

# Kiltarlity Community Council Minutes.

**Date:** 17<sup>th</sup> August 2023.

**Time:** 1930hrs.

**Location:**

Kiltarlity Community Centre –  
Main Hall.

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|---------------------------|--|-------------------------|---|
| <b>Meeting called by:</b> | Arranged Meeting   | <b>Type of meeting:</b> | Community information and feedback. SSEN Focus.                     |
| <b>Chairman:</b>          | Norman Grant.<br>Mairi Davidson. ( <b>Vice Chair</b> )   | <b>Minuted:</b>         | Donnie Smith – <b>Secretary.</b><br><b>CLG/SSEN 2<sup>nd</sup>.</b> |
| <b>Attendees:</b>         | Bill Fraser - <b>CLG/SSEN Lead.</b><br>Linda Bell - <b>Treasurer</b><br>Susan Ogstan – <b>Events Coordinator.</b><br>Iain MacilleChiar. – <b>Committee Member.</b><br><br>Emma Knox – <b>Cllr.</b><br>Chris Balance – <b>Cllr.</b><br><br><b>50+</b> Members of the Community. |                         |   |
| <b>Please read:</b>       | Minutes from the previous agenda.  |                         |   |
| <b>Please bring:</b>      | Minutes provided for this agenda.  |                         |   |

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## *Minutes*

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- Agenda item:**
- 1 Welcome & Apologies & Co-opt new Secretary.
  2. Matters arising from previous minutes.
  3. Treasurer's Report.
  4. Police Report.
  5. Correspondence.
  6. Bus Service.
  7. SSE.
  8. Belladrum aftermath This will be the Next meeting.
  9. Tomnacross Primary School.
  10. AOB.
  11. Date and location of next meeting.

**Norman Grant:** opened the meeting with **Item 1.** Welcome & Apologies & Co-opt new Secretary.

**Proposed** by Norman Grant. **2<sup>nd</sup>** by Mairi Davidson. **3<sup>rd</sup>** by Linda Bell. Donnie Smith officially opted in as KCC Secretary.

**Apologies:** David Fraser – Cllr. (Covid)

**Item 7. Bill Fraser:** presentation about SSEN plans in the Community:

Self Introduction: As community liaison Representative since the Beaully Buzz started, acting as the bridge between information provided by SSEN and the Local Community. Currently, there are 3 Major plans announced by SSEN that are to have a major and detrimental effect on Kiltarlity. The connection from Spittal to Beaully, which tonight's meeting is centred upon. A 2<sup>nd</sup> connection from Beaully to the Eastern side of Peterhead. 3<sup>rd</sup> link is to be undergrounded between Dundonnell to Beaully. Attention was drawn to the similar links proposed to a variety of different parts of the country.

The Spittal to Loch Buidhe - Beaully proposal was tabled by SSEN at the beginning of March '23. There was a lot of

reaction to it. Bill has, since that route was announced, attempted to convey the reaction expressed by members of the local community, back to SSEN. However in the last few months, there has been a shift in attitude with a rather unpleasant transition as information reported back to SSEN has been distorted by them, moving towards a point where SSEN is questioning the validity of Bill's statements as accurate or not. This is the reason for tonight's gathering and vote. Bill appreciates the turnout for the community participation, as it's important to officially demonstrate a democratic voice in Kiltarlity that has been checked logically and whatever the result of tonight's recorded opinion, this information will again be taken forward. We decided not to discuss this before voting – there is a very real risk that Bill will be accused of manipulating the situation to sway the outcome of the vote. So, tonight we are looking for your opinion on the specific Beauly to Spittal proposal and will draw your attention and offer you the official SSEN booklet to peruse, should you require additional information. We'd then like to structure feedback for SSEN about this particular proposal.

It's acknowledged and Bill appreciated the other proposals such as the Beauly to Peterhead line will have similar ramifications. These proposals are being presented 'piecemeal', one at a time, not collectively. We don't currently possess the depth of information we have on the Beauly – Peterhead line, but when the information is made available, it may be appropriate to have a similar discussion.

There are 2 questions we would like answers to:

**1. Given the Beauly -Spittal proposal tabled on the 5<sup>th</sup> March, 2023. Do you find this unacceptable?**

Please provide a show of hands.

All present showed hands except the two councillors. A unanimous result.

**2. Do you support the new Substation location at Fanellan?**

Unanimous in the non-support of this location.

Bill further intimated an SSEN Agenda item later – but we're interested if anyone has any comments they would like to express. At this time:

**Community member 1 asked:**

Do you know if the proposed line upgrade was to be used as a backup as the information put over at the Kilmorack Community presentation stated that this was to be a backup to the subsea route? If it is a secondary backup, why can't they simply place a secondary line underwater as a redundancy measure?

**Bill Fraser:** confirmed the question as the questioning of the overhead route from Spittal is a backup to the subsea link. He doesn't know what SSEN's strategy is, as they have not been forthcoming with that information, but from a personal Engineering perspective, he can see the benefit of having two alternative routes as a redundancy. From a reliability perspective, it makes some sense to have two lines against one.

Bills' personal belief is that it appears very much one of the main reasons for the promotion of an overhead line between Spittal and Beauly is because a sister organisation from SSEN called SSEN Renewables has been busy with applications for onshore wind farms. SSEN has a statutory duty to provide a connection to a generator from a wind farm and it does seem that there is a mutual benefit from SSEN Networks and SSEN Renewables to having the overhead line route.

We have been proposing that its impact would be lessened by the request to underground a fair proportion of the line, but one of the arguments against undergrounding these lines, which has been tabled by SSEN is that it makes it substantially harder to connect into it from an Ad Hoc wind farm addition that may manifest. If you look at what is being requested, whilst factoring in the reasons why that might be, it does appear that the main factor in the selection of this transmission system is that it opens the potential for SSEN, along with its sister network of companies to connect and grow the network in the not too distant future. This is a personal observation.

**Community member 1** looked for further clarification on the redundancy line not being sited underwater.

**Bill Fraser** responded: A secondary limitation is the power constraints an underwater cable is capable of transferring, being accomplished with a transition to DC before underwater transfer, then a conversion station reverting back to AC on land.

**Community member 2:** Would the community council be willing to engage with the large landowners as independent communications have not yielded many results? She had looked for feedback from Lovat Estates after establishing 4 sites had been earmarked for development with Fanellan being the most favorable.

**Bill Fraser** responded: It's not something he could provide an opinion on – but if it's something that is seen as moving opposition in a positive direction, then it should be tabled for further examination, as useful and helpful, but it's very difficult to be specific about any particular course of action.

The main problem as perceived by Bill, falls with the Scottish Government. He was shocked to learn a few weeks ago that an SNP politician in Westminster has been actively agitating on behalf of SSEN, because at present under Scottish Law, on a development such as this, if the local Authority like Highland Council pushes back and refuses planning permission there is then the Automatic triggering of a PLI. (Public Local Inquiry) This is the one democratic tool we have as citizens to question and challenge and have an opportunity to put our concerns to a committee on a planning

issue. This public lobbying from an SNP politician who happens to be the energy spokesperson is available to read by Humza Yousaf, and he has acknowledged he is making a lobbying action as a consequence of discussion and consultation with SSEN.

Bill would further ask, where the balancing discussion with communities and other affected people is, and it does not appear there is any. This is a massive problem we will look to find a method to overcome which could be perceived as an unholy alliance, where a lot of the comments are from people who quite obviously don't have a thorough understanding of the issues that are being promoted. This is a worrying situation, but what's grounds for optimism is the fact that an increasing number of knowledgeable individuals who have relevant experience in the power industry, who understand physics and energy, dynamics and such like, are starting to become more vocal on Social media platforms, forums etc and there are a lot of developing ideas from green fundamentalists like the net-zero lobby who are pushing very hard to have recognised how impractical current concepts and ideas are in benefitting both the community and planet.

**At this point**, a member of the community took an opportunity to address the meeting, not operating through the chair which created an issue with unclear speech, I will attempt to summarise. (DS)

**Community member 3. Elaine Hodgson:** Communities before Power Companies (CB4PC) have connected with 50 landowners to open negotiations with SSEN.

SSEN have been lobbying the Scottish Government and Westminster. Kate Forbes an SNP representative had approached the Scottish Government and Westminster to push through plans that mean that local councils would not have the right to PLIs and that she feels that's not democratic. This was being pushed through as quickly as possible without the involvement of local communities. Alan Brown MP stood up and questioned this at Westminster and also stated that this is a technique that they have to unveil the true intention behind community plans. Although this member couldn't express an opinion on this, she intimated that this was from a conversation between herself and h4im.

Communities before power companies have enlisted the help of a knowledgeable advisor who has contacted SSEN, providing them with documents with some clear requests for information. SSEN has refused to provide this information. Offgen was then involved, but declared a position of neutrality, indicating these answers had to be provided by SSEN, which they further refused. The Scottish government are reluctant to help and Westminster seems happy to see Scotland trashed by processing these plans before community liaison is sounded out or given the opportunity to oppose the actions.

**Norman Grant** again opened the floor for further discussions.

**Another community member** voiced their request for KCC to communicate with Lord Lovat.

**Norman Grant** agreed that we could field relevant communications to the estate.

**Donnie Smith** offered an email address for the community members to raise their concerns which the CC would consider formalising in a correspondence to Lovat Estates.

**Norman Grant** opened the floor again, stating we would continue discussions about SSE as we had tabled further information in the Agenda. **Discussion 7, continued.**

**Bill Fraser** took the floor to raise community awareness of developments since the previous open meeting. In terms of dialogue – or lack of dialogue – with SSEN, it's an ongoing saga and it's started to get aggressive and nasty to suit their narrative. Their formal position remains that they have not decided on a route and that they are taking on board all the information provided to them for feedback. Bill is not and has not been made aware of any changes to the proposals tabled on the 5<sup>th</sup> of March 23 by SSEN as a consequence of any of the feedback provided. He has not been made aware of any alternative routes being put forward, other than those tabled on the 5<sup>th</sup> of March. The fact that they are continuing to progress routes and decisions taken from the 5<sup>th</sup> March meeting suggests there is no serious consideration of adopting any change or deviation from to original proposals.

They are under the impression that they have the autonomy to do as they please. Offgem is supposed to work on behalf of the consumer, ensuring electricity prices are fair and that we don't get overcharged. It's the point of fact that Offgem is working in very close proximity with the power industries, with very common objectives.

The situation about the removal of an automatic triggering of a PLI is indicative of how bad the situation is, as until politicians start to understand the problems of the systems that they are proposing to build or fully appreciate the impact on the local communities, we are unlikely to be heard as a source of resistance, regardless of the major effect it will have on us.

John McGrath who wrote 'The Cheviot, the Stag and the Black, Black Oil' about the exploitation of Scotland over the centuries, about those who made a big profit over many who suffered in consequence by the few in positions of power, could be in line for writing a sequel about big big wind! The experts who calculate power requirements against growing economics and understand energy supplies point out that the wind may not blow and the sun may not shine. People expect power when it's required. These growth modifications seem to have been plotted against ideal not adverse weather conditions, so power requirements that ore outwith demands become a very expensive balancing act. So if it's not going to be fossil fuel, we need to consider a viable alternative. So if the money proposed for these projects were spent on viable alternatives, only a fraction of this infrastructure would be required to back up alternative power sources just because the wind is not blowing or the sun is hidden behind clouds and storage capacity is depleted.

It doesn't stack up – folk making these decisions don't seem to understand these fundamentals. If the auto triggering of a PLI is removed, this will simply be pushed through by politicians and on that tact, we have had some serious and

promising discussions with local MSPs. The issue they have is although Bill senses that they are on the side, with community disruption and the blight on the Scottish landscape, the tide against which they have to swim in Holyrood is overwhelming. It's difficult to see how they are going to get the message started. Bills believe that this will eventually happen, but it won't come without community involvement and keeping vigilant against misinformation and a dilution of narrative to suit the ends of SSEN. As such, Bill welcomes what CB4PC is doing, as they are doing a great job of spreading awareness of the proposals currently brought into the public eye, as the more folk who have visibility on what is happening, the more the politicians will feel obliged to work for what's right for their constituents. It's difficult to be more optimistic, but this is an honest account of being involved for several months and still trying to establish where the pivot points are to constructive focus for change. Bill's conclusions are that we have to start getting recognition from the politicians in Holyrood, understand why politicians in Westminster are trying to do away with our right to a PLI, and essentially seek clarity why it is so difficult to understand from a clear perspective as why this is all happening just now.

It is scandalous that an evolved Government in our country is placing the interests of a commercial organisation over and above the land and the people that it was elected to represent.

**Community member 3. Elaine Hodgson** retook the floor for additional comment: A few months ago Elaine attended a cross-party round table meeting in Holyrood where a just transition for rural communities was discussed. After a vote of no confidence was taken the chamber emptied leaving a very poor x-section of government in attendance. There was an acknowledgement from this meeting that the rural communities were shouldering a lot of heavy infrastructure and upset owing to major developments, but they wanted to offer some money to balance this out. The lack of community support from all the major political parties was very poor. There is a serious lack of general awareness as to the effect this will have locally and throughout the Highlands and the scope and size of these developments are generally unknown. She made an impassioned call to lobby politicians and spread awareness.

**Community member 4:** Why is there work starting at Fanellan Farm when the final planning stages have not been pushed through?

**Norman Grant:** At the moment, they may be doing a site assessment. **Mairi Davidson** has only been made aware of the sighting of the portacabins last night. No one is providing any information openly. Sorry we don't have the answer to these questions right now, but we will ask.

**Community Member 6:** Can I ask Bill about the cooperation between community councils:

**Bill Fraser:** Strathpeffer has been quite active in terms of forming a pressure group to try and protect their interests there. Although understandable that each community is concerned with its interests, there is the potential benefit of working together. Strathpeffer has been very proactive and has gotten in touch with all community councils between Spittal and Beaully (24 of them) 21 of these CCs have signed up to work together if there is a particular benefit derived from doing so. At present, there are no tabled actions, except a readiness to act together when the time is right. This is a fantastic idea in terms of increasing the ability to have our voice heard.

Bill has made some preliminary investigations into the overhead corridors – like one from near Aberdeen to near Dundee, that's causing a huge amount of upset through its transit path. Bill has spoken to them at length and it becomes evident that interests are different as local opinion is more amenable to undergrounding cable runs, whereas the transit paths in question being underground, deprive their communities of a valuable and sizable area of farmable land. So they are not as favourably disposed to undergrounding as we are here. So it's important to recognise that different communities have different needs and to not be played against each other as opinions are expressed.

**Community Member 7:** What is the need for all this?:

**Bill Fraser:** CB4PC has requested information, which has not been provided, and it also seems that SSEN is being obstructive in not providing us with the required information. At one of the meetings we have had with Kate Forbes, she has been very constructive, and she has charged SSEN with asking why there has been no response to some of these long and unanswered questions. We have worked in Cooperation with CP4BC to ensure that some of the questions that have been left unanswered, have also not been missed out, and the 4 Local CCs have submitted specific questions to SSEN, delivered 3 weeks before the next proposed Community Liaison Group meeting that need to be addressed and attended by members of SSEN who are competent and authorised to answer these questions. At this point, it remains to be seen if they will answer these questions as to date, they are quite happy to simply ignore these requests.

**Audience Member 7:** Why is it so complicated that SSEN cannot simply tell us the need for these massive developments:

**Bill Fraser:** No one is willing to officially explain this aspect, but all the wind farms dumped in the North of Scotland are essentially being used to export power to England. There is no need locally to have these lines. The need is a national UK-wide perception of need. This is the question we are looking for clarity on at the moment, and Bill has asked very specific questions pertaining to trunk routes, energy capacity, and future proposals for 2030. 2030 – 2050. Bill has been fighting wind farms for many years but has always met resistance. Now that we have all that generated capacity in the North of Scotland, it's simply a case that they want the power where it's needed most, which is the South of England. We are seeking a deep solution to a large problem, and not be labelled as agitators, which may be the route to surface solutions that leave us with major deeper issues to combat in future years. Bill thinks we haven't been told, as it's not suitable to tell us.

**Community Member 8:** made a statement that it is neither in Rural, Community or Scottish benefit to have this work undertaken in Scotland. She feels that it would be beneficial to apply significantly more pressure to the Highland council as ultimately they are in charge of the allocation of planning. She encouraged an influx of simultaneous communication to the HC members from all those expressing concern. SSEN don't care about us or our interests, it's up to us to pressurise and voice our concerns to the people who have been democratically elected to represent us. Both MSPs and Councillors.

**Bill Fraser:** This is a massive problem. Bill wouldn't have believed the situation a year ago that he's finding out about today. He thinks it is scandalous that a government body has more investment in the commercial interests of SSEN than the long-term prospects of Scotland. You have very accurately summed up the situation, which is exploitation.

**Community Member 9:** Expressed an opinion that writing to the estate will have minimal impact as these decisions on the estate are without the persuasion of the general public from the surrounding area or indeed renting within its catchment.

**Community Councillor Emma Knox:** Made the audience aware that there is dialogue open, that she's unable to comment, but is very much assuring that all avenues are being thoroughly investigated.

**Community Member 9:** Expressed concern that the public voice was being muffled.

**Councillor Dallas:** Provided assurances that there was awareness at HC and MSP levels and that action will be taken to ensure the public voice is heard.

**Norman** opened the floor for final comments:

**Bill Fraser:** The big issue is politicians, who have the final say, and politicians seem to be very vague over what they choose to say are they are in deep collusion with SSEN.

**Norman** opened the floor to move on, and many attendees left to leave a core to discuss smaller community issues.

**Item 2:** Matters arising from Previous Minutes.

**Item 4.** Police vandalism has not been reported back. No reports were delivered this or last year.

**Mairi Davidson** – Any signage for Otters?

**Councillor Knox:** – Been in touch for Otter signs with Transport Scotland.

**Item 3. Linda Bell:** Treasurer report.

- Total £3602.43.
- Community Council funds. £1118.62.
- Pensioner funds £406.48 and Street Lights.
- Ron MacLean's Book. £1058.11.
- Community Newsletter: £1019.22.

**Item 5.** Correspondence:

**Norman Grant:**

All correspondence has been fwd to CC members, as received.

**Item 6.** Bus service:

**Susan Ogstan.** Wanted to keep it current on the agenda, complaints and issues need to be reported and recorded.

**Item 8:** Belladrum.

**Susan Ogstan.** Intimated that representatives from Belladrum have been invited, but further discussions are required to collate complaints and suggestions, positive and negative prior to discussions, potentially on Oct '23 as they are due to have meetings with the Police, Traffic Management, Highland Council to prevent recurrence of this year's issues, which had a major detrimental effect on Care in the Community, transition to work, Local Business etc. Park and Ride from Black Isle Ground. Information gathering prior to presentation.

**Mairi Davidson:** To Emma Knox – How did Belladrum get an allocation of a further 10000 tickets at short notice? No Warning, No Correspondence. Where's the ceiling on ticket sales and how are they established? Local Businesses were affected.

**Cllr Emma Knox:** Not Sure – Exactly the same traffic Management System as last year. This will be explored.

**Community Member 10:** Intimated that Police Traffic control had also been reduced. Cited an example of the previous year having x4 motorbikes, reduced to x2 this year. Questions should be asked and specifics sought. Another community member cited that there was no elaboration on the road speed and direction restrictions.

**Cllr Chris Balance:** – Safety Advisory Group, including Police, fire Ambulance, licencing, and City Management. This Chaired group was briefed, but he'll investigate why it has gotten bigger yearly. Encourage more to travel by bus rather than car – although a Car is a preferable option as material transit is more practical. Incentives could be put in place. Environmental health also has issues with toilets v's public capacity.

**Item 9.** Tomnacross Primary School.

**Susan Ogstan:** The head teacher has returned after a period of sickness. Discussions are ongoing about the school and the community coming together a little more often, looking to get kids involved in SSEN local developments. The headteacher is very proactive about concerns in the community.

**Item 10.** AOB.

**Community member 11:** Received a number of complaints about the state of the Glebe estate. Emailed Tim Stot – the principal planner, took pictures and sent images of issues. 2/3rds of the land should have been handed over to the Glebe residents and hasn't yet and the other 1/3<sup>rd</sup> has got to be looked after by the developer, who has apparently done nothing with it. Allegedly – one part is to be referred to as a 'Wild Meddow', which sounds like an excuse to simply leave it with minimal intervention. Where the paths run is meant to be cut grass, but this has not yet been handed over to the residents. We would appreciate an understanding of the legalities to take ownership of these outstanding issues. She has a complaint form that doesn't seem too complicated to fill out and submit.

**Community Member 12:** Voiced his concern over the condition of the tree in front of the Post Office. Branches are broken and precariously bowed to ground level. The grass-cutting team are unwilling to enter these branches for Health and Safety concerns. Children are attracted to climbing on these too – which is also dangerous. The grass-cutting team have reported it, but still nothing has been done about it.

**Mairi Davidson: To Cllr Emma Knox** – Can you organise a tree surgeon to see to this it's one of the Oldest Oak in the community and attend to the cherry trees at the top of Croft Road, which are obstructing the walkways? **Linda Bell** points out that Dorothy has reported this on several occasions. Could we also place a request for Foxhole Junction coming onto Main Road – sightlines are very poor. Mirrors would be a fantastic addition before there is an accident.

**Item 11.** Date and location of next meeting.

Committee members Community Council Meeting: **Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> September, 2023. 1930hrs.**

**Close of Meeting. 2120hrs.**