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

**held on Tuesday 4 April 2023 on webcam**

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

**Also present on webcam**: Cllr Liz Kraft from 7.30pm, Andrew Fido (Boralex) and one member of the public.

**Apologies**: Jennifer Haslam (Secretary), Community Council member Joe Stewart and Craig Conlin (Boralex).

The Chairman opened the meeting at 7.00pm and welcomed everyone. He reminded members of the public that although our meetings are not public meetings, they were still very welcome to attend Community Council meetings even on webcam and take part in the discussions under his guidance (see section 12 of the Constitution). Those who can’t attend our meetings can, as always, write to us by post or email with any issues they wish raised at garveanddistrictcc@yahoo.com Our website [www.community-council.org.uk/garveanddistrict/](http://www.community-council.org.uk/garveanddistrict/) continues to receive 150-200 visitors per month (out of a community of around 270 people). The Community Council area covers from Garve to Aultguish and from Garve to Achnasheen and is the only organisation that represents the whole community.  We are elected by the community every four years or so and usually meet once a month.  Draft minutes and a list of current members of the Community Council can be viewed at our website.

Best wishes to Ewan Bush, the now former Local Energy Officer whose contract has ended and is no longer an employee of the Development Company.

**Declarations of Interest** – co-opted member Hamish Leslie Melville declared an interest in the Boralex project. Community Council member Bob Moir is a Garve Public Hall Trustee and a Friend of Garve War Memorial. The Treasurer and Community Council members Bob Moir and Sadie-Michaela Harris are all members of the Traffic Calming group. 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 March 2023 via webcam were proposed without amendment by Caroline Gamble and seconded by Sadie-Michaela Harris, unanimously agreed. Minutes are available at Garve Post Office, Achnasheen Village Noticeboard, on our website or via email. Hard/electronic copies are also available on request. A summary report of the meetings is available in the local newsletter and in the An Carrannach. Minutes will be signed by our Chairman and Treasurer in due course via post.

**Matters arising** – **Boralex (was Infinergy)** – co-opted member Hamish Leslie Melville declared an interest in this project and took no part in the discussions.  Andrew Fido attended on behalf of Craig Conlin who was unable to attend tonight.  Craig is the newly appointed Construction Manager for the five turbines to be added to the Lochluichart Windfarm.  Nick Sage has now left the company but both Craig and Andrew know the area and infrastructure having worked and visited the various windfarm sites and the Corriemoillie Substation in the past.  Boralex are currently starting to work through the various planning conditions such as updating bird surveys and undertaking more peat probing on site.  This will continue over the next few months.  It is hoped construction will start in the autumn before winter sets in and will involve opening one of the old borrow pits used before.  The overhead powerline to carry the electricity down to the Corriemoillie Substation has its own planning conditions to meet but most can be addressed in tandem with the others.  Boralex are in regular contact with Lochluichart Estate, Eneco and EDF and will keep the Community Council updated accordingly.  Community Council member Sadie-Michaela Harris asked which bird species are on site?  The red throated diver and Grouse are important species but are mainly found to the south within the existing operational wind farm.  There are also water voles and other species to consider.  Boralex has a specialist team on site who are currently checking they have not moved within the site since the Environmental Impact Assessment was carried out.  Regarding construction, the existing tracks on site will be utilised as much as possible.  Andrew was thanked for attending.

**Highland Council updates** – [www.highland.gov.uk](http://www.highland.gov.uk) – how much did The Highland Council pay out in **compensation claims** over the last 12 months? We have received the following via Cllr Kraft …

*The data below is split into financial years with payment amounts for vehicle damage and those where the subject is unknown. Data excludes personal injury claims. Compensation claim amounts paid out vary per year and can depend on a multitude of factors, including the severity of winter.*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ***Financial Year*** | ***Payments for Damage (Subject of damage unknown)*** | ***Payments for Damage to Vehicles*** | ***Total*** | ***Comment*** |
| *2019/20* | *£822.95* | *£41,416.03* | *£42,238.98* | *Incomplete dataset for the year.* |
| *2020/21* | *£96.00* | *£38,525.83* | *£38,621.83* | *Complete dataset for the year.* |
| *2021/22* | *£1,016.17* | *£111,325.07* | *£112,341.24* | *Complete dataset for the year.* |

Community Council member Sadie-Michaela Harris was shocked at the sums involved. Cllr Kraft will find out how much personal injury claims have cost. In slightly related news, **resurfacing work** has taken place on the A890 south of Achnasheen and on the A832 at Lochluichart which we welcome. Our thanks to all involved but it was also noted that Mossford to Kinlochluichart Church was not resurfaced, why, especially as the equipment was working just around the corner? Cllr Kraft also noticed this while out driving today so will make enquiries.

**Grit boxes requested** – this has been passed onto the roads department to consider.

**Speed survey on A832 and Garve Village** – due to take place in the spring – see <https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/1523/transport_and_streets/1049/20mph_programme/5> where you can also view the proposed 20mph zone for Garve Village (Stirling Drive and Matheson Road). Police patrols continue to take place both in Garve and the Achanalt/Achnasheen area. This update has already appeared on our website. It was noted that the Traffic Calming group webpage has had no incidents reported on it in over five months. It was also noted there has not been a meeting of the group for some time although with our Chairman’s regular updates to the group and to the Community Council, one is not needed. Perhaps traffic is getting our message that speeding/inappropriate speed will not be tolerated in our area.

**Trees in The Avenue** – no news about the replanting plan is expected until the spring.

**White lining in Garve** – this is on the list along with the white lines on the A832 as you approach the Gorstan Junction from Corriemoillie and the white lines as you leave Little Garve and travel up to the main road. The Machine was put off the road last year (condemned) but a replacement machine is due soon.

**Fence on the riverside path in Garve** – it would appear the fence is on private land so therefore a private matter. Community Council members felt this was a cop-out by The Highland Council as it was them that put the fence up in the first place and the fence is still needed now as part of the safe route to schools’ program and they have a duty of care, let alone the safety aspect to the school children. Cllr Kraft acknowledged the points made and will make further enquiries but funding noted at our last ordinary meeting may not be available for land not owned by The Highland Council.

Highland households will see the introduction of a **new recycling service** across the region following a Scottish Government funding award to The Highland Council from April 2024 - <https://www.highland.gov.uk/news/article/15226/funding_secured_for_new_recycling_service_roll-out> Community Council member Sadie-Michaela Harris would love to follow the contents of her blue bin from bin lorry to dump to see what exactly happens to it all. Cllr Kraft would also like to see the new shredder in Inverness so will see if a site visit can be arranged for her and the Community Council members. It was also noted that Gairloch and Ullapool recycle centres are not open at weekends. This does not encourage people to recycle. Cllr Kraft thought staff might be available but is awaiting an update.

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 appreciates photos showing the actual problem.

**Killin Farm railway crossing works/barriers east of Garve** – no further news expected until the spring.

**Faults on the Trunk Road (A835)** should be reported via [www.bearscot.com/report-a-defect/](http://www.bearscot.com/report-a-defect/) The Treasurer noted a lot of surface water on the trunk road on Sunday 12 March 2023 and reported accordingly, our thanks to her.

Around mid-March, we starting receiving reports of **low water pressure in Garve Village**. It appears this has been happening on and off since with bursts found in nearby fields. We asked Scottish Water for an update. They tell us that it does not look like they have had a high number of contacts from customers, although they can see there was a case in March that their leakage team was investigating which does not look like a recurring issue. Everyone is encouraged to report such problems directly to Scottish Water at <https://www.scottishwater.co.uk/Help-and-Resources/Contact-Us/Contacting-Us> or by calling them directly on 08000 778 778 and keep a note of the reference number. Community Council member Bob Moir noted that there has been various visits to the Village by Scottish Water over the last few days including today. The field is in a mess but they are using the listening device. It is thought there might be a leak in Matheson Road, ongoing … *(Post meeting note – Scottish Water were seen in Garve the next day and a leak has been fixed in the field).*

Cllr Kraft joined the meeting at 7.30pm having been out all day at meetings. So we could hear her updates, we went back through the topics already covered as detailed above.

An update on the renovation works at **Garve Public Hall** can be viewed at <https://garve.org/gph-mar23>. It is good to see the wishes of the community being fulfilled following the several surveys that have been undertaken over the years. Bob Moir (as a Garve Public Hall Trustee) updating this meeting that a contractor has now been appointed (two companies tendered for the work) and work is due to start on Monday 17 April 2023 for 42 weeks but it is hoped that the refurbished Hall might be able to open for a Christmas party. There will be men on site from tomorrow delivering the storage container. BT have cut the broadband line and SSE have cut the power to the building. The compound will be set up over the next week or so including a welfare unit for the workmen. The £1m refurbishment would have cost around 30% less if it had been done before Covid. The refurbished Hall will have disabled toilets, a modern kitchen to meet regulations, insulation, new windows and a new waste water system which any development on the community land can tap into. Extra parking spaces will also be created. Site visits for the school children might be possible during renovation works. It was noted a lot of hard work has gone into this whole project by Trustees, Tina Hartley (Community Engagement and Development Officer) and many others and full credit should be given to them. Bob was thanked for sharing details.

A few days after our last ordinary meeting we received word and complaints (FA - 497098169) that **Achnasheen public toilets** were closed again. Cllr Kraft tells us that it appears The Highland Council have shut them pending review by a Highland Council Official. The review concluded that a repair to the hot water tank is required, this is being arranged ASAP therefore a temporary comfort scheme is not required. We are not aware of workmen unable to access the toilets as the doors have keycodes. **Externally** - several pieces of loose timber coming away from the soffit and fascia above the toilet entrance during this winter was noted but all unsecure pieces have now been removed. The toilets should be able to reopen once the hot water has been repaired and if the project gets under way to repair the roof, then the scaffolding will be designed to allow access to the toilet doors below. We have asked for further updates as it was noted that closed toilets do not encourage the Village Hall to be used. The MP’s office is also aware of concerns, the MP has contacted Cllr Kraft for an update. It was also noted that it does appear to be taking some time for the toilets to reopen (about four weeks now and counting) and the busy Easter weekend is this weekend. Can they not be opened without hot water? Are temporary Portaloos an option? Network Rail is an issue regarding scaffolding but it was also asked who would be liable if a slate fell on a train or Passenger? *(Post meeting note - Cllr Kraft made urgent enquiries next morning on this matter. The toilets re-opened later that same day).*

Community Council member Sadie-Michaela Harris attended the **Dingwall Medical Group (DMG) Liaison Meeting** with Community Councils on Monday 13 March 2023 via webcam. Minutes of the meeting are available in the library section of our website. Sadie reminded us that there had been two such meetings before Covid. At this latest meeting local vaccination centres like Village Halls were suggested as this may increase uptake. Green prescriptions like walking rather than medication was discussed. Postcodes for Community Council areas have been supplied. Those who need/want help in area may not always be easily identified along with GDPR issues but working with LINK colleague may help. It is hoped these meetings will be held quarterly. Sadie thought the meeting was positive and informative. Several Community Councils from the DMG practice area attended. In related news, **Mental Health and Wellbeing** - many people are feeling the strain as the cost of living continues to increase.  <https://www.mentalhealthandmoneyadvice.org/scot/managing-money/cost-of-living-crisis-and-your-mental-health/> provides information on how you can maintain your mental wellbeing at this time, alongside information on how to manage your money as bills rise. Community Council member Sadie-Michaela Harris will try and join the Mental Health and Wellbeing training sessions due to take place soon. These are all online. Sadie is a level 3 qualified Mental Health First Aider.

**A joint Community Council meeting** took place last week regarding Highland Council roads. Our Chairman attended a 2-hour online presentation followed by Q&A’s (apologies noted from Community Council member Sadie-Michaela Harris). Our Chairman thought the meeting was very useful, about 12/19 Community Council's in ward five attended along with three local Cllr's and roads officials. The extra money in the 2023/24 budget has not been split down to a ward level yet but it will not mean more men on the ground to do the work needed, just more tar, white lines etc .... Draft minutes of the meeting are in the library section of our website.

**Police report** - no formal report received but as reported at previous Community Council meetings, anyone who wishes to raise an issue with the Police is asked to **call them directly on 101** at the time of the incident and make a witness statement.  Video, dashcam or photo evidence is also welcomed, indeed encouraged by the Police. Our Chairman was concerned to hear unconfirmed reports of harassment and intimidation in the community. He suggests video evidence is taken and passed onto the police at the time if it happens again.

**Treasurer’s report** – The Treasurer confirmed that our total bank balance is £1,508.31 after expenses since the last meeting of £86.00 public liability insurance, £350.00 Secretary fee (split between the Secretary and our Chairman) and the Secretary’s expenses of £16.31 (cards & stamps). The breakdown of the bank balance figure is treasurers account £-30.14 and reserve £1,538.45. Ann MacRae has agreed to audit our accounts once again, our thanks to her. There were no questions for the Treasurer.

**AOB from Community Council members** – Community Council member Bob Moir recently received a letter from **Barclays Bank informing him a payment had bounced**. Bob does not have an account with Barclays but thought he should double check. After an hour on the phone and a visit to Barclays in Inverness, Bob discovered someone had opened a bank account in his name and address, a clear case of identity fraud. It appears this has happened to others too. Bob always shreds any paperwork for his blue bin so it just shows these things do happen in our area. Serious fraud office are now involved, the bank account closed and Bob’s credit rating has been protected. **ONE TO WATCH!**Community Council member Sadie-Michaela Harris asked if we ever received a reply from the **owners of the Garve Hotel** about their plans? We sent two letters, the second by recorded delivery but no reply was received to either letter.

**AOB from members of the public** – no issues raised by those present.

**Screening reports, scoping reports and consultations** – we are aware of two consultations but were not contacted directly by SSEN initially about the first one. SSEN are currently looking at options for new powerline corridors (57m high Pylons) connecting the North of Scotland with Beauly. <https://www.ssen-transmission.co.uk/projects/project-map/spittal--loch-buidhe--beauly-400kv-connection/> and <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/364d4f42d26f408c85530363cb9bf53b> are worth being aware of but route D3 (through our area from Strathvaich to Garve) is NOT their preferred route at this stage. We have asked to be kept updated. A joint Community Council meeting on this topic organised by Strathpeffer Community Council took place online on Friday 24 March 2023 attended by members from Helmsdale, Golspie, Strathpeffer, Contin, Marybank, Scatwell & Strathconon and Kiltearn Community Councils. Our own Chairman also attended. It was questioned had SSEN gone about this proposal the right way?  Had their remit from OFGEM/National Grid been interpreted correctly? It was acknowledged that the powerline is needed to meet net zero targets by 2030 but are existing corridors the right ones, let alone these proposed ones?  Can't the new line be beside existing powerlines or can they all be buried together?  Is a subsea cable down the east coast an option? What is the "least awful solution"?  There was general agreement that the consultation was poorly handled, some households received leaflets, many did not.  Concern was expressed that a decision seems to have been taken already and the consultation is just a paper exercise. Maree Todd MSP has met with SSEN recently and has raised similar concerns. Several Community Councils including Garve & District have now written a joint letter to SSEN about the consultation process and an offer to work with them to find a way forward for this new line. We would encourage everyone to view the proposals online and comment directly to SSEN by the new extended deadline of Friday 14 April 2023. This update has already appeared on our website. Further information is also available on social media. Six days ago, we forwarded details on through our mailing list to those residents in the possible affected area. We did ask a SSEN representative to attend this meeting, no response received. Community Council member Sadie-Michaela Harris noted the cosmetic impact such a line would have in our area, let alone the outstanding natural beauty that would be ruined. Surely underground was the only option, whichever route the line takes? Community Council members unanimously agreed that we will write our own letter to SSEN raising concerns about the consultation process, agreeing that D3 is not a suitable option and that we are willing to work with SSEN to find suitable solutions.

The second consultation came in yesterday - The Highland Council is updating its Local Transport Strategy, which sets out how it will manage and modernise the transport network across the region. The case for change is the first stage in this process – see <https://www.highland.gov.uk/news/article/15239/travel_for_the_future_what_moves_you> for more details. The consultation ends on Monday 29 May 2023. Community Council member Sadie-Michaela Harris noted that many things like meetings can easily be held online these days thus reducing pollution, carbon footprint, fuel costs etc … It was suggested that we take the lead on such matters and keep transport for necessary journeys.

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** - there is one new building warrant currently being shown on The Highland Council website for our area. 23/00439/NDOM5 is for the construction of foul and surface water drainage layout to serve a holiday pod at Glentawick, Little Garve.

One previous planning application has been determined by The Highland Council since our last ordinary meeting. At our February 2023 ordinary meeting we considered 23/00039/FUL, the proposed construction of house & garage (amended design 21/05895/FUL) at North Hill Forest, Silverbridge. Since then, an addition to the application has been made by the applicant – proposed erection of a domestic wind turbine. The Case Officer has granted permission for both the amended design and the turbine with four conditions. More details can be found on The Highland Council’s planning website.

There is currently one planning application (mobile mast above Achanalt) awaiting determination by The Highland Council for our area.

No new planning applications have been received by The Highland Council since our last ordinary meeting.

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)

There is one new licensing issue for noting, Hart Licensees Ltd have surrendered their licence for the Garve Hotel.

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

Tuesday 2 May 2023, 7.00pm, webcam. *(Apologies noted from Community Council member Bob Moir).*

Tuesday 6 June 2023, **AGM** followed by an ordinary meeting, 7.00pm, webcam

July 2023 – no meeting

Tuesday 1 August 2023, 7.00pm, webcam

Tuesday 5 September 2023, 7.00pm, webcam

Tuesday 3 October 2023, 7.00pm, webcam

Tuesday 7 November 2023, 7.00pm, webcam

Tuesday 5 December 2023, 7.00pm, webcam

As usual, our Chairman started to draw the meeting to a close by asking all present if anyone had any final questions or thoughts on anything they had heard the evening, a question he often asks throughout the meeting too. Nobody had any final questions or thoughts. Although our meetings are not public meetings, members of the public are still very welcome to attend Community Council meetings and take part in the discussions under the guidance of the Chairman (see section 12 of the Constitution). A copy of our Constitution is available in the library section of our own website and hard/electronic copies are available on request.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending.  He also thanked Community Council member Sadie-Michaela Harris for hosting the webcam session.  The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.55pm.

Signed ……………………………..

Signed ……………………………..

Date ……………………………….

*On Sunday 2 April 2023, the Midland Pullman visited our community on its way from Inverness to Kyle of Lochalsh having travelled up from Paignton the previous day. Here it is at Achnasheen heading west …*



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

garveanddistrictcc@yahoo.com

This set of minutes were first published (in draft form) at 2.00pm on Monday 10 April 2023.