

STRATHERRICK & FOYERS COMMUNITY COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD 29th AUGUST 2023

AT THE WILDSIDE CENTRE, WHITEBRIDGE

WITH OPTION OF VIDEO LINK

1. Present

Patrick Haston (PH), Mark Hindley (MH), Simon Hargreaves (SH), Craig Lightbody (CL) and Chris Joyce (CJ)

Public attending

Cllr Chris Balance, Catriona Fraser, Tony Foster, Peter Faye and Sharon Ferguson (Admin)

Apologies

Gill Gray & Cllr David Fraser

2. Adoption of minutes – 27th June 2023

Minutes of the CC meeting on 27/06/2023 were adopted as a true record of the meeting
Proposed by CJ, seconded by MH

3. Matters arising

None

4. Micro Grant Applications

None received

5. Reports

Treasurer

Main account - £16,885.27 (as of end of July as that is the most recent bank statement)

This includes a grant of £3,906 from the Stronelaig panel, for phase 2 works at the toilets and £452 from SFCT which was repayment of some invoices for the toilet build that SFCC paid for. Both payments came in this month.

Project/Micro grant account - £1,127.82

Admin asked at the bank about opening another account purely for the toilet income and expenditure and they have stated this can be done online by the signatories. Also enquired about getting a paying in card to allow us to use the Post Office to pay in cash donations from the toilets and this is possible too. This will be required as there is going to be a change with pay ins with the Post Office on the 9th of Sep which will mean we will require a card to do this.

Admin asked again to get viewing only access to the bank accounts as it will make running the accounts a lot easier.

Fire Report

No report received

Boleskine Community Care

BCC is happy to announce that Olivia Grant started her role as Community Service Coordinator on the 1st August. She has already started 2 new services at the Hub since then; the Nail Technician has proved to be very popular; we have two fully booked days at the end of the week and the Hearing Aid Clinic was requested at our AGM so we are glad to provide this within the community. Olivia has attended Befriending training with the Highland Hospice and has met with the Three Glens Befriending Service. It is one of her main objectives to get our Befriending Service up and running again.

Our weekly activities are also very popular, especially to Moovin About which has had a footfall of 216 since January.

The NHS will be using the Hub to carry out their Winter Vaccination Programme. The next date is the 1st of December for flu and Covid.

Community Council- Update from BCC

Finance & Fundraising - BCC thanks the Community Council for hearing the update, given at your last meeting, in regard to the funding and 'Hub' lease issues presently encountered with SFCT and for your very positive verbal support. Regrettably progress, if any, is slow.

In the 2 months since your last meeting there are a few points to report regarding funding.

1. BCC gained a grant from the Royal Countryside Fund (RCF) for 2 years to fund the salary of our Community Services Co-ordinator (CSC). Our announcement of this had to be held as the funder wished to link this to their organisational name change from The Princes Countryside Fund. The grant has enabled BCC to engage our CSC from the 1st August and we already see the benefits this position is giving. The RCF conditions of grant are, as one would expect from a funder, purely related to the usage of granted moneys and the outcome benefits that can be gained. Gaining this grant means that BCC is not reliant on the grant offered by SFCT that contained conditions that were considered to be highly intrusive to BCC's working and partnership.
2. After responses to BCC email questions, BCC has submitted (21st August) the Stage 2 Grant Application to SFCT for Core Operational Funding (including donation to the Highland Hospice towards the employment of the BCC/HH Care-at-Home Co-ordinator and a BCC Cleaner) and for funding towards the employment of a Community Engagement Co-ordinator to work alongside the CSC as mentioned above – these two being seen by BCC as important. The total of this application is approx. £12,000 less than funds granted by SFCT to BCC in the past few years. SFCT have confirmed that they would not fund the position of Marketing & Fundraising Co-ordinator and so BCC have been seeking alternative funding.
3. BCC is however still running on our own unrestricted funds to meet our core funding costs from the end of March 2023. Despite agreed cuts to expenditure this obviously damages our funds though, as yet, we have not had to utilise our 'reserve funding' – but we are close. Cuts in spending have not affected the 'Care-at-Home' service or other services or social activities as these are self-funding. For future years BCC will also have to increase the 'reserve funding' but will have to have staff, trustees and volunteers working well to do so.

The land lease on the Hub ran out at the end of March - no progress on this has been formally reported to BCC since your last meeting.

Community Relationships

The South Loch Ness News is a volunteer lead initiative that has been circulated monthly since last October. This is well received by our membership and as a low cost but interesting publication BCC as a page within this magazine as well as the calendar of events.

BCC had requested help from the Highland Third Sector Interface (HTSI) with regards to the differences between BCC and SFCT – HTSI have interviewed various bodies within the community and have collated initial reports. These now bear some consideration and further discussions – BCC believes that there is still quite some way to go here.

Stratherrick and Foyers Community Trust

- The Chairs of CC and SFCT have approached SSE for a discussion on wind farm investment, but they say they are not in a position to discuss this. We will pursue this.
- Following the Community Action Plan and work by parents/carers and staff at SFCT, the Care and Learning Alliance (CALA) have been asked to look at facilitating after school childcare at Stratherrick and Foyers Primary School, with initial support from the Trust, to help support and encourage families to the area. This initial process to look at the suitability of the building and get approval from the care inspectorate will take at least 6 months.
- New lighting has been installed at Wildside to benefit the groups there who requested it.
- The land at Wildside has been purchased for housing / development if required. We have informed local residents we now own the land.
- The Park at Wildside has been given planning and £20,000 has been raised towards its development.
- Errogie Phase 1 wind and watertight (and protection of bats) has been completed and an application is in to planning for Phase 2. We have a funded project with Accelerate to review the Business Plan for Phase 2 and a funding bid to strengthen that.
- The Slipway at Foyers was awarded planning, the QS has arranged the tenders and will work on a transport plan.
- The land at Inverfarigaig was purchased for the local residents who will agree a lease from the Trust.
- We have started the process of a community asset transfer from Forestry for the Forest School at Inverfarigaig, which will impact budgets in 2024/25.
- We are arranging a new lease with SSE of the land on which the Trust owned Hub sits. This will be leased rent free to BCC and includes a lease for the extra car parking requested by BCC. This is taking a little more time than we would like but we hope to have it completed soon.
- We were given Planning In Principle for the Riverside Field Project and set up the Community Liaison Group. The residents recently met to discuss and agree the landscaping as part of Phase 1 (a second meeting will happen soon) and we have initiated work to meet planning conditions.
- The Pathways Group will be doing a presentation at the next Board to talk to us about progress.
- At present the Housing Group are seeing what the demand is for the homes at Inverfarigaig is like before making any further decisions.
- This winter we will work with the Knockie Trust to give out £18500 of financial support to individuals for fuel and food. This will be the final year of this support. The Trust has requested a deadline for application will be made this year, rather than first come/first served, and all will be reviewed at the same time.

By 21st August we have received grants applications from Stratherrick Primary Parent Council, the Stratherrick Hall and the Stage 2 application from BCC (which will be reviewed by three Board assessors and SSE) with recommendations to the Board by 4th October for a decision

MH asked Tony why in the BCC's report it states that no progress has been reported about the lease but in the trust report it states that the new lease is being arranged; Tony stated he had spoken with BCC's chair about it and will discuss again so they are kept up to date.

MH raised that in recent SFCT minutes it states that board meetings are to be reduced to bi-monthly and asked what the rationale for this was; Tony said this suggestion had come from the Accelerate programme, who the Trust have had help with on policies but just something the board are considering. MH was concerned that if this was adopted, it would be up to 4 months between board minutes being shared. Tony suggested they could do interim minutes. CL asked if interim minutes could be used currently; Tony will take this back to the board and Accelerate for their thoughts.

CL asked Tony about the Trust becoming a charity; this is something they are taking advice on and would only do so if it was beneficial for the community and the funds.

Tony invited the CC to a community event on Sat 23rd Sep in the Gorthleck hall, 11am – 2pm.

Riverside field

The group met last Tuesday to discuss the landscaping ideas, but no plans were available. Catriona Fraser clarified that the plans are going to the residents then back to the liaison group to discuss

6. Toilets

Donations for the use of the toilets are now coming in as we have a cash donation box in place, and we also have an account with GiveTap. This gives us a QR code that visitors can scan, and it takes them to a donation page. The QR code is in every toilet and outside. This is the best option at the moment but as not all mobile phones services can get a Wi-Fi connection at the site, this will continue to be a problem. Work is progressing to get the payment system in for the waste disposal point and once that is in, the card machine there will allow visitors to tap and give a set donation. Nothing is free though and the card machine for the waste point will cost £10 per month and GiveTap take 20p per donation. Visit Scotland have been asked to see if there is any better solution but from talking to many different areas, there is nothing better available.

Costs have now been received for the outdoor tap and that will be in place soon.

There had been an issue with toilet seats coming loose; the contractors Compass agreed that the original ones fitted weren't heavy duty enough and they have now replaced them with better ones. HC are being chased for the signs for the waste disposal point as they are not up yet.

Peter Leyden the toilet attendant is doing a brilliant job and he is also great at reporting issues around the Falls.

HC still not been in touch regarding the car park now the building is complete – some improvements are required, and we now have the new issues that the parking scheme are causing. Written plan for collecting and banking cash donations to be written.

7. Planning

23/03515/FUL | Erection of summer house | Tigh-An-Aodan Erroglie Inverness IV2 6UH – *No comment*

23/03397/PNO | Formation of forest track | Land 385M SW Of Torcastle Torness Inverness – *No comment*

23/03694/PNO | Peatland Restoration | 40KM South West of Inverness, 11.5KM East of Fort Augustus – *No comment*

23/03216/FUL | Construction of replacement jetty | King Cottage Inverfarigaig Inverness IV2 6XR – *No comment*

23/02668/FUL | Convert garage loft to self-contained holiday flat and erection of balcony and staircase | Log Ness the Turns Foyers Inverness IV2 6XU – *No comment*

23/03306/FUL | Erection of house and garage | Land 45M North Of Balnaberran, Torness Inverness
– *No comment*

Catriona Fraser raised the issue of more properties in the area becoming short term leases. There isn't anything at present to stop that if someone applies for a licence to do that. Discussion had on the CC putting together a paper for HC planning.

CL asked what voice the CC has with planning as it doesn't feel like the CC are being listened to. Cllr Balance said that if the CC make an objection, that should automatically take the application to committee rather than a delegated decision, but this hasn't been happening. Admin and Cllrs to investigate this.

8. Renewables

- Aberarder (SSE) – going ahead with original plans for 12 turbines at 130m. SSE bought from RES
- Cloiche (SSE) – Await outcome of planning.
- Glenshero (SIMEC) – Refused at public enquiry, no right to appeal
- Dell (Coriolis) – Scoping application in to alter the original approved plans from 14 turbines to 10, amend height from 130.5m to 200m and to vary the layout – Admin has invited developers to a CC meeting. No reply yet. Admin will chase up again.
- Corriegarth Extension (BayWar.e) – Highland council have now removed there objection, Admin to clarify but it seems to still be going to public enquiry
- Bhlairaidh – at Glenmoriston. Extension plans passed but three turbines less
- Loch Liath – same as above for location. **Now in for planning**
- Red John – Pump storage at Dores, approved at public inquiry. No further updates received
- Loch Kemp (Statera) - proposed hydro pump storage at Dell Estate. **Still awaiting planning app**
- Culachy Wind Farm (Fred. Olsen Renewables) – invite to meet. On an estate in Fort Augustus, at pre-scoping stage. Will invite to a future CC meeting.

9. Roads

Work at the Glebe settlement has started. This will create traffic calming measures to reduce speeds in that area. Admin has asked HC if they have considered if the Corriegarth extension was to gain planning permission and whether this work would need re-doing. HC are confident that any vehicles carrying turbines etc. would be get through the new road layout.

All agreed on road speed survey wording that had been sent by email. Admin to create survey.

Coast to Coast cycling event is on 9th Sep; the CC have not been officially notified of this and although no road closures involved, all agreed advance notice and communication is required.

Noted that 20mph signs still flashing in Foyers despite the school being closed – admin to raise.

10. Correspondence

Official notification from HC received that they are starting the consultation on widening the Gaelic primary school catchment areas, which would mean that it would cover the whole of Stratherrick and Foyers for the Gaelic primary school in Inverness if approved. Consultation meeting in the Gaelic Primary School/ Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig Inbhir Nisin Inverness on 13th Sep at 6.30pm. The consultation began on 21st Aug 23 and will finish on 27th Oct 2023. The proposal paper and appendices are available online at:

<http://www.highland.gov.uk/schoolconsultations>

11. Upcoming events

Community catch up event – Sat 23rd Sep, 11am – 2pm @ The Stratherrick Hall, Gorthleck

12. AOCB

CC elections – the Community council elections happen every 4 years and nominations are open from 5th Sep and close on 3rd Oct at 12 noon. If there are less than 4 nominations, the CC will go into abeyance. If there is more than 4 and up to 8, all candidates will automatically become members but if 9 or more, there will be an election that will be run by Highland council. All members encouraged to speak to members of the community to encourage people to come forward. PH will write a short piece on what it has meant to him being a member of the CC.

Firework Control Zones – CL attended a Scottish Government work on firework zones. The workshop was to support the implementation of the Fireworks and Pyrotechnic Articles (Scotland) Act 2022, which is a key part of the Scottish Government’s approach to changing the relationship that Scotland has with fireworks. The legislation was passed by the Scottish Parliament in June 2022, and a programme of work is underway to implement the core measures within the Act. Firework Control Zones are one of these core measures. This will give local authorities the power to designate areas (‘Fireworks Control Zones’) where it will only be permitted to use fireworks as part of a public fireworks display, or for a limited number of regulatory or business purposes. All agreed to survey the community to find out their views on the use of fireworks locally.

13. Next meeting

Next meeting will be on – Tuesday 26th September 2023 19.00