

**STRATHERRICK & FOYERS COMMUNITY COUNCIL
MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 23rd MARCH 2010
AT THE FOYERS PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Members present:

Mr M. Houston (Chairman)
Mrs K. Grant (Treasurer)
Mr K. Fraser
Mr A. Sutherland

Mrs E. Merther (Secretary)
Mr M. Bateman
Mr A. Nicol

Also present:

Police Constable A. Mathieson
Mr D. Polson, Highland Council Planning Department
Ms H. Mackie, Albyn Housing; Mr R. MacRae, HSCHT;
Mr M. Williams, HRI Architects

Apologies received:

Mr P. Higham
Mr A. MacPherson
Councillor D. Hendry

Mrs L. MacGregor
Councillor M. Davidson

1. Adoption of Minutes

Minutes of the meeting held on 23rd February 2010 were adopted as a true record.

Proposed: Mrs K. Grant Seconded: Mr K. Fraser

2. Mr David Polson, Planning Department

Mr Polson had kindly agreed to provide the CC with information in response to several enquiries.

Rural planning: He explained that overall this is governed by the Highland Structure Plan and Local Plans. The tendency is to favour development within areas with existing settlement, taking advantage of existing facilities and services. This applies to rural development areas and 'fragile' communities, where the tendency is for a permissive development policy. The whole of our area comes under this policy. The CC had enquired specifically whether there was an overall plan for the Whitebridge area. Mr Polson said that Planning was aware of a large number of applications in this area, and they used the landscape assessment produced by Scottish Natural Heritage as a guide when considering applications. This assessment categorises different types of landscape, and offers guidance on siting appropriate development. It is, however, an advisory document, and they are not bound by it. Within Planning they now take a team approach to decisions, to try to ensure consistency and continuity.

Around Inverness itself there is an area (extending almost to Dores on our side) where development is discouraged.

Land access: Mr Polson explained the rights of access as they apply to Planning Department officials. The CC will seek further information on the broader position from the HC Access Officer.

CC involvement in the planning process: Mr Polson's initial response to this enquiry was felt to have discouraged CC involvement. However, he said that this had not been his intention. Guidance now encourages CC input where large local schemes are proposed, but beyond this it is up to each CC to decide how much involvement is appropriate in its own situation.

Creation of hill tracks without planning permission: The CC felt that unsightly tracks are being created across the hills under the 'umbrella' of agricultural development, which

does not require planning permission. Mr Polson advised that the legislation originally required a prior notification, but this had been removed before it was finalised. Moves are now afoot to change the current uncontrolled situation. However, even for agricultural development, there is currently a requirement for an environmental impact assessment to be carried out for tracks of 1 km. or more in length.

Notification to CCs of proposals for green energy schemes: The CC had expressed concern that delays in notifying communities of these proposals had prevented them being more involved - for example purchasing a share in a wind turbine. If all agreements have been finalised before communities know of a scheme, it is too late to request changes. Mr Polson advised that there is now a web site, updated monthly, which gives details of proposed schemes. However, such proposals will not be available on the web site until developers have given permission.

The Chairman thanked Mr Polson for attending our meeting, and for the valuable information he had given.

3. Gorthleck Affordable Housing Scheme

Representatives of Albyn Housing, the Highlands Small Communities Housing Trust, and the Architects presented an update on proposals for the scheme. The likely layout of housing, and drawings of some proposed house types were presented. There are ten plots designated for Albyn houses, to include various sizes of property and some amenity housing. There are a further eight serviced plots, provided by HSCHT. There is also a proposal to include some allotments around the perimeter of the site, which have proved very popular in other areas. According to demand, these would not necessarily be restricted to residents of the scheme.

The Albyn representative informed us that unfortunately their funding has been cut, which will mean a further delay in building, probably until next year. The CC agreed that it would use whatever pressure it can to try to speed things up.

HSCHT may be able to go ahead with their plots sooner. With the current mortgage difficulties they are exploring various options that may allow them to provide housing more quickly.

The Chairman thanked all three representatives for their most interesting presentation.

4. Matters Arising from Previous Minutes

(a) Wade's Bridge at Whitebridge

Mr Bateman reported that it is intended to carry out temporary repairs this summer, and they hope to seek funding later in the year for more major work.

(b) Fraser Monument & Burial Ground at Foyers

The Secretary reported that grants have now been received to cover the cost of the necessary survey, report, and estimate for the Monument. The Ward Discretionary Budget has given £150, the Community Trust £212, and the CC will contribute the balance of £50. She will instruct Laing Traditional Masonry to go ahead with the report.

(c) Right of Way through Knockie Estate

Mr Sutherland had been with Mr Stewart Eastaugh (Access Officer) to look at the proposed diversion. They both felt there are significant problems with the proposed route, and will go back to the property owners for further discussion.

5. Correspondence

Highland Council Correspondence:

Enquiry - bilingual path signs

Two circulars regarding digital TV switchover (circulated)

Other Correspondence & Circulars Received

Notice of Inverness Area CC Forum 19.04.10 (circulated)

Scottish Natural Heritage - Loch Ruthven SSSI Citation

South Loch Ness Heritage Group - Public Meeting 30.03.10 (circulated)

6. Treasurer's Report

Balances remain unchanged as follows:

Project A/c - £5663.58

Ordinary A/c - £786.70 (Including £150 grant for Fraser Monument and £11.73 held for Mr J. Campbell, Senior Citizens' Fund. A further cheque for £212 grant for the Fraser Monument was passed to the Treasurer to be paid in to this A/c.)

7. Planning Matters

New applications:

Erection of signs at Rohan, Gorthleck.

New Auxiliary Fire Station, Gorthleck - detailed plans

There were no objections.

8. Fire Brigade Report

Mr Kirkland was not present but no new matters had been reported.

9. Policing Matters

It was reported at our January meeting that a theft of diesel oil had taken place. Constable Mathieson was able to report that this was now found to be incorrect, as the tank in question had not been filled.

10. Roads and Signage

(a) Outstanding Matters

The Secretary asked members to email to her details of any specific road items they wished passed on to Mr Richard Evans, following his attendance at our February meeting.

The Secretary reported that she met with Mr Neil Young of the Transport Section, and he had agreed that a new bus shelter will be provided for the stop adjacent to Riverside in Lower Foyers.

(b) Bridge in Lower Foyers

There is still no word of the new capital programme.

(c) Other Roads Items

TEC Services have provided warning signs for pedestrians on the road, but Mr Nicol is still concerned that there is no warning sign for children playing on the road. Further enquiries will be made.

Mr Nicol again raised the question of completion of the pavement from Glenlia to the School road in Foyers. He did not know whether the Glenlia Residents' Association had made a formal application for funding from the Safer Routes to School fund. Further enquiries will be made.

Mrs Grant reported that following the recent severe weather there is a deep, water filled ditch by the road in front of Lynemhor Lodge in Gorthleck. This is a considerable danger to children walking to and from school. The Secretary will contact TEC Services.

11. Water and Sewerage

There was nothing new to report.

12. Community Project - Gorthleck

The Chairman reported that progress is being made.

13. Renewable Energy and Community Benefit

Mr Sutherland reported that further negotiations are to be carried out regarding community benefit from the Dunmaglass scheme.

He also reported that the first phase of the energy saving measures agreed for the 51 houses assessed is due to start shortly.

14. Any Other Competent Business

(a) Mrs Grant had received a complaint about sewage leaking from behind the Hall in Gorthleck. Enquiries will be made.

(b) Mr John Rule attended the meeting to complain that he had not received a response to his earlier letter, and presented a further letter. An acknowledgment had been sent, and the Chairman informed Mr Rule that the CC is awaiting information in response to enquiries it has made relevant to his first letter. A full response will be sent when the information is received.

Mr Rule also had a complaint about a proposed forestry development at Ardochy, Whitebridge, and wished to know what involvement the CC had with this. He was informed that these schemes do not go through the usual planning process as far as the CC is concerned, and that we are not necessarily informed of them.

(c) Mr Nicol reported that a successful trial of equipment to accelerate broadband speed has taken place in Culloden and Dingwall. He will enquire when this is likely to be made more widely available, as broadband speeds for many households in this area are very poor indeed.

(d) The Secretary has received a letter from Mr John Forsyth regarding fire damage to a large noble fir tree on the Loch shore adjacent to the river walk in Lower Foyers. He requested that the CC pass his concerns on to the Hydro, who own the land, to see if measures can be taken to protect the tree. He had prepared a draft letter detailing his concerns. It was agreed to contact the Hydro with his concerns to see if some action can be taken.

15. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be on Tuesday 27th April 2010 at the Stratherrick Hall.

The meeting was closed at 9.50 p.m.