind Farm updates.

Sallachy Community Benefit SP attended the forum Zoom meeting on 28.07.24, discussed the timelines of the project. Planning consent approved 2022, limited impact on local settlements. Minor water courses within the site lead to Loch Shin. Planned transport route Invergordon to A9 to A836 to A838 junction north of Loch Shin. Construction to start 2026-2027, grid connection July 2028. Lots of local opposition from Rogart re construction traffic coming through. Community benefit £5k per megawatt. Max. £6.5 million over 25 years, won't start for 4 years. Meeting with Community Councils to allocate percentages:



Creich 20%
Ardgay 20%
Lairg 35%
25% to NW communities

Robert Johnstone from Lairg CC to take things forward re allocating funds. Next community forum tba.

Balblair Wind Farm update.

Consultation is tomorrow (17.09.24) 4pm-8pm Bonar Bridge, 12-2.30pm Invershin Hall. CC has emailed to say they wouldn't comment until after the public consultation. Also Asked about Battery storage – where was this in original consultation? One sentence on website. Number of turbines reduced by 1. They will be invited to a community council meeting in coming months.

Member of Public: The presentation earlier was not good. They should be set-up to present with a laptop, projector etc. It's not acceptable. Questions were not answered. They are not sending competent people. The presentation was poor, there were not enough handouts. We are not being properly consulted, we are not getting data, they are just going through a box-ticking exercise.

Community Council needs to set expectations from people coming to give presentations. Raise concerns with Highland Council and even Scottish Govt to object to the quality of presentations and consultations we are getting. Make a complaint.

Re future presentations, set expectations, tell them to bring a screen and a projector, be prepared to answer questions, provide a microphone so we can all hear, and they should come back and answer our questions if they can't on the night.

Creachan Planning application proposed for 2025. Out of area, doesn't affect us directly.

- 14) SSEN Pylons CM to update. No update although has started a document re AC/Dc cabling and burying cabling. No incentive to burying, incentive only to minimize cost. Cost savings in DC could be significant.



- 15) Public Toilets in Bonar Bridge. MB: Debbie Sutton at HC informs that toilets are still closed due to vandalism. People to be sent to use the toilets at Ardgay. HC has no funds to repair plumbing. Issues with plumbing.
- 16) SSE Hydro Fund. IM & HB to update. Pot of money only available to Creich, not distributed by area, Creich can apply to the fund. £10m over 5 year. IM is now on the panel for that, no date for going live.
- 17) CC Achany Reps. Next meeting in January 2025, reps required from CCC.
- 18) Logger Lorries travelling to Loch Budhie area. Issue with lorries travelling up there at 5/6am in the morning. HB has emailed SSE who deny it is their lorries. Contacted FLS to see if it is their lorries. Issue ongoing.
- 19) Correspondence Nursery School re grant to purchase a mud kitchen – to be discussed in private session.

Creich Traffic Concern group, looking for funding for speed restriction signs – they need to send in an application. **Action MB will forward speed survey results.**

Bridge Hotel, Bonar Bridge being used as an Air BnB, people entering the place via a key safe. Concerns re H&S etc. Passed over to Environmental Health and to be shared with MB.

KoSdT -email received alleging changes have been made to the Articles of Association without members agreement. No special resolution put in. Postcodes removed from articles. **DW**: that was done in 2014. Person alleges that in the Articles of Association a number of points have been altered without a Special Resolution in an attempt to dupe over 200 members and Companies House. In original articles 2012 article all postcodes included, these postcodes omitted in 2024 filings.

The correspondence received was read out in full.

Extract below.

The first Articles of Association filed is 23rd November 2012

Under **Objects 4** it statescovering postcode unit of..... it then lists the postcodes.

These postcodes you will see in the 2024 filing have been omitted.



In the 2012 filing point 12 under objects you will note reference to citizenship or community development. In the 2024 filing this is now point 7 under objects and has altered

In the 2012 filing under the heading Procedure at Directors meetings there are 11 clauses numbered 101 – 111

In the 2024 filing under the same heading there are 12 clauses numbered 83 – 94. 94 is a completely new clause and one that is quite alarming basically taking away the protection to its members that there is regarding personal interests of directors.

At the End of the 2024 filing Is an appendix style document which is to evidence the Special Resolution this was in fact a special resolution for an AGM in August 2022. I have attached the AGM agenda and the special resolution for your reference received as a member. You will note this is the exact same resolution attached to the filing in 2024 and there is no mention of the changes outlined above.

On the covering page of the 2024 filing there are 7 named subscribers to the Memorandum, one has not signed and 3 resigned from the Board in 2023 as can be seen on the people page.

Question raised by **DW & PC, Cllr MB** & CCC member **NM** re validity of this as an item of competent community council business. **DW:** Memorandum and Articles were changed in 2014 and concerns should be raised with OSCR, nothing to answer. Last AGM requested some changes to article numbers, and these were submitted to OSCR.

PC: When you receive letters like that, about any organization, why don't you just forward them to the Trust to respond?

HB: We received correspondence sent into us, you [DW] were coming tonight, we can just ask you and respond.

DW: The community council is not here to police charities in the area, this is not competent business.

20) Any other competent business.

CCC has been asked to support Cllr Helen Crawford's motion re wind farm developments. **APPROVED**



Sale of Shin Falls. HB asked if there was any money left over from the sale for the community.

DW: Any surplus from the sale remains in the community because it remains within the Trust. Update on the sale of Shin Falls was given in May, there is no further update. KoSDT is a charity, any money that comes in is used for community benefit, it does not leave the company or the area. There were significant costs associated with the sale: Payment back to National Lottery, £10k legal fees, £15k contractor fees. Any further questions are a matter for the KoSDT AGM. Accounts for the year not finalized for the year, anyone saying they have information from the annual accounts is incorrect as the accounts have not been finalized for the year. Accounts run from 1st July to 30th June.

PC: These are questions that should be raised at the AGM they 're not for this Community Council. If the community council put a member forward for the Board of the Trust, questions like this would not need to be wasting everyone's time. The information would be readily available to them. It makes little to no sense that the council does not have a rep on the Trust board. Need cross-representation. There must be someone between the 8 of you on the council who can attend a meeting once every two or three months.

NM & SP offered to join the board.

DW, manager of the KoSDT asked for the following comment to be minuted.

CM: As a personal opinion, if you don't agree with the values of the Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust, we as a committee do not need to sit on your board. Don't make us feel we have to be part of your organisation when a lot of us here do not wish to touch it.

DW: asked for clarification.

CM: I for one will never sit on your board after the disgusting letter I received last Christmas

CC to discuss a CC rep joining the Trust Board in private.

21) Date, time and place of next meeting. 14th October 2024, Bonar Bridge

Private Session – Community Benefit

Rock By Sea

1) The Bradbury Centre £1,200 for 10 people to attend Moving & Handling training course



- 2) Carrie Vettors £665 to attend Reiki training course
- 3) Ryan Christie £300 for apprenticeship costs
- 4) Lucy Williams £860 to attend RHS course

Beinn Thoursinn

- 1) The Four Seasons Club £1,873

Coire Na Cloiche

- 1) Bonar/Ardgay golf club awarded £1,672 for junior winter training in Dornoch, and purchase of junior club tops
- 2) Kosdt final payment of £5,000 of 3 year award made by previous CC honored for Helping Hands Home Energy project.