

~~Draft~~ minutes of G&DCC Ordinary Meeting held 6th June 2012 in Garve Village Hall

Present: Kenny MacLean (Chairman), Jean Hollingdale (Secretary), Jean Bailey (Treasurer), Eliza Leslie Melville, Jennifer Haslam, Sue Tarr (Minute Sec), Alex Mackenzie; Cllr Ian Cockburn; Robbie Bain (Ward Manager); Dennis Kearney (Jones Bros); Nick Sage and Fiona Milligan (Infinerary); three members of public.

Apologies: Bob Moir, Jean Urquhart, Richard Greene, Matilda Urie (E-On), PC Alison Millar, Nell (Dog Warden).

The Chairman opened the meeting at 8.10pm.

Declarations of Interest: Cllr Cockburn will stay for planning & licensing but not take any part in the discussion.

The Chairman thanked Jennifer and Max Haslam for providing the teatime spread and Laura Guana for cakes.

Chairman's Comments:

Best Wishes to Keith Riddell, acting minister, who is unwell. The Chairman attended the following events: Diamond Jubilee Garden party in Strathpeffer; The Inner Moray Firth Plan consultation drop in event at Contin; Marybank, Strathconon & Scatwell CC meeting on 23rd May; the SSE open day at Torr Achilty Power Station and Fairburn Windfarm along with Jean Hollingdale. The day was very interesting; Jean Bailey attended the Community Benefit event at Strathpeffer organised by SSE, SCF, HIE and Community Benefit Scotland, which was again very interesting – a website and document on how to deal with community benefit money is coming. Transparency is the keyword. Kenny MacLean, Jean Hollingdale and Sue Tarr attended the AGNV AGM on 31st May; The Chairman was unable to attend the Achnasheen Diamond Jubilee event but was at the Garve Big Lunch which was a very good day with about 100 people attending. A member of public said that several people have said what a wonderful day it was. It was nice to see people from throughout the community and of all ages. Thanks to AGNV for food and posters, Strathgarve Primary School, Uisdean, Laura and all who helped with catering, G&DCC for Jubilee coins but especially to Uisdean Menzies for all his hard work on the day.

All minutes and agendas are available from Garve PO, Garve and Achnasheen Village noticeboards, online at www.achnasheenandgarve.com, in the AGNV or direct from the Secretary on gdcc@fsmail.net or tel 01997 414201, or at each G&DCC meeting.

Jean Bailey thanked Kenny MacLean for providing the new Achnasheen Noticeboard to display the minutes now the Post Office has closed.

Approval of minutes for meeting 1st May 2012: It was noted that Jean Urquhart's apologies for the May meeting had not been recorded. Proposed by Jennifer Haslam, seconded by Eliza Leslie Melville.

Matters Arising:

Dingwall Swimming Pool – has now re-opened.

Olympic Torch – is coming to Inverness this weekend. Roads around Inverness are going to be very busy this weekend and there will be an increased police presence.

Gully sucker – the Achnasheen drains have been cleared.

Corriemoillie Sub Station – construction started on 28th May. The new liaison manager, Marianne Townsley, has informed G&DCC of following activities: delivery of machinery etc. to site; temporary and permanent site signage; construction of earth bund; construction of substation platform and control building; erection of security fencing; landscaping works for finished substation. Work is being carried out by I & H Brown and is due to be completed by spring 2013. It was noted there has been some traffic congestion with lorries arriving at the site. A representative will attend the G&DCC meeting of 7th Aug to update the community.

Garve Water Supply – residents have received a letter from Scottish Water informing that the new water supply will be complete by the end of the month and the water will be treated by the chloramination process.

HC Election – our four councillors are now Ian Cockburn (SNP), Richard Greene (Ind), Biz Campbell (Ind), and Audrey Sinclair (Ind). The Chairman summarized some changes to the HC committee structure.

Stromeferry road – options and costs for resolving this problem uncertain at present. There will be a public meeting in Lochcarron at the end of June.

Reboot Laptop – Kenny MacLean collected "our" laptop from Forres. The Treasurer has no need of it; the Chairman is now using it for CC business.

Surface Dressing – the Achanalt stretch has been completed.

Corrieshalloch Footbridge – work is complete and the bridge re-opened.

Rogie Falls Footbridge – still closed. The bridge is finished but the walkway on the other side still to be completed. Eliza Leslie Melville stated that more rock had been allowed to fall into the river despite assurances that this would not happen. Robbie Bain to follow up.

HIFRS – visit to Kinlochewe Fire Station cancelled but members of G&DCC to attend the public meeting in Kinlochewe next week; members feel it is important to support the local fire stations.

Eneco update – have had a meeting with Scottish Ministers re importance of renewable energy; Fergus Ewing has taken note of G&DCC and how the community benefit process has been handled. Kenny MacLean will be attending the Jones Bros office opening where he will meet Fergus Ewing.

Jones Bros update – (Lochluichart Windfarm) Dennis Kearney informed the meeting that construction of tracks was going well; the second borrow pit has been opened and they are getting ready for on-site concrete plant. All stone used is won on-site; sand will be imported from Beaulay. Concrete mixing starts in the next 3-4 weeks. There is no work on Sat afternoon or a Sunday and the site was closed for the Jubilee. Kenny MacLean commented how neat and tidy the site was and not visible from the road. Dennis will arrange for a trip to the site in near future.

E-On update – Robbie Bain has returned comments on Community Benefit to E-On and E-On have acknowledged G&DCC offer to be the community liaison group. Tree felling on the Corriemoillie Site is due to start later this summer.

Infinergy update – Nick Sage informed the meeting that the Lochluichart Extension is due to be considered by HC Planning Dept on 19th/ 20th June. The Planning Dept is currently experiencing a huge workload. If the Extension gets approval it will go to the Scottish Govt and hopefully a decision will be made before the end of the year. The Planning meeting can be viewed by webcam – it is not a hearing, as was the case with the other windfarms. Infinergy are pressing for an early decision.

WRA update – Sue Tarr reported that a steering group made up of representatives from local community organisations had been set up to take the Biosphere project forward. The Biosphere is likely to be centred on Beinn Eighe and Kinlochewe and its emphasis is on sustainable communities as well as environmental areas of interest.

Red light at Garve level crossing – the new hood has been fitted. Robbie Bain requested Network Rail contact as there is a similar situation at other local level crossings.

Police report – PC Alison Millar sent a summary of police issues: a two vehicle accident at Achanalt, one person reported to Procurator Fiscal; the police continue to target the Achanalt area regarding Road Traffic matters – one person charged regarding seatbelt offence, 3 persons warned (in Contin area) in relation to speeding and 2 persons charged in relation to speeding; following a report at Contin of a possible drunk driver 1 person charged in relation to drink driving; appeal for information to PC Millar re assault at Achnasheen - alleged assault was very minor in nature and there were no injuries as a result. Members welcomed the police report. It was also noted that a JCB telehandler had recently been stolen from Achnasheen; if anything suspicious is seen contact Dingwall Police Station or Crimestoppers on 0800 551 111 or Strathpeffer Community Officer PC 900 Alison Millar on 0845 600 5703

Hazelbrae landslips – the stone walls are deteriorating; there had been various incidents at the traffic lights with traffic not stopping in time; G&DCC and Richard Greene have been in correspondence with Cathel MacAskill at TranServ over these issues, resulting in improved signage and the large flashing warning sign. The traffic lights couldn't be moved as they didn't communicate with each other round the bend. The Topography survey is complete. The outcome will be a permanent solution but it is a challenging situation; engineers expect more soil to move if it rains. Work was likely to need a SEPA license because of the burn. It was suggested that trimming back the trees on the bend would help traffic see the lights. Kenny MacLean had been contacted by the North Star and given them a statement. General concerns expressed about the length of time it was taking for repair work to be started. Sec to contact TranServ suggesting that the trees be trimmed and requesting update on the situation.

Elsewhere, TranServ have been repairing crash barriers on A835.

Diamond Jubilee Coins – these have been distributed to the children at the Big Lunch held on 4th June and remainder have been hand delivered. G&DCC have received several thankyou's from children and parents. There is £124.52 left over for purchase of tree and protective barrier. HC have given the OK for planting in the

layby at Gorstan – permission also to be sought from TranServ. It is felt that a tree planted here will be central to whole community. It is best to plant in the autumn.

Treasurer's Report: Balance fwd. £2239.40; Senior Citizens (no change) £1105.76; War Memorial balance fwd. £100.86 plus donation 40.00, £140.86; Treasurer's A/c balance fwd. £947.28 less expenses 36.55, £910.73; Jubilee Fund balance fwd. £85.55 plus sale of three coins 38.97, £124.52; current balance £2281.82.

Over 60's Party – Sec to contact hotels to find out about dates as it is intended to hold the party earlier in the year to avoid bad weather. To date we have not done any fundraising for party this year. Members to think about organising a Bingo night possibly September; other ideas included sale of work or car boot sale.

Correspondence: By Email: Andy James re HIFRS meeting; Robbie Bain re planting of commemorative tree; TranServ re Traffic Lights at Hazelbrae; Cllr Richard Greene re Traffic lights; SCF re Community Benefit Seminar; NHS Briefing Report; E-On re SCF Seminar; Andy James HIFRS update; HC Consultation – Developer Contributions & Public Art Strategy; SSE update re Corriemoillie Sub Station construction start; Robbie Bain reminder for end of year accounts; SSE invitation to Torr Achility Power Station and Fairburn Windfarm; TranServ re Traffic lights (x2); Lochcarron CC mins; Marybank, Strathconon and Scatwell CC mins; Katrina Mackenzie thankyou; Strathpeffer CC mins (x2), AGM agenda and Chairman's Report; E-On update; PC Alison Millar police report; Paul & Angela Moxon thankyou; Bus Timetable changes (Inverness area).

AOB – Kenny MacLean - Noticeboards in Achnasheen suffered some storm damage. He is receiving posters from other areas for display, this is very welcome.

Achnasheen Wheelie bin – this is supposed to be emptied weekly but it is overflowing. June Ross has taken note and to follow up. The bins at Grudie and Gorstan laybys are emptied fortnightly.

Jones Bros have had a press release about donating to the jubilee coins; G&DCC wish to acknowledge the contributions made by other local businesses also. Kenny MacLean to prepare press release about Jubilee Day. Overhanging trees in Stirling Drive – growth needs trimming. Robbie Bain to deal with.

Ross Memorial Hospital – status is under review. Under severe financial pressure.

Railway Stations – Garve, Lochluichart, Achanalt and Achnasheen Stations have all received Bronze Awards from Keep Scotland Beautiful for tidiness and cleanliness. Electronic signs are about to be installed giving passengers updates on train arrivals.

Archives – it was discussed whether G&DCC should make use of the HC archives for old CC files. At present it is not required. When time allows old files could be sorted out, and discard old leaflets etc. but keep important documents (minutes etc.).

Apple Trees – HC are gathering information on apple trees in the Highland area.

Consultations (3): Inner Moray Firth Development Plan (HC) – Garve will no longer have a map showing areas of preferred development but instead developments will be dealt with on their merits.

Developer Contribution Guidance (HC) and Public Art Strategy (HC) – these outline proposed HC policies for developers to consider re public facilities and provision of art installations. Deadline for comments on all three consultations is 6th July 2012. Members had no comments.

Planning Applications – these can be viewed on the HC website or in the local press. Dates for response relate to date published on website or newspaper. Two applications have been determined: 900kW Turbine at Luib, permission refused (visual impact.) Bell mouth junction at Corriemoillie, permission granted.

Two new applications: 12/01314/AGR, Agricultural building land 450m SW of Sruthan-na-Hearba, Garve (Prior Notification). 12/01839/FUL, Agricultural building Corriemoillie Farm. Members have no comments.

Licensing Applications – none.

Dates of future meetings:

Tues 3rd July 2012 Achnasheen Village Hall 7pm

Tues 7th Aug 2012 Garve Village Hall 7pm

Tues 4th Sept 2012 Achnasheen Village Hall 7pm

Tues 2nd Oct 2012 Garve Village Hall 7pm

All welcome to attend.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 10pm

Report on the Highlands and Islands Fire and Rescue Service public meeting held in Kinlochewe Village Hall on Monday 11 June 2012.

The meeting started at 7.00pm and was jointly chaired by Deputy Fire Chiefs Mike Holme and Stewart Edgar. Also in attendance were Fraser Nixon (Area Manager H&IFRS), Robbie Bain (Ward Manager), all 4 Cllrs, retained staff from Kinlochewe, Torridon and Lochcarron Fire Stations and several west coast CC's were also represented. G&DCC were represented by Jean Hollingdale, Jean Bailey and Kenny MacLean. There were around 50 members of public.

The two Deputy Fire Chiefs explained that the area covered by Highlands and Islands was of a similar size to Belgium and was home to around 290,000 people. HQ is in Inverness where there is the only full time Fire Station in the area. The rest of the Highlands and Islands are covered by 95 retained Fire Stations employing 1264 people. The budget is £24.8Million per year and this is split £22.9Million revenue/£1.9Million capital.

Recent press reports and concerns were based on an "Audit of Best Value" report but a number of the concerns have already been addressed. The service is also preparing to be part of the single Scottish Fire and Rescue Service that will cover the whole of Scotland from April 2013. The Police will also be a single force from that time.

One area of concern was training of staff. BA, Fire behaviour, RTA, First Aid, Driver competence and water awareness were all areas that full time and retained crews now work on. A retained Fireman/woman must complete 19 training modules whereas a full time Fireman/woman must complete 45 training modules.

The other area of concern was station sustainability. Crews must meet a minimum fitness but it can be difficult to staff these stations if nobody from the community comes forward. This has been noted over recent years as the community itself is constantly changing as younger people move away and older people stay/move in. Most retained staff have other jobs so getting time off from their main work for training sessions can be difficult.

IF a Fire Station had to close, analysis of risk, costs and community impact have to be taken into account. H&IFRS will engage with neighbouring Fire Stations, CC's, Employers and HC to find a way forward.

It was also noted that individuals have to take responsibility too. Preventative action should take place whether at home or work.

All staff, full time and retained will transfer to the new service from April 2013. Significant planning is already underway.

There then followed a Q&A session;

Q – H&IFRS promise community engagement, what happens from April?

A – We don't know the future.

Q – Prevention at home – how do you educate people?

A – We have community advisers who will make home visits.

Q – (from a retained member of staff) – We're not fully trained to do home visits!

A – Training available to advise householders.

Q – How many stations closed now?

A – 7 Fire Stations currently can't turn out if there was a fire. Areas covered by neighbouring Fire stations.

Q – Ageing community – planning ahead?

A – This is a big issue. The Min/Max age has been removed to be a retained member of staff but you must meet minimum fitness, current staff who don't meet fitness will be assisted, not sacked.

Q – (from a retained member of staff) – Lack of pagers for staff and poor reception!

A – Discussions ongoing.

Q – (from a retained member of staff) – Training deadlines can't be met, we'll lose our jobs!

A – No, extra time will be given, busier stations first, then smaller but staff can't keep putting the training off year after year as is the case in certain Fire Stations!

Q – Call/Text staff if poor reception for pagers?

A – Call centre staff may not have time – best if this is managed locally.

Q – Whose helping and make busy stations full time?

A – Strathclyde and Tayside staff are helping to train/assess public buildings to help us catch up. Costs between a retained station and full time rise from £75K - £1M.

Q – Strathclyde take over new single service? Highlands will be forgotten about!

A – Recent events have highlighted the remoteness and difficulties of the area at a national level.

Q – Vary contracts for retained staff?

A – Already in place, also wording changed from “must live within 10 minutes of the Fire station” to “ideally 8 minutes, 15 minutes max”.

Q – Your application forms are not clear.

A – They are being updated.

Q – Share staff between Stations and need more money for Scottish Government?

A – Staff are shared and we get “top slice” as we're so remote.

Q - (from a retained member of staff) – Too short notice of training sessions taking place.

A – Being addressed.

The two Deputy Fire chiefs thanked everyone for coming and closed the public meeting at 8.20pm.