

STRATHERRICK & FOYERS COMMUNITY COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD 27th AUGUST 2024

AT THE WILDSIDE CENTRE, WHITEBRIDGE

WITH VIDEO LINK OPTION

1. Present

Mark Hindley (MH) – chair, Olivia Grant (OG), Mike Slater (MS), Gary McGowan (GM), Craig Lightbody (CL), Janet Hobson (JH) and Helen Grainger (HG).

Sharon Ferguson (Admin)

Public attending

Cllr Fraser, Cllr Balance, Colin Ross (HC), Ken Sinclair, Tony Foster, Jim Cameron, Jo Cameron, Alex Sutherland, Jos Kugel, Frank Taylor, Stewart MacLean, Elspeth White, Michael White, Sarah Bryne, Kirsteen Campbell and Caroline Mortimore

Apologies

Chris Joyce (CJ)

2. Discussion on local road issues and planned improvements – Colin Ross, Senior Engineer, The Highland Council, Infrastructure, Environment and Economy

Colin was welcomed to the meeting. Apologies from John Taylor and Steven Grant from the roads operation team at HC but Colin read out the list that JT had sent to update the CC -

Works carried out this financial year with HC budget

B862 – Knockie to Cattle Grid at Viewpoint – Surface Dressing – Approx 2300 linear metres

B851 – South of Croachy - Surface Dressing – Approx 900 linear metres

B851 – Croachy Village – Surface Dressing – Approx 500 linear metres

Various – Machine and hand patching (permanent works)

Works still to be carried out this financial year in area and on routes driven by residents

B851 – Dunmaglass – Resurfacing – Approx 300 linear metres

B862 – Scaniport – Resurfacing – Approx 1000 linear metres

B861 – Balnafoich towards Tomfat Woods – Resurfacing - Approx 400 linear metres

B862 – Errogie – Remedial resurfacing Repairs – Length to be determined.

Various – Machine and hand patching (permanent works)

Known sections of road requiring attention – budgetary dependant

B862 Calanour to Errogie

Trinloist Road

Glenlia Road

Colin explained that the budget that they get for road improvements has been dramatically reduced and less money coming from timber extraction works. Other road improvements have been financed by mitigation payments agreed by energy schemes etc.

Cllr Fraser added that they do set out with the road engineers what works are planned and there is always a reason why resurfacing is done in certain patches and it can be that it will save money in the long term.

All agreed that the CC would supply a list road issues and what is felt is the priorities as review for 2025/26 to take place soon.

Alex Sutherland requested that signs stating 'not suitable for HGV's' are put in place on the pass road as damage to the bridge on that road continues to happen.

MH raised the issue that the road reports written by consultants for energy scheme planning applications are fictitious and do not correctly represent what condition the local roads are in; Colin agreed and has recommended that Loch Kemp is refused on that basis. The B862 changes character 20 times in less than 22km and this is not clear from the reports and they do not meet the current standards of B class road.

Discussion had about road mitigation payments from energy schemes; with Aberarder WF, HC had made agreements on road mitigation payments should it go ahead, it was refused and when it went to appeal, the Scottish Government reporter agreed with the developer that they didn't have to pay for road mitigation works and the same thing happened with Corriegarth 2 WF. Cllr Fraser pointed out that a planning decision made by a SG reporter can only be challenged on a point of law. Cllr Fraser, Cllr Balance and Colin to do a report to the SG on this matter by end of September, ahead of the South Planning committee meeting in Oct to try to explain this issue. CC to look into what they can do. Admin to contact Kate Forbes regarding this and press for a follow up meeting of the joint meeting that was held in Strathnairn regarding roads and the cumulative effect of the upcoming construction of energy schemes in the area.

Discussion had on recent village improvement schemes done; Ken Sinclair asked why the drainage kerbs were being used as they tend to block up; lack of room was the main reason and gullies sink but agreement that maintenance is required on them. MH raised that many members of the community did not like the urban look of the village improvements; Colin explained that the road environment is the biggest single factor in drivers speed and some semi-urbanisation required to reduce speeds in rural areas when travelling through villages/settlements. GM raised that the Biodiversity group were wondering if something other than stones could be used at the side of these works; Colin explained that the problem with grass or any kind of planting at the side of the road is the maintenance of it. MH suggested when the plan is done, the CC will look at it prior to construction and see it can be softened.

The new 30mph speed limit signs for villages will be up soon after the 21 day consultation period. A community consultation will take place after the current works at Inverfarigaig are completed. Colin was thanked for attending and left the meeting

3. Adoption of minutes – 25th June 2024

Minutes of the CC meeting on 25/06/2024 were adopted as a true record of the meeting. Proposed by CL, seconded by HG.

4. Matter arising not on the agenda

Whitebridge bus route – the route has now been changed and the bus goes via Farr and the high school pupils from Torness get a minibus into school as the new route leaves Torness without a public bus service. Reports are that the Whitebridge bus is arriving late into the school and late home. Letter to be written to HC to highlight issues and ask for a review to ensure any future changes are done properly and with public consultation.

Fireworks – still awaiting HC having a process for requests for firework control zones. Await outcome of committee meeting to find out. Cllr Balance pointed out that a lot of evidence will be required when applying.

Conflict of interest – Cllr Fraser had raised by email that the CC should be asking for any conflict of interest at the start of each meeting. This has been done voluntarily but will now be recorded.

5. Micro Grant Applications

Stratherrick Clay Target Club - £500 towards purchasing a de-fib for the club building; all agreed.

Hugh Nicol - £500 towards purchasing a de-fib for the Ault-na-Goire area; further investigation into how this would work as plan was to attach to a private dwelling.

6. Reports

Treasurer report from Janet Hobson

Main account - £23,995.67

Micro grant account - £5,091.37

Donations from Toilets in Foyers since July 1st 2024 - Through Stripe = £166.28 and Cash Donations paid in to bank = £779.35

I now have access to on line banking for the CC along with Mark Hindley.

One further signatory still to be arranged; HG agreed to be the 3rd bank signatory.

MH read out and passed round the form that is to be completed to remove Patrick Haston and Simon Hargreaves as signatories – all agreed.

Boleskine Community Care

Highland Community Lottery - 65 tickets sold so far. Using this as match funding for lunch club!

Lunch Club - Hoping to do this in Gorthleck hall on a Friday afternoon over the winter months. We have applied to an NHS fund for funding towards this. We have also been in talks with businesses to run healthy eating workshops at our lunch clubs.

Recruitment drive - For volunteers specifically for befriends going into the winter months

Interviews - Care Coordinator and carer roles interviewed

Services - Community optician service and hearing clinic happened at the hub in August. Foot care remains regularly fully booked every month.

Activities - In the process of planning a winter activities Calendar

Stratherrick and Foyers Community Trust – Craig Lightbody liaison Director

Planning - suggestion to obtain a quote for a planning consultant to help the CC with all the planning work they have to deal with.

Foyers shop – Meeting had been held with BCC and the Trust to discuss BCC's plans to purchase the shop. The trust CEO reported that he was surprised the CC weren't in attendance; CC admin clarified that the CC had not been invited and were not aware of this meeting. Tony Foster said that SFCT has offered help in various ways for this project but the 1st stage that needs done is a feasibility study. All agreed to support BCC in their bid to maintain a shop and PO in the area.

Riverside field – the trust CEO had a meeting with Highlife Highland and Sport Scotland; they had said that a MUGA couldn't be used for shinty and recommended a grass pitch. Full report on this meeting to come from the CEO. CL raised that there hasn't been a Riverside field liaison group meeting since May; CEO said that there will be one soon.

Questions from SFCT – does the amount being paid by SSE for Aberarder windfarm equate to £5k per MW; MH said it did. Can the CC look into community investment in a wind turbine for community benefit; yes but to be carried forward to next month's meeting.

The role of the liaison officer to be discussed between the CC and SFCT.

Riverside Field – Community Liaison Group

No meeting

7. Foyers Public Toilets

Been having issues with the bins at the car park but this isn't actually a toilet problem. The bins are constantly overflowing as they get large amounts from campervans (full black bags). Peter, our toilet attendant, is spending a lot of time sorting out rubbish at the moment which isn't part of his job. Admin met with HC today to discuss the problem; solution is in-between fortnightly bin collections, the street cleaning team will now swap the bins for empty ones we they will be emptied weekly. The roads department have filled the potholes with hard core and dug out the tree stumps to create three new parking spaces opposite the toilets but just filled with hard core and not made into a disabled bay. The marking and lining that the parking enforcement team had said they would do hasn't been done yet.

Request was emailed for members of the CC to be part of the toilet sub-group meeting as we are due to meet with SFCT to look at some running issues. CJ has replied by email that he will be on the sub-group and MH will too.

8. Planning applications lodged since last SFCC meeting

24/02353/FUL Erection of 3No. Holiday letting cabins. Land 40M NE of Lodge 2, Lochnagar, the Turns Foyers; Revised plans from withdrawn application. Comment to be made requesting no further tree loss.

9. Energy Schemes

- Foyers Substation extension (SSE) – MH has been attending meetings with residents near the proposed works. These residents have expressed their frustration that the local Cllrs cannot do more; Cllr Fraser explained as both himself and Cllr Ballance are on the planning committee, they are bound by the planning procedure and although they cannot comment directly on planning applications, they attend meetings, listen to what is being said and value everyone's input. Cllr Ballance agreed that it is frustrating but they are bound by the rules. The favour does seem to be weighted towards the developer and if HC object and it is overturned by Scottish Government ministers, HC have to pay both their own and the developers costs.
- Aberarder Windfarm (SSE) – going ahead with original plans for 12 turbines at 130m. SSE bought from RES – The B851 is closed this week due to resurfacing at the Flichity bridge which are works that SSE are doing to allow the Aberarder windfarm to go ahead but the CC got informed last night by SSE that they would be bringing in a delivery of two turbine blades for maintenance work that the Dunmaglass windfarm this Thursday 29th August. As the B851 is closed, they are coming in off the A9, along the distributer road, out by Dores and then following the B862 to the Calanour junction then the B851 to the entrance to Dunmaglass estate. Admin replied right away with concerns that this route has never been used or trialled for lorries of this length and also raised concern over the very short notice and why couldn't it wait until the B851 was open again The CC also received an email from a member of the community with strong concerns over the route (this was forwarded to SSE). All agreed to write to SSE to complain about this. For the community benefit for this windfarm, SSE have met with the chair of the CC and the chair of SFCT and explained that they have new rules for how they decide on Community benefit. For those areas that host the sites, they will get £5k per MW for the lifetime of the

scheme but as with all SSE Community benefit, £2.5k of that goes to the local community and £2.5k goes to a regional sustainable development fund. Those areas that are only affected during construction are to get a time limited amount. For this scheme, the figure will be circa £22k payable to the Stratherrick and Foyers Community Council area. Decision to be made on where that amount should go. It could be SFCT where all other community benefit is paid, the CC could use it or chose to give to another local organisation/group or give out in grants to several local groups. Discussion had and as the figure is relatively small, the majority felt it should go to Boleskine Community Care but to look further into this and decide on the process. Also agreed to look into the new community benefit rules from SSE and the possibility of getting professional help with that as some other communities have done.

- Cloiche Windfarm (SSE) – Consented Dec 23 (extension to Stronelaig)
- Dell Windfarm (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 – Two applications in; one section 42 to extend the current planning that has been awarded and a section 36 to apply for a new version of the plans known as Dell 2. Await them coming to planning committee
- Corriegarth 2 Windfarm (BayWar.e) – Permission granted Dec 23.
- Loch Liath Windfarm – North side of Loch Ness, on Fort Augustus and Glenmoriston land but visual from SFCC area. Planning submitted
- Culachy Windfarm (Fred. Olsen Renewables) – On Fort Augustus and Glenmoriston CC land. Planning submitted Dec 23
- Loch Na Cathrach Pump Storage Hydro (previously known as Red John) – Above Dores, approved at public inquiry. New manager in place but no correspondence or update received.
- Loch Kemp Pump Storage Hydro (Statera) - proposed hydro pump storage at Dell Estate. Both NatureScot and SEPA have objected to the proposed plans. The confidential documents have still not been made available to the CC.

The Ness fisheries board have alluded that Statera are going to be putting in a planning application to build up the weir at Loch End; MH expressed his frustration of piecemeal applications for what is the one application/plan and it does not allow for democratic decision making. Cllr Fraser said that some communities have taken this up at Scottish Government level and suggested the CC write to the head of planning for Highland, the SG and MSP's as this is planning policy that would have to be changed. Currently if HC sit on a planning application and wait for all other associated planning applications to come in and look at them together, they can then be fined for not dealing with planning applications timeously.

- Carn na Saobhaidh Wind Farm (RES) – New scoping application that we have had notification from the Energy Consents Unit about. Situated in the Strathnairn and Strathdearn area, the proposal is to access from the A9 using an established road for other windfarms. Comments to be in by Mon 9th September; all members to view the application and reply by email.

10. Roads

Covered at point 1.

11. Correspondences

Email received from local resident and employee at the campsite asking if they could park their caravan on land at Inverfarigaig for the months that they weren't allowed to stay at the campsite; the local residents group and the landowners, SFCT, are happy with this as a temporary measure. Discussion had on whether this is a planning issue but all agreed this is a matter between the individual and the land owner.

An email had been received from a local group, Stratherrick and Foyers Community Review and Support Group (SFCSRSG); they had requested to come along to the meeting to introduce their group, what they do and what help they were looking for. Michael White, chair of the group, explained that they respond to questions from the community about SFCT, review them then ask the Trust for answers. Many issues with the Trust were raised and issues with surveys were highlighted. MS asked if any of the members of the group had considered becoming Directors as this might be the best way to change things. Jos Kugel asked if surveys from SFCT were only available to members of the trust; all surveys open to any member of the community. Tony Foster said that the Trust would be willing to meet with all six members of the group together but as individuals as the Trust did have some issues with the running of the group as they haven't advertised their meetings to the community. MH agreed that the Trust need to meet with the group to resolve these issues and the CC would do what they could to facilitate this but it was a matter between the Trust and this group. The group had also asked if the CC could rotate where their meetings were held; agreed and this is being looked at. The main reason for using the Wildside centre is the facilities there to be able to do hybrid meetings as that is something that has continued since the pandemic.

Email received from Michael White as an individual, regarding the land that the Trust had purchased from HC opposite Thain road that has historically been used for dumping. Michael's son has been struggling to sell his house due to the condition of the land. Tony Foster talked through the steps that the Trust have gone through to get the land cleared since they bought the ground and the improvements that have been made. Admin is awaiting a reply from environmental health at HC to get their feedback as they have been involved.

12. Up and coming events

None known off

13. AOCB

Report of speeding vans – Admin has had several reports of white vans going very fast through the area and one person that has lost a wing mirror in an incident with one that didn't stop. Not all have been identified but the company 'Vestas' has been mentioned several times. Admin to contact the company and individuals encouraged to report to the companies and to the police by calling 101.

14. Next meeting

Tuesday 24th September 2024