



Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Creich Community Council

20th January 2025, Bonar Bridge Community Hall

Present: Scott Veters, Chair (SC), Hayley Bangs (HB), Caroline Munro (CM), Colin McFarlane (CMF), Iain Bowles (IB), Shona Patterson (SP), Russell Smith (RS), Norman MacDonald (NM)

Cllr Michael Baird (MB), Miranda Jones (MJ), Caroline McMorran (Northern Times), 15 members of the public

1) Apologies

None received

2) Chair's Welcome

Chair thanked and welcomed people for coming

3) Approval of November 2024 Minutes

RS proposed, SV seconded, minutes approved

4) Matters Arising

RS requested an update on the local place plan, HB advised that the demographic information was sent back and more local statistics were requested, rather than Sutherland-wide demographics. Statements from Creich and Ardgay have been added. The plan is on the website and has been submitted.

Scott Macdonald from Sutherland Community Partnership (who are working on a Sutherland Plan for Highland Council) requested any community action plans/local plans be sent to him. MJ clarified that the Sutherland Plan would signpost and refer to existing plans, not create a new plan.

5) Financial Report

Beinn Tharsuinn Fund £29,413.62

Community Council Fund £359.89

Coire Na Cloiche £14,648.72

Rock by Sea £29,627.59



Rock by sea have sent in additional funds due to an underpayment throughout the course of the fund (£6000)

6) **Secretary's update** from 19/11/24 – 14/ 01/25

- All fund applicants notified of decision.
- Spittal – Buidhe scoping sent to Ardgay CC.
- Reply to Trust email re removal from Agenda.
- Response to Phil Tomalin re boundary changes requesting confirmation of agreement from listed residences.
- Electricity Infrastructure consenting consultation request sent to all members.
- Email sent to Oberlanders re LPP appendices.
- Email sent re Inveroykel scoping requesting confirmation of Creich's submission.
- Submitted Spittal to Loch Buidhe to Beaully scoping.
- Request for extension to the Scottish electricity consenting submitted and sent to local councillors, MSP & MP.
- Created new Correspondence page on website and uploaded Inveroykel and Spittal scoping responses.
- Put notice of new correspondence page on Facebook.
- Rogart LPP distributed for comment to all members.
- Oberlanders demographic details for LPP sent to all members for comment.
- Responded to Oberlanders details and requested local demographics used not Sutherland wide.
- Responded to Oberlanders new demographics requesting Economic Inactivity breakdown included.
- Funds for payments sent to treasurer.
- Braelangwell scoping draft sent to all cc members for comment.
- Replied to correspondence received which was discussed on 18th November meeting.
- Braelangwell scoping draft updated with members' feedback. Resent for approval.
- Braelangwell scoping submitted 25/11/24.
- Approved LPP appendix statement submitted to Oberlanders.
- Response to Electricity consenting bill in Scotland Submitted and uploaded to website.
- SCP full meeting details passed to CC members.
- BB hall booked for meeting.
- Draft minutes circulated to cc for approval to website.
- HC budget consultation sent to CC members.



- All December and January correspondence sent to members.
- Funding requests sent to members.
- Agenda sent to members for approval.
- Uploaded agenda to website and Facebook once approved. Secretary's report sent to members.

7) **Resilience**

MB gave an update on the Sutherland Resilience Initiative and the community cars. Creich residents can use the Lairg Community Car which is about to go live.

The council discussed the recent poor weather and snow where people had not been able to walk to the shops as the paths had not been cleared. MB confirmed this has been brought up at ward business, priority given to main roads and school roads. Constituents have spoken to MB re the state of the roads and lack of gritting. The Highland Council is currently recruiting for road workers to join the Ardgay Team. Class 2 drivers so HGV licence is needed. IB the Highland Council is not paying enough for HGV drivers.

8) **Planning & Licensing** (Russell Smith)

Everything circulated as it came in

Ardgay Game have submitted an application for static caravans and a car park alongside their site to house temporary workers. Potential for problems with SEPA, sewer/drains and possible issues with road access (new bell mouth to be constructed for access).

Council agreed the development would support new jobs.

9) **UPDATE:** Rosehall

All ongoing wind farms. Rosehall Hall AGM Tuesday 21st January - the committee need volunteers as people are stepping down. Rosehall school was off Tuesday to Friday during the snow as driver did not want to risk the journey

UPDATE: Bonar Bridge

All ongoing wind farms. Issues with paths not cleared during recent snow, and kids missing school as toads not cleared.

UPDATE: Invershin

Speed limit update requested from MB, also update on the bridge and railings



10) HC Report

The 20mph limit scheme has gone to traffic order to be made permanent

Gritting done on several roads when requested by constituents

2 roads are on the capital programme for improvements this year, Rhinamain and up Strath Carron (Robert Sawyer area)

There is to be a Highland Council consultation on boundary changes - open until the end of March 2025.

The Visitor Levy consultation runs until 31st March. Concerns raised include issues with Highland residents being charged the levy for overnight stays in other areas of the highlands - the Levy should be for people coming into the area. The levy also excludes motorhomes. The £40 charge for motorhomes has been a failure and is still being reviewed.

The Ward Discretionary Fund stands at £5525 and needs to be claimed by 31st March 2025. Apply via Liam Clancy and the application goes to ward business for approval.

MB had a meeting with Chief Inspector Calum Smith re speeding on the Balblair straight.

IB: At the Falls of Shin, the laybys on either side of the road have been designated as bays you can park in but they still have the incorrect markings (chevrons) denoting you can't park there.

ACTION: MB take to roads dept

CM reported residents have approached her re the state of the pavements. CM requested this be reported and repair requested

MB: pavements are on the lists and have been reported

11) Wind Farm & BESS updates

- Coillie Beith

Nothing to add

- Balblair

Promised planning application in December has not yet been submitted

- Inveroykel

Scoping submitted, awaiting application

- Strath Oykel



Planning application approved. HC is considering an appeal. Maree Todd wrote to IB to say they have begun a 3-month review of the decision.

MB: re judicial review MB has been told by the Clerk is that they have discussed it with the Head of Legal, Stewart Fraser, he is in agreement that the planners go to James Findlay KC for advised. If he finds mileage that the council can use for the judicial review, that will happen. Has been promised that sharing costs will be between NOROS and the Highland Council.

MB: The letter from the cc went to the planners at THC who is the consultee, objections should have been sent to the Energy Consents unit. THC should have passed this on. MB contacted Caroline Payton at ECU to say Creich's paperwork had not been released from THC. On the reporters report under NOROS, Russell's input is there. The reporters should be aware that this cc put in a statement. Ardgay CC put in a statement of neutrality.

RS suggested that if THC are looking for grounds for judicial review, and if they find them, the CC should support it. The CC doesn't have the legal expertise to decide what is grounds for appealing.

MB: the EIA that goes with the application has to have all the information there and it does not have the transportation side of it. MB has been informed by another KC that this EIA is illegal without the transportation documents. There is no means to get to the site and the landowners will not allow any temporary or permanent bridge to go over the water. The application is not viable without an adequate transport plan.

SP: NOROS are waiting on advice from James Findlay KC

IB read out point 12 of the decision letter re the application. "we are aware from the council's committee report of October 22 that Creich Community Council made a representation to the council however it did not submit its representation to the ECU and therefore it is not treated as an objector"

Reporter is saying our objection will not be taken into consideration as sent to wrong people.

ACTION: MB to advise the council who they should write to in order to reiterate their objection to the application and express their support for a judicial review. An issue raised should also be the process by which ccs are being consulted, consultations coming from HC so responses being sent their but should have gone to ECU which was not made clear.



Responses not being acknowledged by HC. How many other councils are similarly falling foul? Important to state that the cc is disappointed their objections were not forwarded or submitted. IB to action writing the letter.

CMF: The Energy Consents Bill should standardise procedures and processes.

MB: Because this is a section 36 application it's determined by the Scottish Government using the 1998 Electricity Act to make a decision but last year, they came out with NPPF4 which clearly states the policies on energy and climate change. If the site that the wind farm will be on can be mitigated in any way they will accept it. No site visits.

IB wrote to all ministers, Caroline Peyton responded, listing all the ministers she was replying on behalf of, and stated that the decision was solely Dr Alistair Allen (acting Climate Minister)

MoP suggests that when the cc objects to HC, the objection is then automatically sent to ECU to cover all bases.

MoP when RWE came to Culrain they asked the question re connection to the grid and were told it's not going to go to Invershin as that is at capacity. Will go to Loch Buidhe - but the 400kv lines are too powerful so will have to have new smaller pylons.

- Braelangwell

At scoping

- Invercassley

Request for scoping by 6th February. ECU 00006064
22 turbines at 230 m and BESS of 30MW

MoP suggests attacking cumulative effect of wind farms specifically, look at the visual but other factors such as ornithology. Invercassley, golden eagles, white-tailed eagles, hen harriers. Lose one a year and the population will be wiped out in years to come.



Social economic effects for whole of community having 400 turbines turns the environment into industrial.

Total of turbines 380. Map (ardgay.org) to be shared with CC to put on website.

MoP: This ring of steel will destroy tourism in the area. I own a large holiday let, it's our main income, if we lose business, we will be forced to sell our family home.

ACTION: HB to pull out previous scoping letter and adapt for Invercassley, share with Ardgay CC. Have a joint presentation on Battery storage.

MoP: When SSEN come down (end of Feb) can we ask them to provide their KMZ file - they have this information, and it should be shared.

ACTION: IB to write to Martin Godwin on behalf of CC to ask for this file

SSEN at Rosehall Hall, Monday Feb 24th 4pm-7.30pm, Tues 25th 9-1pm re Invercassley

- FLS

Inver Oykel - Graham Stewart sent info to CC re Strath Oykel FoI request from FLS, was told that they do not need to consult with the local community

MoP - our community needs to go to HC as our planning authority and object to FLS stance, saying public consultation on the use of public owned land as managed by FLS must take place as part of democratic process. For FLS to say public consultation is part of planning application is fundamentally flawed.

CM: also that land was gifted to the forestry commission to allow people coming back from the war to have work, for the purpose of forestry.

FoI request was for all comms between FLS and the communities before they granted the lease to RWE. FLS responded that as they were the landowner at that point, they had no duty to consult, it's the developer they granted the rights to who have the duty



to consult. This is at odds with FLS's statement on their website saying that they always consult with communities before any plans are launched or commitments made.

ACTION: Email to be sent to cabinet secretary pointing out that FLS have gone against their undertakings and also, they have gone against the undertakings as made by her in a statement 2 years ago to Scottish Parliament saying that FLS will consult with communities before any decisions are made.

- Dalchork BESS

North of Lairg. There is an outlying battery safety plan. All safety aspects have been passed to the Fire Service.

Bill wrote to fire service in October enquiring what they would do in respect of a fire or thermal runaway worst case scenario (where would they come from - how would they deal with gases, explosions or deflagrations) they have not responded. Asked for a review on 9th December, no response, last week appealed to Scottish information commissioner received a response saying that I have a valid objection, and they will investigate but cannot force public service to provide information that has not been recorded.

ACTION: Creich CC to make an objection on the portal (Energy Consents ECU site) - state it was discussed at CC meeting, as neighbouring CC we would like to make an objection. (Issue of Shin running into Kyle) Bill & Colin will draft for Hayley to copy into the portal

12) SSEN Pylons

Spittal - Loch Budhie

Letter received: engagement events & public consultation and feedback events.
Webinar 4th February 2-3.30pm

27th February in Bonar Bridge

13) Invershin Power Station

IB: SSEN Feb 27th visit - will bring a separate team to tell us about connections for all wind farms. NO plans to extend Invershin substation - but they are going to be



upgrading all the pylons and transformers driven entirely because of new wind farms in the area.

Read out an email from SSEN re Loch Buie to Invershin existing towers etc not suitable due to onshore renewable

ACTION: IB to reply to SSEN and ask for more information and maps ahead of the consultation date in February.

14) SSE Hydro fund (IM)

IM not present

15) Correspondence

- Rogart wind farm and Dalchork substation - out of area
- Far north line sustainable project - Lindsay (project officer) asking do they want her to come and explain the project to the cc? Agreed Ardgay CC may be better to hold the presentation
- Meeting with Maree Todd 13th Feb 7-8.30pm at Bonar Bridge Community Hall - she would like questions in advance. Email to be forwarded and decisions made. Plan to have questions from each area of KoS then open up Qs to the public - radio mike - she will have some prepared questions but also will answer questions on the night.
- Carn Bheag woodland scoping - circulated,
- Savills forestry new woodland creation at Balnagown - circulated
- Boundary Change - Phil Tomalin, not contacted individual households. CC has addresses and can contact them. Issue is a correction, not a change. CC to put on website, affects 2 properties.
- Complaint from a Culrain resident - circulated - not cc business
- CC review of scheme of establishment consultation - to be circulated
- David Campbell @ Land consultancy services has money to give out. (SSEN)
ACTION: CC/HB to respond - ask for examples of communities they have worked with.
- Rangers - funding for rangers' service. Does CC want to send in a letter of support for funding possibly from Community Regeneration Fund.



16) **AOCB** none advised

17) Date, Time and place of next meeting

March 3rd, 7pm Invershin

18) Private Discussion

Rock By Sea approval for CC for £300 towards driving lessons, approval for JM £500 toward nail training costs.

No applications for BT or CnC