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

**held on Tuesday 6 June 2023 on webcam**

**Community Council members present on webcam**: Kenny Maclean (Chairman & Secretary), Bob Moir (Vice Chairman), Caroline Gamble (Treasurer) and Sadie-Michaela Harris.

**Also present on webcam**: Cllr Liz Kraft, Tina Hartley (Community Engagement and Development Officer, TG&DDC) and three members of the public.

**Apologies**: Community Council members Jennifer Haslam & Joe Stewart and co-opted member Hamish Leslie Melville. Apologies were also noted from Craig Conlin & Fiona Milligan (Boralex).

The Chairman opened this meeting at 7.25pm following the conclusion of the Annual General Meeting. 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](mailto: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.

We were sad to learn that Martin Sedowski, a former resident at Inchbae and more recently of Lochcarron has passed away. Our thoughts are with his family and his friends in both communities.

Tonight marks one year since Cllr Liz Kraft first starting attending our meetings as the local Councillor. Cllr Kraft told this meeting that she is enjoying the work and the four Councillor’s for this ward are working well together. As they all live at different ends of the ward, that helps to cover the area well.

Community Councils were the focus of attention at the Scottish Parliament on Tuesday 23 May 2023. The Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee undertook a roundtable discussion with Community Council members from across Scotland, who spoke about how they would like to see Community Councils change in the future. Our Chairman was unable to attend but sent a written submission to the committee sharing his experiences since he was first elected nearly twenty years ago.

We send good wishes and safe travels to Lewis Mackenzie, Ella Moxon and Isobel Moxon who have now left the employment of The Midge Bite Café in Achnasheen to go travelling around Europe. They have all become well known faces of the midge and have helped to establish the midge as THE pit stop between the east and west coasts with their friendly service and reliability of always having the door open on time. They have been a credit to the midge and this community. Our Chairman attended a small gathering to mark the occasion on the evening of Sunday 28 May 2023.

**Declarations of Interest** – the Vice Chairman is a Garve Public Hall Trustee and a Friend of Garve War Memorial. The Vice Chairman, Treasurer and Community Council member 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 6 April 2023 via webcam. The Vice Chairman noted two items, the burst pipe was in the field, not Matheson Road and *“surrender”* should read *“surrendered”*. No other proposed amendments were received within the 14-day rule (or since) so the draft minute was then proposed with amendments by Sadie-Michaela Harris and seconded by Bob Moir, 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. Minutes will be signed by our Chairman and Treasurer in due course via post.

Community Council members also noted the notes of the non-quorate meeting held on Tuesday 2 May 2023.

**Matters arising** – **Boralex** – No update. *(Post meeting note – next day we received an update from Craig Conlin at Boralex. A site meeting with Glyn Robson (Lochluichart Estate Manager) to discuss tree felling works has taken place, Craig will update us when works will commence. They are looking to go out to tender to hopefully start civil construction in October 2023. Some additional works may have to be carried out at the site entrance bell mouth (A835). Our thanks to Craig for his update).*

**Highland Council updates** – [www.highland.gov.uk](http://www.highland.gov.uk) – **Personal Injury Claims** - how much are they costing The Highland Council each year? Cllr Kraft is still looking into this.

**Mossford/Old School Road, Achnasheen repairs?** – the roads capital plan has been increased and Mossford is on the list (1000m stretch). An extra £5.1m will be spent on main roads like the A832 across the Highlands. Hotbox is also working away but plans can change if an issue is found elsewhere. The A890 Stromeferry Bypass is budgeted for separately. Did Cllr Kraft know when the road will be repaired at Mossford? Not for sure but expects the work to be done over the summer months.

**Broken fence in Garve** – Stirling Drive residents feel that if “fly tipping” (grass cuttings) as reported at our non-quorate meeting is such an issue, then The Highland Council should be getting the fence fixed even sooner to stop the issue! Cllr Kraft noted the point and will raise it again. It was also noted there is no garden waste collection in Garve & District so the so-called “fly tipping” is seen as an excuse by The Highland Council. Where are the Seasonal Access Officers to carry our fence repairs? We are only talking about replacing a rotten strainer post! *(Post meeting note – Cllr Kraft informs us one Seasonal Access offer covers Applecross to Achnasheen/Achanalt while another covers the rest of our Community Council area plus the Black Isle. Our thanks to Cllr Kraft for the update).* Some attending this meeting recalled the **community skips** which were well used around twenty years ago until they started being abused with oil, car parts and asbestos. Cllr Kraft thought funding might be available through the Coastal Community’s Fund. LEADER is now Community Lead Development. Both funds are ward based but match funding is also encouraged. There would also have to be a clear demonstration of demand for additional waste collection. Those who apply for the funding would probably also find themselves liable if abuse started again.

**Replanting trees in The Avenue** – awaiting an update …

**When is the white lining machine coming to this area?** - again, Cllr Kraft expects such work to be done over the summer months.

**Is it possible to get "unmarked police car" signs?** – Cllr Kraft still looking into this.

**New recycle centre visit and blue bins?** – Cllr Kraft understands that there are plans to create an animation of what can and cannot go in the bins and then an animation of where the rubbish goes. Currently, most of it goes to Lothian to be separated and sold commercially. It was noted that paper and card will need to be binned separately from other recycle goods from April 2024 – <https://www.highland.gov.uk/news/article/15226/funding_secured_for_new_recycling_service_roll-out> It was also noted there is lots of “contamination” under the current system as people are not using green/blue bins correctly.

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.

**Faults on the Trunk Road (A835)** should be reported via [www.bearscot.com/report-a-defect/](http://www.bearscot.com/report-a-defect/)

**Network Rail update** – work on the station platforms at Achnasheen will take place from 11.00pm on Monday 19 June 2023 for four nights. Working on the railway at night offers the safest environment for workers and causes the least disruption to train services. More details are available at [www.networkrail.co.uk](http://www.networkrail.co.uk) or by calling their helpline on 03457 11 41 41. Letters have already been sent by Network Rail to neighbouring properties.

**Garve Public Hall refurbishment** – the Vice Chairman with his Hall Trustee hat on updated us that works are making good progress. “Kits” arrived on site yesterday and one is already up to house new toilets/entrance. Foundation works are also progressing well. It was also noted that new drains/sewage pipes have been installed and that the good weather has been a great help. Only one issue … Midges! The local Posties can also use site toilets, thanks to the contractor for accommodating them. Tina Hartley (Community Engagement and Development Officer, TG&DDC) who has been helping the Trustees with applying for funding agreed with Bob’s summary and noted how community minded the contractor is.

**Future of Achnasheen Village Hall** – The Highland Council first learnt of storm damage around February 2021. Their (then) local maintenance officer inspected and made recommendations which included as initial package of work to stabilise the roof nearest the west gable, followed by more substantial repairs across the remainder of the roof. Approval was granted for the initial works costing around £20k-£40k; however permission was required from a third party (Network Rail) for land access for scaffolding. Terms and scaffolding design were not agreed until January 2023, by which time a further assessment highlighted further issues. Due to the need to now progress repairs as one big work package, a revised quotation was received in February 2023 for the full repairs, totalling around £100K. This has been sent to the Property Capital Board at The Highland Council for approval but they have expressed concern at the lack of a current lease agreement as the original lease expired some time ago. Achnasheen Amenities do have a letter of comfort to use the building for now, but this is not a lease. It was noted that there may be some internal repairs due to the roof leaking, but not aware of any other major works besides the roof.  Unfortunately, the maintenance officer who conducted the original survey has now left The Highland Council. The Highland Council are not willing to re-issue a lease on the old terms and it is unlikely Achnasheen Amenities could afford a higher rent as they have already had to apply to the LCT to cover existing costs. LCT have awarded them in the last 12 months £252 for a fire alarm & safety equipment check and £589 to cover Hall insurance. We have also learnt in recent days that The Highland Council Housing Department are not interested in the building for social housing due to a lack of demand for housing in Achnasheen. Cllr Kraft confirmed a capital project of this scale to repair the roof would need to be agreed by the four ward Councillors so Achnasheen Amenities would have to have a business plan going forward once works are complete including taking on all maintenance of the building (inside and outside) if they wished to keep the Hall. The toilets could close if the building ends up being put up for sale but Cllr Kraft hopes the toilets can be saved if nothing else. Perhaps other options would need consideration such as compost toilets. A member of the public asked if The Highland Council must provide toilets? – no. There is no statutory duty on the local authority to provide public toilets, perhaps this needs to be investigated at a Scottish Government level? Perhaps it would pay The Highland Council to keep the toilets open instead of cleaning up the “wild” toilets in laybys. The Seasonal Access Officers do not work in the winter months so who polices the laybys then? Signs can be put up to advise where the nearest toilets are but will they be open? The four ward Councillors are keen to hold a postal consultation with the community about the Hall/toilets and hold a public meeting before taking a final decision on this matter. The old school building in Achnasheen has also been raised at The Highland Council but the four ward Councillors feel one building at a time is best at this stage. It was noted that The Highland Council are wanting a better return for their money going forward (rent increase, no maintenance and possibly charging non domestic rates), something Achnasheen Amenities probably cannot afford. A community buy out did not carry much weight when the residents of Achanalt and Achnasheen were asked previously. We await developments with interest. It was disappointing nobody from Achnasheen Amenities was in attendance tonight but it was good to hear repairs to the roof can be done now agreement has been reached with Network Rail.

**SSEN proposed new Spittal-Beauly powerline** - SSEN have recently published an update on their website which covers some of the questions that have been asked recently including alternative technologies and mitigations, planning policy and legislative considerations, further explanation on the need of the project and the next steps. An email has been sent to everyone who has signed up to their email list for the project to make them aware of the update. The document is available on their website under the ‘project documents’ tab. Further community consultation is planned to take place late 2023/early 2024. A public meeting was held in Strathpeffer Pavilion on the evening of Thursday 18 May 2023 which was advertised on and off line. We are advised it was very well attended with around 300 people present. Also in attendance were Cllr Kraft, outgoing MP Ian Blackford, Maree Todd MSP and around ten members of the SSEN team. The audience was very polite and courteous however, they did not hold back in their questioning of the SSEN team and the politicians. The questions were very robust and challenging on various aspects of the proposals and the consultation to date. SSEN did offer up an apology for the way the consultation was handled which was welcomed. They did hint at looking at potential alterations. Our thanks to Ron McAulay at Strathpeffer Community Council for his regular updates. This update has already appeared on our own website.

We have still not received any communication from the owners of **Garve Hotel** as we would like to hear their plans. Concern has been expressed once again at the untidy state of the building and its surroundings, there’s guttering and lead work hanging down from one of the windows upstairs, facing the main road. Can The Highland Council Environmental Health Officer not get involved? Are rates being paid on the building? The community is working hard on the refurbishment of the Hall and community land yet we have the backdrop of a decaying Hotel. Community Council member Jennifer Haslam (via our Chairman) wondered if it was a Community Council matter? The Vice Chairman noted a press article of a similar Hotel in Aberdeenshire which resulted in an enforcement order being placed. Cllr Kraft will make enquiries into the matter and noted similar concerns have been raised with her about the Mackay’s Hotel in Strathpeffer.

We note **Strathpeffer Post Office** is temporarily closed until this Friday 9 June 2023 due to shop renovation works.  Post Office services will continue to be available in Garve, Achnasheen and Kinlochewe as usual.  More details including branch opening times - <https://www.postoffice.co.uk/branch-finder> This update has already appeared on our website, thanks to Community Council member Sadie-Michaela Harris for noticing this closure.

**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.

The day after our non-quorate meeting, Chris Green from Strathgarve informed us that on Monday 1 May 2023 (at approx. 3.30pm) there was some antisocial behaviour on the single-track road in Strathgarve. Two riders were tearing up and down the road at very high speed despite children and families taking advantage of the nice weather. One rider was on a quad bike, the other rode a motocross bike which sounds like it had no exhaust. Forestry & Land Scotland along with the police have been informed - the police incident number is PS-20230501-2822. Our thanks to Chris for his update which we have already posted on our website.

It was noted that police in unmarked cars continue to patrol our roads and were in Achanalt on Saturday 20 May 2023 and Achnasheen a few days earlier. No reports of any issues.

Press reports inform us that a man and a woman have appeared in court charged in connection with several offences that included housebreaking and theft in Torridon and Achnasheen.

Further press reports inform us that twenty-four incidents of vandalism in ten days occurred recently in Ullapool. A 29-year-old individual has been charged.

**Treasurer’s report** - The Treasurer confirmed expenses in the last month were £33.95 ink for our Chairman and £90.00 auditor fee. Our total bank balance is now £1,384.36. The breakdown of the bank balance figure is treasurers account £-154.09 and reserve £1,538.45. Awaiting The Highland Council grant funding of £445.20. There were no questions for the Treasurer.

**AOB from Community Council members** – the Vice Chairman noted further **mains water issues in Garve**. It is suspected there is a leak in the field but not confirmed. A leaking valve has also been found near the Garve Hotel. Perhaps it is time for a complete pipe replacement like Gorstan/Little Garve? Some were also questioning if there would be enough pressure in the hydrant if there was a fire. Our Chairman will ask Scottish Water for an update but in the meantime, everyone is still encouraged to report issues directly at the time at <https://www.scottishwater.co.uk/Help-and-Resources/Contact-Us/Contacting-Us> or by calling Scottish Water directly on 08000 778 778 and keep a note of the reference number. Community Council member Sadie-Michaela Harris is aware of issues over in Strathgarve. A couple of her neighbours  
have reported their low pressure to Scottish Water on several occasions. *(Post meeting note – further issues in Strathgarve since our meeting where apparently the pressure is down to 0.8 bar).*

The Vice Chairman also reported concerns of **motorbikes using Wades Bridge**. Apparently it can be quite noisy at times. Should such vehicles be using the Bridge which was closed to vehicles many years ago? The Treasurer advised that on more than one occasion she had heard (but not seen) a noisy vehicle on the Strathgarve side of the bridge but could not be sure if it was a car or a motorbike. Cllr Kraft will see what Traffic Orders were taken out at the time as the only sign appears to be “No Through Road” on the Little Garve side.

An Achnasheen resident has contacted our Chairman about the **old Scots pine tree** that was cut down in Achnasheen Village Centre several years ago for safety reasons. They would like to plant a tree in its place at their own cost and would like the Community Council’s permission. The Community Council members raised no objections but will also advise how to get land owners permission.

Our Chairman has also been asked to mention the proposed changes at the **Howard Doris Centre (HDC) in Lochcarron**. The beds are to be taken over by NHS Highland in a few months’ time but the rest of the building (dining room, meeting rooms, lounge) will not. The HDC Board are keen to hear from people not just in Lochcarron but further afield including Garve & District on options to replace the existing “Day Care” with a “Community Well-Being Hub” hosting activities for all ages. An open day is planned for Monday 12 June 2023 2.00pm until 4.00pm & 7.00pm until 9.00pm at the centre, all welcome!

**AOB from members of the public** – the wall which holds up the **road beside Hazelbrae** is cracking. The householder has reported directly to BEAR but no action appears to have taken place. We will ask for an update once photos have been obtained along with reference numbers.

**Screening reports, scoping reports and consultations** – we have received one consultation from Boundaries Scotland who are undertaking a second review of Scottish Parliament constituency boundaries. The consultation on constituencies runs until Saturday 17 June 2023. Please see further information on their website - <https://boundaries.scot/> However, it should be noted that no changes are proposed for the constituency we are in (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross). This review only applies to Scottish Parliament constituencies, not Community Council areas, Highland Council ward areas or UK Parliament constituencies.

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 are no new building warrants currently being shown on The Highland Council website for our area.

Two previous planning applications have been determined by The Highland Council since our last meeting. At our February 2023 ordinary meeting we noted 22/05109/FUL, the proposed erection of 40m high tower and associated ancillary works on land 645M North of Old Town Achanalt. Planning permission has now been granted by the Case Officer with three conditions.

At our non-quorate meeting last month we noted 23/01636/OHL which was the proposed 33kV electricity wood pole connection spur at Fannich. The Case Officer has S37 raised no objection.

No new planning applications have been received by The Highland Council since our last meeting but we do note one Prior Notification Order - 23/01942/PNO, Strathvaich Phase six - Coire nan Laogh - Peatland Restoration project on land 2540M West of Strathvaich Lodge which has already been approved by the Case Officer. This update has already appeared on our website.

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 are no new licensing issues for us to consider this evening.

Before our Chairman moved to the last item, he had to note Community Council member Joe Stewart has been unable to attend Community Council meetings since April 2021 due to work commitments which take him away from us and his family. Under 11.2 of the scheme, our Chairman had to ask Community Council members for agreement for Joe’s continued absence. Community Council members felt Joe should be asked his views on his membership. Our Chairman will make enquiries.

Our Chairman also had to note Community Council member Jennifer Haslam has been unable to attend Community Council meetings since December 2022 due to ill health. Under 11.2 of the scheme, our Chairman had to ask Community Council members for agreement for Jennifer’s continued absence. Community Council members, proposed by Sadie-Michaela Harris, seconded by Caroline Gamble unanimously agreed Jennifer’s absence and wished her well. We know she appreciates the regular updates provided to her.

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

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

January 2024 – no meeting

Tuesday 6 February 2024, 7.00pm, webcam

Tuesday 5 March 2024, 7.00pm, webcam

Tuesday 2 April 2024, 7.00pm, webcam

Tuesday 7 May 2024, 7.00pm, webcam

Tuesday 4 June 2024, **AGM** followed by an ordinary meeting, 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 this 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 9.00pm.

Signed ……………………………..

Signed ……………………………..

Date ……………………………….

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

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This set of minutes were first published (in draft form) at 4.00pm on Thursday 15 June 2023.