

~~Draft~~ Minutes of Garve & District Community Council Meeting
Held Garve Village Hall 10th Jan 2012

Present: Kenny MacLean (Chairman), Jean Hollingdale (Secretary), Jean Bailey (Treasurer), Lady Eliza Leslie Melville, Jennifer Haslam, Alex Mackenzie, Bob Moir, Sue Tarr (Minute Secy), Cllr Biz Campbell (arrived after Chairman's Comments), Nigel McManus (Eneco), Fiona Milligan and Nick Sage (Infinergy), 4 members of the public.

Apologies: Cllr Jean Urquhart, Robbie Bain.

The Chairman opened the meeting at 7pm and welcomed everyone.

Declarations of Interest: Lady Eliza, with regard to planning application on Lochluichart Estate.

Chairman's Comments:

Sophie Reid passed away recently, long-time postmistress at Lochluichart. Condolences to her family.

Best wishes to Danny Hogg, Hilda Ross, Steve Young and Caroline Gamble who have not been well. Hilda Ross thanks the CC for the flowers.

Kenny MacLean saw Strathgarve pupils carol-singing at Tesco's before Christmas.

At a recent Highland Council meeting items discussed included Scottish Government minimum pricing on alcohol (NHS Highland to work more closely with HC Licensing); Rural Affairs and Climate Change Group discussed community benefit policy. Four factors involved being proximity impact, visual impact, construction impact and no. of households affected. North Planning Committee now in place, Cllrs Biz Campbell and Audrey Sinclair are both on the committee. HC has commented on the UK Parliamentary Constituency proposals. Highland Council Election will be 3rd May 2012. HC had sent out a welcoming letter to all new Community Councillors and training will be available Feb/ March in Dingwall. The Chairman has been invited to attend a Marybank, Strathconon and Scatwell CC meeting along with a representative from Eneco. He has also been invited to attend a Winter Roads Maintenance Summit at Lochcarron, arranged by local businesses and communities.

G&DCC minutes and agendas are available from local PO's, on the website or direct from the Secretary by email gdcc@fsmail.net or Tel 414201, or at each CC meeting.

Approval of the Minutes from meeting held 6th Dec 2011: Proposed by Jean Hollingdale, seconded by Lady Eliza.

Matters Arising:

Community Benefit from Dosmuckeran Hydro Scheme – Robbie Bain has informed the CC that Altpower have agreed to a sum of £500 per year (equates to £5000 per megawatt). Need to discuss how this is paid to the community and whether it could be paid into LCT. Eneco are not sure at this stage but are assessing the situation. There was a suggestion that as it is a relatively small sum it could be paid to the Community Council with the proviso it be spent on a community project.

Eneco update – Nigel McManus informed the meeting that the windfarm start date was 14th Nov and work carried on till 17th Dec; they had resumed work today (10th Jan) after the Christmas break. They had made good progress. For the next few months work will be on constructing the access road. Eneco will come and give a talk and show a plan of construction for those interested.

LCT update – Nigel has received some useful and constructive comments from LCT members. There have been one or two inaccuracies on the mailing list which they are ironing out. A member of the public asked if there was a list of members available. The Chairman asked whether the E-on Community Benefit could be paid to LCT. Nigel confirmed that E-on had been in consultation with Eneco but ongoing at present. He asked if a community wide Trust Company would be of merit. The CC thought it would.

Infinergy update – Nick Sage and Fiona Milligan informed the meeting that SEPA has objected to the planning application, requesting additional information. Infinergy has supplied this but it triggers a new round of consultation. Infinergy have supplied G&DCC and local Post Offices with the additional information and it will be advertised in the local paper this Friday (13th Jan) and following Friday.

Fiona announced that if permission is granted for the Extension then Eneco will take over the running of those six turbines. In the meantime Infinergy will continue to be the main contact and attend G&DCC meetings etc.

* The LEO scheme will transfer to Eneco unchanged. All this depends on planning permission being granted. *

* Deer fence at Grudie – ongoing. Jennifer Haslam to chase up. *

Weekend Burials – HC have confirmed that burials can still take place on a Saturday, but as much notice as possible helps.

Village Shelter, Achnasheen – HC have offered to demolish it. Kenny MacLean replied that he would prefer it to be fixed and painted. Biz Campbell to deal with.

Over 60's Christmas Dinner – this took place despite terrible weather conditions with 44 attending. G&DCC have received thankyou's verbally and by card; also from Rachel and Sandy our helpers. Feedback has been that people enjoyed it very much. Suggestion that we hold it earlier in the year to hopefully avoid bad weather, possibly at the end of October. Members to give it some consideration for next meeting, as we will have to start planning earlier. A member of the public proposed a special vote of thanks for all the drivers who braved the storm in order to get everyone there.

Wester Ross Alliance – there have been press releases about the Biosphere project.

Railway Fence at Loch Garve – a letter has been received from Network Rail; they have inspected the fence and confirmed it is adequate and fit for their purposes.

Olympic Flame – The Chairman has written to Lord Coe, Charles Kennedy, Robbie Bain and Cllr Jean Urquhart. No reply from Lord Coe yet.

Diamond Jubilee – Mrs Bentley, head teacher for Strathgarve has confirmed that the school hope to be marking the Jubilee and have a few ideas at this stage. Kenny MacLean has offered her his support, and Lady Eliza may also be involved. Mrs Bentley hopes that the Parent Council will get up and running again soon. The existing funds paid for the school's panto tickets but have now run out.

G&DCC dates and venues for coming year - these have been confirmed and distributed to Post Offices etc.

The Chairman then invited Nigel McManus to make his presentation of a framed photo of the turf-cutting ceremony for Lochluichart Windfarm. On behalf of G&DCC he thanked Eneco for the gift. Kenny MacLean proposed that it be kept at Lochluichart Lodge for the present; Jennifer Haslam seconded and all agreed.

Treasurer's Report: Senior Citizens balance forward £2540.46; less cost of 54 dinners, hamper, thankyou gift for Aultguish, and 33 gift vouchers to each household not attending (total cost £1458.50) balance remaining £1117.96. War Memorial balance forward £225.86; no expenses this month. Treasurer's Account balance forward £1545.80; less flowers and catering costs balance remaining £1520.28. Total balance £2864.10.

The Chairman thanked Eneco again on behalf of G&DCC for the donation towards the Christmas Dinner.

Jean Bailey felt that although no expenses had been received from Uisdean Menzies for the War Memorial upkeep, he had put the work in and G&DCC want to reimburse him. Bob Moir proposed he be given £150, Alex Mackenzie seconded and all agreed. It was also noted that the time that Uisdean and Janette put into looking after the War Memorial was very much appreciated.

Fundraising – members were asked for fundraising ideas for the coming year. Maybe hold a Bingo night late summer/ autumn and if the Hall has a fundraising event CC could take a table.

Correspondence: all members had received letters from Rob Gibson and William Gilfillan. G&DCC received by email, HC planning meeting dates (2); Stagecoach re bus changes; NHS Pharmacy Consultation; Nel (Tecs) greetings; AGNV re inclusion of G&DCC minutes; Robbie Bain re Altpower, Dosmuckeran; Strathpeffer CC mins; Torridon and Kinlochewe CC re wind turbine; Infinergy; Ann Stewart re right of way, Achnasheen. By post, Network Rail reply re fencing; various greetings and thank you cards.

AOB (CC Members): Bob Moir- There has been some fly tipping in the layby at Loch Garve. Biz Campbell to deal with. There has been another incident at the level crossing where a car braked suddenly because of the red light on the railway. Secretary to remind Network Rail. The wall at Station Road has deteriorated with recent frost, and harling is falling off. Biz Campbell to deal with.

Alex Mackenzie – the school sign on the far side of the bridge is wrong way round. Alex and Bob will turn it round the right way.

Sue Tarr – has a supply of leaflets giving information about red squirrels, if anyone would like one.

Jean Bailey – would like to start up the coffee morning/ book swap idea tried a while back, would the CC consider donating about £40 to get it started? The Chairman requested numbers of people interested in attending first.

Jean Hollingdale – there is a blocked culvert on the old road leading from the Gorstan layby up to the houses which is causing flooding in the layby road and main road. Biz Campbell to deal with.

Kenny MacLean – the stone wall from Achnasheen west has various parts which have "gone" and need repair. Biz Campbell to deal with but she felt that budget constraints weren't promising for these repairs as potholes were taking priority. £1million extra money has just been made available to HC just for repairing potholes.

Kenny asked Biz what was the latest on the road closure due to landslides on the Strome ferry bypass. Biz gave a full update of events and what the HC was doing to deal with the road closure. Currently they are waiting for a report from consultants on the long term solution (due later this week). Interim measures involve an emergency ferry to run from North to South Strome which will be for essential local traffic only including school pupils and local businesses. This will make a test run tomorrow (11th Jan). People travelling from east of Achnasheen are requested to use the diversion route via Inverness. HC recognise it is not ideal but safety has to come first; they will be holding a public meeting in Lochcarron soon.

Kenny was concerned about the lack of a police officer in Lochcarron especially if there were accidents on the road between Achnasheen and Lochcarron. Biz confirmed that there would be a new police officer.

The disabled toilet door in Achnasheen got blown off on Boxing Day. The caretaker received an unsatisfactory response from the HC emergency response phone line, and the toilet remained out of use for two weeks. Thanks go to Freda Mackenzie at Tec Services who got the door repaired within 24hrs once it was brought to her attention. Biz Campbell to look into the rude response received from the emergency line.

The village bin in Achnasheen had its lid blown off. Robbie Bain is ordering a new one.

There are road drains blocked at Achnasheen. Robbie Bain trying to get the gully sucker.

AOB (Members of Public): There are several places where the drains are causing local flooding on the roads and they are a danger. Kenny thought that these will be dealt with during spring maintenance.

Clarification was requested about the LEO scheme – the Chairman asked that Fiona Milligan speak to the member of public after the meeting as the meeting was running late.

The Give Way sign coming down to the Gorstan junction is in poor condition – Biz to look into.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Campbell for attending and she left the meeting.

Scoping reports: none.

Consultation: NHS – no-one should be more than 20 miles or so from a pharmacy. Achnasheen is covered from Lochcarron or Strathpeffer. G&DCC have no comments.

Planning: No planning applications have been determined since the last meeting. One is pending (Garbat). One application has been withdrawn (3 houses at Chuillin). The Chairman has noted one Building Warrant (Garbat). 5 new planning applications have been received:

11/04267/FUL - Erection of 900kW Wind Turbine and access track at North Luib, Ledgowan.

11/04011/FUL - Change of use from guest house to create six additional residential units and licensed café, Inchbae Lodge.

11/04617/FUL - Removal of outbuildings and erection of two houses, Chuillin.

11/04266/PIP - Erection of house, land north of TighFiodha, Silverbridge.

11/04680/OHL - Installation of 7 span line off 33,000 volt overhead line to provide temporary electricity supply for construction of Lochluichart Wind Farm, Land off A835 to West of Aultguish Inn Garve.

Discussion about whether the CC should make comments on planning applications. Some members felt that planning applications should be noted but not discussed in detail and the CC should not comment. The chairman felt that planning applications should be discussed. Agreed that G&DCC make no comment on these planning applications.

Licensing: Variation to Existing License for Inchbae Lodge, changes including change of name to Inchbae Cafe, removal of residents, change of opening hours, off license sales. To go before the licensing board 7th Feb. G&DCC have no comment.

Date of next meeting: Tues 7th Feb 2012 7pm Garve Village Hall.

Tues 6th Mar 2012, 7pm, Achnasheen Village Hall

Tues 3rd Apr 2012, 7pm, Garve Village Hall

Tues 1st May 2012, 7pm, Achnasheen Village Hall

The Chairman thanked everyone for coming and closed the meeting at 9.15pm.

Report on public meeting held on Monday 16/01/2012 regarding the Strome ferry Bypass in Lochcarron Village Hall.

Kenny Maclean attended along with Jean Hollingdale. Around a dozen officials from HC were sat at the top table including Robbie Bain (Ward Manager), Ian Hay (TEC), Cllr John Laing (TEC chairman and chair of this meeting), Hugh Fraser (Director of Education), Neil Gillies (Director of TEC). Also present were MSP's Dave Thomson and Rob Gibson, Cllr's Audrey Sinclair and Biz Campbell, Chief Inspector David Bushall, Alistair Firth (Transport Scotland), representatives of Lochcarron, Shildaig and Applecross CC's, Lochcarron Business Association and around 250 members of the public. Cllr's Jean Urquart and Richard Greene were unable to attend.

The meeting had been due to start at 7pm but this was delayed until everyone had managed to get in the front door of the Village Hall and found somewhere to stand.

The meeting started at 7.10pm and Neil Gillies explained where things currently stood. The road must remain closed as there are still rocks falling and so the public must be protected. The contingency measures included a passenger and car ferry which started service today running 9am – 5pm, (the car ferry didn't actually start until 10.30am as the battery was flat!). There have been discussions on the possibility of an extra train in the mornings and some traffic may be allowed to travel on the railway. This had been agreed in principal with Network Rail but details still have to be worked out.

The meeting was then informed that tenders for scaling, bolting and netting of the rockface would go out this week and HC have asked for responses by 20/01/2012. HC would be looking for quality (80%) over cost (20%). It is hoped that work would start by 06/02/2012 with the railway diversion in place by 17/02/2012 but this diversion would only be available during certain hours of the day. The Bypass should be fully re-open to everybody by 20/04/2012 (after Easter) but all these dates would depend on the amount of work required to make the rockface secure again. HC would also be looking at the rest of the rockface for any problems. They would rather plan works in advance rather than do re-active works.

The longer term was also outlined. HC had revisited plans first drawn up some 20 years ago during the last major rockfall. These included a bridge over the Strome, a new road up behind the current Bypass road and an extension of the existing avalanche tunnel. Costs would have to be updated but at this early stage the figures looked to be between £40 million - £70 million.

The meeting was then opened to the floor for questions. These included:

- Fire service backup is based in Kyle (Dingwall on standby)
- Are dates guaranteed for re-opening Bypass (depends on works)
- Has the army been called in (no)
- Extend ferry times (in discussions)
- Amended bus services (in discussions)
- Business suffering, extra ferry services no use if you work early or late (noted)

- We were asked years ago and we said build a bridge, you ignored us then and you will now (comments met with loud applause from the floor)
- Why not use bigger ferry (slipways not suitable)
- Ferry timetables not updated on HC website (noted)
- Is the train safe to use (No one from Network Rail at meeting, Transport Scotland asked to answer – safe as it can be, there is a speed limit in place)
- Has HSE been informed what is going on
- Go to Alps and Norway and see how they do it (noted)
- Has Scottish Government Transport Minister been informed (yes)
- Back up plans should have been in place before now (noted)
- Better road signage on A9/A96/A82 (noted)
- Are the ferry's used (today was first day, 73 cars and 110 passengers)
- I won't send my child to school on a stormy day on a ferry (Director of Education was happy to speak to parents on a 1-2-1 basis after meeting)
- Children were still late for school (that should not have been the case)
- What if the kids can't get home, say ferry breaks down (kids will use train)
- Please can we have realistic plans for the future and realistic timeframes (noted)
- More public meetings (will be back in a month or so with updates)
- Costs over the last 20 years to keep Bypass open (figures not to hand but that would help make the case that a long term safe alternative is needed)
- Where is European money to fix this ongoing problem, Inverness gets it all (Objective 1 EU money has not been spent in Moray Firth area, Objective 1 has helped to pay for many roads in Wester Ross and next year will help to pay for the new road from Strathcarron Junction back up the glen to Coulags)

Cllr Laing thanked everyone for coming and closed the public meeting at 9.20pm.

The following day, HC released the following press release on its website:

ScotRail is to provide an additional early morning service to ensure that Plockton High pupils can get to school - free of charge - while the Stromeferry bypass remains closed.

From Monday 23 January, a 06.20 Inverness-Kyle of Lochalsh service will transport the children to Plockton before 09.00. Other passengers can also buy tickets for the service.

In order to accommodate the additional service, the 07.26 Elgin-Inverness will be replaced by a bus. A bus will also operate the 09.00 Inverness-Kyle, connecting into a train at Achnasheen.

It is expected that the service will be in place for between four and six weeks.

This will mean that the 09.53 Garve, 10.02 Lochluichart and 10.08 Achanalt service (Monday – Saturday) will be replaced by a bus. The bus will meet the train in Achnasheen at 10.19.