

GARVE & DISTRICT COMMUNITY COUNCIL MINUTES

Meeting Held on the 6 February 2007

Garve Village Hall

Present: Helen Grainge, Donald Northwood, Jim Ruggles-Brise, Pat Campbell, Sheree Grant, Alex Mackenzie, Uisdean Menzies, Lady Eliza Leslie Melville, Ian Dickinson, Marian Taylor Cllr Ewen Mackinnon and 28 members of the public.

Apologies: There were no apologies

- 1) Approval of the minutes of the previous meeting was proposed by Marian Taylor and seconded by Lady Eliza Leslie Melville.
- 2) Matters arising: the only issue from previous meeting was the question of the proposed new ballot and due to the issues surrounding this, the matter would be left until after all other business of the meeting.
- 3) Planning: there were no planning issues that affected the community.
- 4) Lady Eliza gave the financial report that the OAP account had £22:00 and the main account £2000:00. It was agreed that fund raising was going to be needed. Lady Eliza commented that if we had the wind-farm we would not have to worry about fund raising.
- 5) On the issue of the ballot the secretary read out a number of letters from solicitors, developers and residents; he also explained that following the last meeting he had discussed with other council members that due to the legal issues and the restraints placed upon the Community Council; he would approach both the developers and the anti wind-farm objectors to seek a way forward to achieve a ballot that was both fair and independent. The formula was that an agreed list of names and address would be drawn up and agreed and signed off by the Community Council, developers and the objectors lobby; they would then allow the Electoral Reform Society to carry out a postal ballot based on that list and the results then be published. The cost would be met by both the developers and the objectors lobby. The secretary reported that the objectors lobby while voicing some disquiet agreed to the idea. The developers on the other hand objected to the whole idea and were not prepared to take part in such a ballot (their letter was also read out to the meeting). Some members of the public voiced their opinions and asked a number of questions, the secretary explained that under the current rules the Community Council could not and did not have access to the full electoral list and if they did use the list would breach the regulation on the data, i.e. some community members had put a X on the return form not to be contacted and under the Data Protection Act and electoral rules could face legal action; on the other hand if the Community Council did not contact some people from within the community we could be faced with further action for ignoring their views.

There then followed a lively and long discussion about the merits of a ballot, how if carried out, it would happen; suggestions were sought from the public

who had very mixed ideas. Spokes persons from Strathconnon estate and Strathbran estate gave their views and suggested ways of holding the ballot, these were rejected by members of the public. Other spokes persons from Achnasheen, Garve, Achanalt and outlying areas voiced their views and ideas all of which were rejected by other members of the public. Councillor McKinnon said that he would like a ballot to take place so he knew what the community wanted on this issue and the current addendum submitted by the developers. It was explained by the members of the Community Council that they had already told him and that the community was split down the middle on the whole project and a further indication was by the views expressed at this meeting. It was the opinion of several that the decision should be left with the Scottish Executive, but others insisted that we should hold another ballot of some description. After a discussion lasting for over two hours and with one Community Council member walking out due to the indecisions of the public the subject was brought to a close.

- 6) Any other business: A member of the public asked if we could seek to get the white lines reinstated on the stretch of road at Gorstan; the Secretary agreed to write to the Highways Department and ask.

The issue of flood alerts was raised following the past few weeks heavy rain, one member of the public stated that areas around Loch Garve needed cleaning out and that this would reduce the level of water. It was agreed to write to SEPA and report the conditions around this area.

A member of the public asked about the changes to the constitution and it was explained by the Secretary that the current constitution in operation was found to be not fit for task and that following advice from the Highland Council and the supply of a draft constitution from them that included the best practice guide, a new Garve and District Constitution had been written as a discussion paper for approval by the Community Council and the Highland Council. This new constitution would then be introduced following the next election of the Community Council. The member asked if we had discussed this with any member of the public and shouldn't the public have a say. It was explained that this was the council member's constitution on how the members should conduct business and was formulated by the local authority and was not a general document. The council were then asked if they could have a copy and again explained that this was a draft consultation document for Community Council members and as yet had not been discussed by the Community Council; it was further explained that once the constitution was approved the public could view the paper but it was up to the Community Council members to make changes or adjustments to the document not the public; further the document when approved would be advertised in the press and relevant places, i.e. post offices, but as yet it was only a draft consultation document. At this point Lady Eliza gave the community member her unedited and un-discussed draft copy of the proposed new Garve and District constitution paper.

The meeting was brought to a close.

Next meeting set for the 3 April 2007 Achnasheen Village Hall

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Special Meeting Held on the 6 February 2007

Garve Village Hall

Present: Helen Grainge, Donald Northwood, Jim Ruggles-Brise, Pat Campbell, Sheree Grant, Alex Mackenzie, Uisdean Menzies, Lady Eliza Leslie Melville, Marian Taylor Cllr Ewen Mackinnon.

Following the main meeting a sub meeting was held to discuss issues surrounding the possible ballot. Cllr Mackinnon said that we had to make our own mind up on the issue and be seen to have done what we felt was right and then stand by our decision. A number of members including Helen Grainge, Pat Campbell, Lady Eliza, Uisdean Menzies and Sheree Grant suggested that the Community Council should abandon the idea of a ballot. Donald Northwood said that, that was a cop out and that we should hold some form of ballot using a formula that was acceptable to all.

A discussion was then held and it was agreed that a voting ballot would take place using the election format, i.e. ballot boxes at village halls and one way of including people with holiday homes etc was to arrange for them to have a vote either at the box or by proxy.

Cllr Mackinnon agreed and would arrange for a member from the Highland Council to come out and discuss the issues and how we could run such an event. He further stated that time was important as the planning department had booked a date for the committee meeting in the middle of March.

The meeting was closed and arrangements would be made to meet at a date to be arranged.