**Minutes of the Garve & District Community Council ordinary meeting**

**held on Tuesday 5 October 2021 via Zoom webcam**

**Community Council members present on webcam**: Kenny Maclean (Chairman), Jennifer Haslam (Secretary), Caroline Gamble (Treasurer from 7.10pm), Bob Moir, Sadie-Michaela Harris and co-opted member Hamish Leslie Melville.

**Also present on webcam**: Cllr Dr Ian Cockburn, Sue Tarr (Chair, TG&DDC), Tina Hartley (Community Engagement and Development Officer, TG&DDC) and one member of the public.

**Apologies**: Community Council member Joe Stewart and David Lawson (Eneco).

The Chairman opened the meeting at 7.00pm and welcomed everyone and explained that this meeting was being held via webcam due to the current Coronavirus situation. He reminded members of the public that they were still very welcome to attend Community Council meetings even on webcam and take part in the discussions under his guidance. Those who can’t attend our meetings can, as always, write to the Secretary with any issues they wish raised. We send our thoughts to our former Treasurer Jean Bailey at this sad time.

The Community Council website, launched in March 2013 continues to be well used receiving around 150 “hits” per month. Regular updates appear at the bottom of the home page between meetings.

**Declarations of Interest** – Co-opted member Hamish Leslie Melville declared an interest in the Eneco update and the proposed battery storage facility. Community Council member Sadie-Michaela Harris is a Director of the LCT. Community Council member Bob Moir is a Garve Public Hall Trustee. The Treasurer is a member of the Garve Litter Busters Group and is a landowner where Scottish Water hope to lay new mains water pipes. Community Council members confirmed that they had read all documents due to be discussed tonight before the start of this meeting.

**Approval of draft minutes** of the last ordinary meeting held on Tuesday 7 September 2021 via webcam were proposed without amendment by Bob Moir and seconded by Sadie-Michaela Harris. Minutes are available at Garve Post Office, Achnasheen Village Noticeboard, on our website or via email. Minutes will be signed by our Chairman and Secretary in due course via post. Community Council member Sadie-Michaela Harris wished to commend our Secretary for her work, especially taking minutes down a phoneline or through a webcam!

**Matters arising** – **Eneco** – Co-opted member Hamish Leslie Melville declared an interest in this item and took no part in the discussions. A welcome update from Eneco who run the Lochluichart Windfarm who we haven’t heard from in some time. David Lawson writes … “*Firstly apologies I have not been in contact recently.  Please see below a short update with regards to the Lochluichart windfarm. The wind farm is continuing to operate well.  Over the summer a blade maintenance campaign has been completed successfully.  This consisted of 4 teams on mobile elevated platforms applying a protective plastic skin to each turbine blade.  The intention is to protect the blades from the effect of erosion caused by airborne particles, such as rain and hail.  The works were due to run over the summers of 2020, 2021 and 2022, however they have been completed a year early which is great news.  The settled weather seen this year has certainly helped with the schedule. Eneco have just appointed a new contractor to provide snow clearing services during the winter periods.  Safe access to the turbines and control building for our turbine technicians is needed to ensure the continued operation of the Windfarm.  A large tractor and plough will be exclusively available for Lochluichart, with the option to call upon heavier plant such as excavators and snow blowers if required.”* Our thanks to David for his update which is very much appreciated and that has already appeared on our website. Community Council members had no questions on this matter.

Caroline Gamble (Treasurer) joined the meeting at 7.10pm.

**Proposed Battery Storage facility** - Co-opted member Hamish Leslie Melville declared an interest in this project and took no part in the discussions. <https://meetings.ili-energy.com/lochluichart-energy-storage-project/> No news as such except to say Ewan Bush, Local Energy Officer tells us that he is waiting for a response about the possibility of locating a community owned rapid EVC at Grudie Bridge.

**Highland Council updates** – [www.highland.gov.uk](http://www.highland.gov.uk) – **the “Trench”** in Stirling Drive, Garve is still awaiting attention. Cllr Cockburn will chase up.

**White lines** at Gorstan Junction and Ledgowan Junction have been painted but south of Achnasheen on A890 following resurfacing works and in Garve Village are still outstanding.

**Pothole** at Corriemoillie reported again and partly fixed.

Damaged **overhanging tree branch** at Gorstan has been removed, thanks to all for their speedy response.

**The Highland Council winter service** starts on the 14 October and continues to 14 April. During this time, they monitor road and weather conditions across their roads network. The Highland council maintain a fleet of 105 gritters, 42 pavement gritters and 1 snowblower. Across the Highlands there are over 1,750 grit bins. Over a typical winter around 50,000 tonnes of salt will be spread on the road. The cost of providing this service reflects the fact that they have to treat the longest local road network of any council in Scotland. Although expenditure varies according to the severity of the winter, The Highland Council expect to spend in the region of £5million annually.

<https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/20005/roads_and_pavements/107/winter_road_maintenance>

Zero Waste Scotland has launched a digital recycling tool to help combat confusion **between what can or can’t go in your blue bins**. The tool is designed to work in any of Scotland’s 32 Local Authority Areas. More details at <https://www.highland.gov.uk/news/article/13976/first_digital_tool_to_tackle_recycling_confusion_in_the_highlands>

We warmly welcome the decision of the Scottish Parliament’s Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee to recommend that the proposals by **Boundary Commission Scotland to change the electoral wards in Highland be rejected**. Had this proposal gone ahead, Strathpeffer would have been moved into the Dingwall Ward and we would have only three instead of four Highland Councillors covering our large Ward area. Cllr Cockburn understands the vote was 7-0 to reject the proposals and next year’s Highland Council elections will be held using current Ward/Councillor numbers. Cllr Cockburn wished to thank everyone who wrote in objecting to the original proposals.

We were sorry to learn reading the draft minutes of the Dornie & District Community Council meeting held on Monday 27 September 2021 that **Mackenzie Sutherland** is leaving his post in the Roads Department. Mack is moving on to be the Ward Manager for Ward 2 (Thurso and Northwest Caithness) and Ward 3 (Wick and East Caithness). We would like to place on record our thanks to Mack for all his help and assistance to us and wish him well in his new job.

The Highland Council notes that **residents should report issues directly to them** by calling The Highland Council’s Call Centre on 01349 886606 or via [www.highland.gov.uk/report](http://www.highland.gov.uk/report) In all cases, you will be given a reference number. The Highland Council also appreciate photos showing the actual problem.

**Faults on the Trunk Road (A835)** should be reported via <https://www.bearscot.com/report-a-defect/> A member of the public asked if we ever learnt where the new barrier east of Garve was going. No notice received by the Community Council. They also asked about a speed survey, the last we heard from BEAR in April 2021 was that they had no plans to carry out further vehicle/speed surveys in the Garve area.

**Network Rail updates** - Grind and weld rails for planned level crossing works at Garve Railway Station - each night from 7.30pm Monday 4 October 2021 to 4.00am on Thursday 7 October 2021. Thanks to Community Council member Bob Moir for sharing this information with us. Yesterday, we learnt that Network Rail are to undertake essential maintenance work at the Garve level crossing, which will require an overnight closure of the main A835 trunk road. The upgrade is scheduled over one weekend from Saturday 30 October 2021 to Sunday 31 October 2021. The existing level crossing is becoming life expired and will be lifted out then replaced with new rails. To complete the required work in the safest and most efficient way, the level crossing will be closed as follows:

Half Road closure – 7.30pm until 10:00pm on Saturday 30 October 2021.

Full Road closure -10.00pm on Saturday 30 October 2021 until 8.00am on Sunday 31 October 2021.

Half Road closure – 8.00am until 4.00pm on Sunday 31 October 2021.

During the full road closure there will be no vehicular access over the crossing, except for emergency vehicles. During periods of half road closure vehicles will be able to cross over the railway in either direction under the control of temporary traffic lights. For any questions on the work, please call Network Rail’s 24-hr helpline on 03457 11 41 41 or[www.networkrail.co.uk/contactus](http://www.networkrail.co.uk/contactus) This update has already appeared on our website and has been passed onto all Ward Five Community Councils by our Chairman. Social Media are also carrying this information.

**Scottish Water** – The Treasurer informed us that Scottish Water hope to lay new mains water pipes across her land at Little Garve and in the Gorstan area. We have received no official word on this but welcomed the news as some of the pipes were thought to have been laid in 1960 and have burst at least four times this year already.

**TG&DDC updates** – Sue Tarr (Chair, TG&DDC), Tina Hartley (Community Engagement and Development Officer, TG&DDC) took us through their various updates. **The Sustaining Choices Action Plan (final version)** has been received by TG&DDC. A summery sheet will also be made available in due course. Work has begun on looking at the nine action points in the plan, considering the links between them, where best to seek funding from and spend time completing the relevant application process. The nine action points are … *1. Active Travel - Provide quality cycling and walking routes around Garve and District. 2. Active Travel - Wayfinding signage provision. 3. Parking - Improve parking for use of residents. 4. Parking - Designate specific locations for motorhome parking. 5. Parking - Improved parking for visitor attractions. 6. Public Transport - Explore route and bus-stop provision for district buses, increase frequency of public transport. 7. Public Transport - Establish a community bus, and/or a car-share scheme. 8. Road Safety - Traffic calming measures into and out of Garve and other villages in the district. 9. Safety (General) - Explore impact of noise levels from NC500 tourism.* To begin with, a very “short lived” ideas group has been formed to look at where traffic calming measures should be in place across Garve & District.  Historically, we know that changing speed limits is difficult, the Community Council have tried for a number of years, but there may be other options like the suggested “lower your speed electronic smiley faces”. Garve is also the gateway to the Wester Ross Biosphere so signage is also being looked at. Community Council members Bob Moir, Sadie-Michaela Harris and the Treasurer are part of this ideas group along with several members of the public from across Garve & District – all welcome!

**Access to the War Memorial** – The “On Ya Bike” group have been liaising with TP&E Planning and Engineering *(*[*https://www.cycling.scot/transport-planning-and-engineering*](https://www.cycling.scot/transport-planning-and-engineering) *are a social enterprise transport consultancy delivering sustainable transport networks to allow anyone, anywhere to enjoy the benefits of cycling*) who have provided a quote for first stage feasibility work in support of the Garve to Gorstan (which takes account of War Memorial access) and Garve to Contin paths.

The Chairman noted **Remembrance Sunday** is on Sunday 14 November 2021. Former Community Council Treasurer Eliza Leslie Melville wishes to donate a Wreath for our use, our thanks to her. The new Minister is looking at a 1.00pm Service at the War Memorial.

**Possible Dial-a-Bus service?** Tina is researching other communities in the Highlands that have implemented a Dial-a-Bus type services with a view to what can be done here. Norma Ross at Contin Community Council is also on the case!

**Proposed purchase of Garve Hotel land**. Community Council member Bob Moir attended three online meetings w/c 20 September 2021 on behalf of Garve Hall Trustees and the Community Council. There is still no official vehicle access onto the land and no confirmation who owns the parking spaces next to the Garve Public Hall at this stage. Ownership of parking spaces is being followed up by Hall Trustees and their solicitors. In the meantime, TG&DDC will make a lower offer for the land without access rights on the assumption that rights will be acquired later. This decision is based on the fact that land will still support the Community Development Plan priorities given existing pedestrian access points via the dropped kerb gate off the trunk road, via core path access along the riverbank and direct access from the rear of Garve Public Hall itself.  Pedestrian access will also become available to the side of Garve Public Hall if the purchase is successful. Both Community Council members and Trustees of Garve Public Hall have raised concerns with this approach but LCT have agreed to this as a way forward.  It was noted that the drop kerb access from the A835 could be used for now until the access matter is resolved. Community Council members were concerned that one member of the Community Council received several “WhatsApp” messages about the Community Council’s position. It was felt there is a difference between being contacted for a chat/update and being badgered and held accountable for the entire Community Council on a private mobile number. It was noted the person sending the “WhatsApp” messages did not attend this meeting tonight to ask Community Council members their questions face to face.

Pre-planning advice has been received by TG&DDC for the land which states … “*Based on the information submitted the proposals for providing community facilities within the site would likely be supported by the planning authority, provided that future details can demonstrate that the proposed buildings would be sensitively accommodated within the site due to acceptable design, landscaping, access and mitigation of flood risk. The opportunity to secure improvements to the quality of the surrounding paths to and along the river are also encouraged and it is recognised that these could provide further benefits to the community as important amenity resources”*. Sports Hall, Visitor Centre/café and parking are all mentioned in the document as possible uses for the land but these are just “thinking aloud” ideas at this stage, nothing is set in stone. TG&DDC will undertake full public consultation on their exact plans at a later date before a full planning application is submitted.

Our Chairman has been approached about the **possibility of employing someone** who would cut grass in gardens/be a handyman based in the Garve & District area.  The last community survey identified “Handyman” service provision at number 10 out of the 16 priorities the community asked TG&DDC to concentrate on. Work is currently taking place on this priority by TG&DDC to look at Council provision, identification of gaps and consideration of how a local service could be provided. On a slightly related topic, Our Chairman has been approached regarding the lack of grass cutting in the playground of the old school in Achnasheen. He is making enquiries with The Highland Council to see if this is still on their work schedule.

**Fire alarms** in people's homes need to be upgraded before February 2022 so that they are interlinked.  More details about the change in law at <https://www.gov.scot/publications/fire-and-smoke-alarms-in-scottish-homes/> Tina confirmed that this is an active issue <https://garve.org/fire-alarm-feb2020> The Development Company currently have a working group of Directors and staff taking this forward. LCT did discuss this matter at their meeting held on Wednesday 18 August 2021.

**Future of Achnasheen Village Hall** – Tina Hartley, Sue Tarr and our Chairman were invited to a meeting along with Achnasheen & Achanalt residents on Tuesday 21 September 2021 to discuss the future of the Hall. The 80-minute meeting was attended by 12 people.  The general feeling was not to purchase Achnasheen Hall for the community from The Highland Council. Nobody expressed an interest in taking on the running of the public toilets from The Highland Council either however, due to the poor turnout, it was agreed a survey would go out to all households in Achnasheen and Achanalt to ensure everyone has a say in the future of the building. Notes of the meeting are available. Some Community Council members were concerned to read about LCT funding going to a Highland Council owned building *(windfarm money cannot be spent on issues that The Highland Council have statutory responsibility for such as potholes. These “prohibited uses” have been in the legal agreements (clause 1.3) since the windfarms were built. The legal agreement is available to view on the LCT website)* but Carol Smith, LCT Secretary has confirmed that the LCT Board was aware of the lease arrangement and received clarification from The Highland Council at the time the grant was awarded.  It was felt that the agreement was such that LCT could provide the funds for the internal electric works. Our thanks to Carol for the clarification. In other news, **Garve Public Hall** hire rates have increased to £12.00 per hour for local groups. Tina was also able to tell us that possible funding for Garve Public Hall renovations had reached stage two of the Regeneration Capital Grant Fund application process.

**The final Community Open Day of 2021** took place at Aultguish on Saturday 25 September 2021, around 40 people from the community attended. The weather was mixed on the day but those who did attend enjoyed the afternoon’s activities. It was hoped these open days would help people feel they could start to enjoy outdoor socialising again. The old whisky barrel planters also made an appearance! More details at <https://garve.org/green-leaves-facebook>

Our Chairman thanked both Sue and Tina for attending and for all their hard work over the last hectic month.

**Garve & District Community Council currently has a vacancy on the Community Council.**  The Community Council members consider it to be very important to have as broad a representation of our community as possible, as we cover a wide variety of community issues and to do this well, we need members from all corners of our large area.  We usually meet on the first Tuesday of the month.  If you are aged 16 or over, live in the Community Council area and are on the electoral roll and would like to be considered for co-option onto the Community Council, please email [garveanddistrictcc@yahoo.com](mailto:garveanddistrictcc@yahoo.com) with your name and contact details. This update has already appeared on our website.

It was also noted that LCT were looking to recruit new Directors to the Board. Sadie-Michaela Harris had not heard if anybody had applied but noted their AGM will be held in early November 2021.

**Police report** - no formal report received but as reported at previous Community Council meetings, anyone who witnesses speeding or inappropriate speed is asked by the Police to **call them directly on 101** at the time of the incident and make a witness statement.  Video or photo evidence is also welcomed by the Police. Cllr Cockburn noted the Police have carried out speed checks along the whole length of the NC500 recently including in our area.

**Treasurer’s report** - The Treasurer updated members that the bank balance as per the latest bank statement was £2,700.00. The breakdown is as follows …. Newsletter fund unchanged at £744.50. Reserve unchanged at £1,538.45. Admin £466.03 - £31.00 ink and minus £17.98 gift = £417.05. There were no questions for the Treasurer.

**AOB from Community Council members** – Community Council member Bob Moir informed the meeting that a member of the public has approached him about a **parked vehicle in Garve** with no tax or MOT. They wondered what the Community Council could do about it? It was noted that as the matter has already been reported to DVLA by the member of the public, there is no more the Community Council can do.

Bob also noted plans to extend the **famous Garve Christmas lights** along Stirling Drive this year. Could electric be supplied from a lamppost? Cllr Cockburn suggested the events group email the Ward Manager.

Community Council member Sadie-Michaela Harris noted a **scam on social media** where it appears a friend’s dog has been seriously injured and can other friends make a donation towards the vet’s bill. It seems the friend’s profile has been hacked and donations go straight to the fraudster. Advise – check with the real friend first!

**AOB from members of the public** – no questions from those present.

**Screening reports, scoping reports and consultations** – none. All Highland Council consultations are available at <http://consult.highland.gov.uk/portal> All Scottish Government consultations are available at <https://consult.gov.scot/consultation_finder>

**Building warrants, planning issues and licensing issues** - One previous planning application has been determined by The Highland Council since our last ordinary meeting. At our August 2021 ordinary meeting, we considered 21/03360/FUL - the proposed erection of house and workshop on land 75M SW of Strathmore House. Planning permission has now been granted by The Highland Council with seven conditions. More details are available on The Highland Council website. There were no new planning applications or licensing issues to consider this evening. All planning applications can be viewed at [www.highland.gov.uk/info/180/planning\_-\_applications\_warrants\_and\_certificates/143/planning\_permission/4](http://www.highland.gov.uk/info/180/planning_-_applications_warrants_and_certificates/143/planning_permission/4)

**Dates of future meetings** – the latest guidance received from The Highland Council on Tuesday 17 August 2021 is that Community Councils should still meet virtually for now. It was agreed to hold winter month meetings on webcam.

*(Ordinary meetings are usually held on the first Tuesday of every month unless stated otherwise)*

Tuesday 2 November 2021, 7.00pm, webcam

Tuesday 7 December 2021, 7.00pm, webcam

January 2022 – no meeting

Tuesday 1 February 2022, 7.00pm, webcam

Tuesday 1 March 2022, 7.00pm, webcam

Tuesday 5 April 2022, 7.00pm, venue/webcam tbc

Tuesday 3 May 2022, 7.00pm, venue/webcam tbc

Tuesday 7 June 2022, **AGM** followed by an ordinary meeting, 7.00pm, venue/webcam tbc

Members of the public are very welcome to attend Community Council meetings and take part in the discussions under the guidance of the Chairman. A copy of the Constitution that every Community Council in the Highlands has to work to is available on The Highland Council website - [www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/21179/scheme\_of\_establishment\_final\_sept\_2019](http://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/21179/scheme_of_establishment_final_sept_2019)

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending.  He also thanked Community Council member Sadie-Michaela Harris for hosting the Zoom webcam session.  The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.25pm.

Signed ……………………………..

Signed ……………………………..

Date ……………………………….

[www.community-council.org.uk/garveanddistrict](http://www.community-council.org.uk/garveanddistrict)

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