

STRATHERRICK & FOYERS COMMUNITY COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD 29<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 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 Chris Joyce (CJ)

Sharon Ferguson (Admin)

**Public attending**

Cllr Fraser, Ken Sinclair, Margie Elgar, Rob Mullen, Tina Jordan and Keith Oversby

**Apologies**

Helen Grainger and Cllr Ballance

**Conflicts**

OG – for planning as it is her parent's application

**2. Adoption of minutes – 24<sup>th</sup> September 2024**

Minutes of the CC meeting on 24/09/2024 were adopted as a true record of the meeting. Proposed by CL, seconded by JH.

**3. Matter arising not on the agenda**

Whitebridge bus route – some wider school bus issues have arisen in town area; agreed to set an agenda for discussion with David Summers from HC and arrange a meeting, preferable face to face.

Dunmaglass Turbine Delivery – MH has received a reply to his complaint; apology for the inconvenience when the road was blocked for many hours and the verge has now been sorted.

FLS late night shooting – reply received and no further complaints.

Bottle banks – they have now been emptied.

Parking in Foyers – a vehicle and long trailer have been parked in the bus bay by the shop which has been causing issues in Foyers as coaches parking on the road. As not lined/marked, not sure what can be done.

**4. Micro Grant Applications**

Anna Peterkin (Highland dancing classes) £500 to subsidise the cost of classes – all agreed

Susan Erlam (Women on the Wildside) £490 to fully pay for three days of a mobile sauna in Lower Foyers by Loch Ness that would be open to all in the community – all agreed

Hugh Nicol – discussion had on previous application; due to complexities of having a public access de-fib on a private building, all agreed that having one in the phone box in Errogie or the church in Errogie would be a good solution. Admin to look into who owns the phone box.

## 5. Reports

### Treasurer report from Janet Hobson

Main account - £22,178.88

Micro grant account - £4,591.37

DONATIONS FROM TOILETS AT FOYERS SINCE 1ST OCTOBER via Stripe - £279.93

Bank forms removing previous signatories have been signed and handed back into the bank. DD for MacGregors Industrial Supplies (toilet cleaning products) has been set up.

### Boleskine Community Care

Services - Our Foot care service continues to be fully booked each month. Our hairdresser comes twice a month and appointments are usually filled. We have an Ear Wax Removal clinic booked for November with Highland Hears and we have the Opticians coming in December. As CC members are aware, we are no longer hosting a winter vaccination program due to this service being centralised by NHS Highland to Inverness. We made our mobility aids available to the community for several reasons. To hire the aids, they must be serviced regularly. We were quoted £200 per item with brakes so it would be unaffordable for BCC to maintain their upkeep. We also did not have the space at the Hub to keep them all or the correct insurance for people to hire them from us. We received over £100 in donations

Activities - We had a very busy Halloween Calendar with both children and adults pumpkin carving events. These events combined raised over £150 for BCC. We will also be open on Thursday evening between 5pm and 7pm for Trick or Treaters. We have an Autumn Lantern workshop on the 2nd of November and a Temple Spa pamper evening on the 15th of November. We also have a very busy November planned with loads of new events and activities. There has been an increase in attendance across all activities at the Hub this month.

Funding - We received a very exciting email from The National Lottery on Monday. We successfully applied for funding for a Community Larder at the Hub and have been awarded £6700. I have reached out to those who run the community larders in both Fort Augusts and Drumnadrochit for advice on how to run the project. We are yet to announce this to the community as we are waiting for a marketing pack to arrive from the National Lottery.

Volunteers - We are always looking for volunteers for all activities at BCC. We are looking for both drivers and befrienders coming into the winter to help us tackle isolation within the community. We are also open to any suggestions of new services or activities people would like to see held at the Hub.

Auld Smokey Pizza - We have invited Auld Smokey Pizza to come to the Hub on the 22nd of November. They will be offering wood-fired pizzas cooked in their Land Rover. We really need community support for this as its success will determine whether we can arrange for other takeaway businesses to attend the Hub. We will have the Hub open so that people can enjoy their pizzas at the Hub or take them away. Hopefully we will get as many people as possible so please spread the word!

Cllr Fraser will chase up on vaccine clinic query and he has spoken to the chief of social work and is hoping for a better process with the mobility aids. MH will also write re vaccine clinics.

MH raised about the Foyers shop potential community acquisition; CL reported that a steering group has now been formed with BCC as the lead as requested and supported by the CC and the Trust. The steering group have met twice, once on their own and then with the Scottish Land Fund. Community Trust staff now writing the brief and applying for stage 1 costs on behalf of the steering group. This will pay for a feasibility study and business plan to help decide the way forward.

### **Stratherrick and Foyers Community Trust – Craig Lightbody liaison Director**

Due to the late finish of the board meeting on the 2nd of Oct., another board meeting has been scheduled for the 6th Nov.

Interviews for the post of Chief Executive Officer (CEO) have been completed. A statement from the chair of SFCT states, "An appointment has been made and more information will be released when it is appropriate to do so".

The SFCT AGM will be held at the Wildside centre on the 27th of Nov.

A member of the community has sourced approximately 40 tonnes of timber for community firewood. This is located in three separate areas of the community and would be processed at each site. The trust can't release funds for the hire of equipment for this and are asking if the CC can offer micro grants of 500 pounds for EACH of the processing sites, (3 x 500 pounds)?

Most of the directors time has been tied up with the interviews for the CEO so that about covers most of trust business for this report.

Link to minutes of the last board meeting -

[https://www.stratherrickcommunity.org.uk/userfiles/file/home/our%20documents/minutes/2024/\(f\)%20draft%20minutes%202%20october%202024%20sfct.pdf](https://www.stratherrickcommunity.org.uk/userfiles/file/home/our%20documents/minutes/2024/(f)%20draft%20minutes%202%20october%202024%20sfct.pdf)

MH thanked all the CC members that input into questions for the final interview panel for the Trust's CEO, of which MH was a member of.

Admin clarified that the CC would not be able to award 3 micro grants to the same person for the same thing but did suggest one micro grant app for £500 and one small grant app to the community Trust for £1k.

### **Riverside Field – Community Liaison Group**

No meeting

## **6. Foyers Public Toilets**

All going well at the toilets and usage has slowed down but still plenty visitors in the area.

They were extremely busy on the day of the marathon with special thanks to Peter Leyden, the toilet attendant, who worked extra hard that day to keep them stocked up and looking good! Due to this usage, I sent the QR code to the organisers of the Marathon and they made a donation of £200. We also received this email following the event – A few weeks ago my wife and I were in Scotland so she could run the Loch Ness Marathon. We took the opportunity to visit a few waterfalls whilst in the area. We used your toilets at Foyers - THEY ARE THE BEST TOILETS WE HAVE EVER USED IN SUCH A RURAL ENVIRONMENT.

There is a fault with the payment system for the waste emptying point and it is being looked into but once fixed, there will be a £5 charge to access the wasted emptying point.

Still awaiting an update on the money that HC have collected from the car park and when we can apply to that.

Cllr Fraser updated that the Inverness City Committee agreed that allocation of the money made from the car parks would be done by ward councillors. Meeting about this on 11<sup>th</sup> Nov.

## **7. Planning applications lodged since last SFCC meeting**

24/04357/PIP - Erection of house, Land East of Scotshaven, Gorthleck Inverness – no comment

CL asked about comment that the CC made on planning app for lodges at Foyers to do with tree loss; admin to contact compliance officer and Grant Stewart to look into this.

## 8. Energy Schemes

- **Glen Earrach Energy Pump Storage Hydro** – Community consultation took place on 24<sup>th</sup> Oct. Virtual consultation available 15<sup>th</sup> Nov at - <https://www.glenearrach.energy/post/glen-earrach-pumped-storage-hydro-facility-consultation>
- **Foyers Substation extension (SSEN)** – Reply from SSE regarding using any other substation; *The Foyers Substation Project is triggered by the need to replace the ageing transformer infrastructure at Foyers Power station. The new modern technical spec of the transformers will require the installation of additional electrical equipment at the switching station (a new bay) for the transformers to connect to. Where a switching station is in place an extension of the platform of the existing switching station is generally the standard technical solution, building on what is in place already. In the case of Foyers, we are also contracted to consider the potential Loch Kemp connection at this point in time. Following community feedback consideration has been given to moving the switching station which has been disregarded on the basis of cost and loss of habitat. SSEN Transmission are regulated by OFGEM and are therefore obliged to present a cost-effective solution for regulatory approval. Costs of these projects will be reflected in UK consumer's energy prices and therefore the cost element is an important one. Given the size of the proposed extension additional costs relating to a relocation cannot be justified and are in no relation to the scale of the project. For context a full new switching station would result in significant habitat loss, a substantial amount of new access tracks and about 2 hectares of development area. The same considerations would apply if it was considered connecting both Foyers Power Station and the proposed Loch Kemp project to the existing Farigaig Substation (only taking into account the underground cable connections alone and disregarding the additional extension considerations that would be required at Farigaig)*  
FLS reply on tree loss – the felling is not just taking place to allow for SSEN's work, they are due to come down. All re-stocking will be native trees and won't be re-felled. KS raised that the trees were close to what is known as terminal height.
- **Aberarder Windfarm (SSE)** – going ahead with original plans for 12 turbines at 130m. SSE bought from RES. Community benefit offer discussed; SSE have responded somewhat dismissively of the points raised by the CC and have said they won't be agreeing to HC's proposed charter on community benefit. HC are looking at how to help CC's with community benefit negotiations and looking to run a workshop. All agreed not to accept the offer until that has happened. Option of getting independent help too. CLG meeting for this scheme on 12<sup>th</sup> Nov. GM & MH to attend.
- **Cloiche Windfarm (SSE)** – Consented Dec 23 (ext to Stronelairg). Await construction timings
- **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 Windfarm (Greencoat UK Wind)** – navigation light still on that there isn't planning for. Admin to email compliance officer.
- **Corriegarth 2 Windfarm (BayWar.e)** – Permission granted Dec 23. Road mitigation discussed; Colin Ross had previously told the CC that ministers at the ECU had removed the need for developers to pay for road mitigation works but

- **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 refused
- **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 Energy) and Ness Weir II** - proposed hydro pump storage at Dell Estate. **Statera have made some amendments to the planning application for Loch Kemp PSH but they don't cover the CC's main concerns. Most of the confidential ornithology reports are now released on the ECU's website but a new sea eagle nest is included in the additional information. Although separate planning applications, Loch Kemp and Ness Weir II are connected. The Planning officer at HC has agreed with MH that it is not ideal to have them being considered separately. Scottish canals have refused the CC's request for information on the Ness Weir app. An internal review has been requested. Thanks to Kyra Motley for drafting the letter for this. We have an extension with the ECU to reply re the Loch Kemp amendments and an extra meeting arranged with Statera on 20<sup>th</sup> Nov to discuss Loch Kemp and Ness Weir II.**
- **Carn na Saobhaidh Wind Farm (RES)** – Situated in the Strathnairn and Strathdearn area, the proposal is to access from the A9 using an established road for other windfarms. At scoping.

## 9. Roads

Thanks to CL who compiled a list of road defects which has been sent to HC. Admin to contact Neil Fraser at HC re calibration of speed warning signs. Noted that there was a 30 sign painted on the road in Erroglie that is on the wrong side – HC to be notified. CL raised an issue that had arisen when a company tried to do a temporary road closure in Lower Foyers without a permit, thanks to Cllr Fraser who had helped follow up on this. Discussion on speeding vans; if we can encourage individuals to report to the company if possible with time and location as many company vehicles have trackers.

## 10. Correspondences

Tina Jordan had written to the CC and attended tonight's meeting to discuss her concerns about the level of large energy schemes proposed and being constructed in the area and the fact that Loch Ness has no environmental protection. Discussion had on what could be done. Seeking World heritage status and a meeting with NatureScot was suggested. Many of the special statuses have not effectively been wiped out by the National Planning Framework 4 and Cllr Fraser pointed out that if HC take too long to make a decision on a planning application then the SG can make the decision with no input from HC. A large scale public meeting for people all around the Loch was suggested and engaging with MSP's and MP's.

Email received from resident at Tom An Mhoid; querying who owned the grit bin. Admin has clarified that they were bought by SFCC with grant funding several years ago and are filled by volunteers to help community resilience.

Email from Fort Augustus and Glenmoriston Community Council notifying of their LPP; shared with all members of the CC and noted but no comments.

## **11. Up and coming events**

Community Fireworks at Loch Ness Shores Campsite – 2<sup>nd</sup> November  
Remembrance Sunday at Stratherrick War Memorial – 11<sup>th</sup> November  
Closing date for Directors nominations for SFCT – 13<sup>th</sup> November  
Pizza night at BCC Hub – 22<sup>nd</sup> November

## **12. AOCB**

Winter resilience – admin to create a map of all the grit bins and find out which ones need filled.  
Also arrange a resilience meeting with other stakeholders in the area.

Soup to go – CL had contacted Lyn Woods as the CC had wanted to get the volunteers a gift, Lyn had responded to say thank you but they didn't want a gift and were happy it just being noted the work they all done. MH to write to Lyn.

Meeting with Statera Energy – a special meeting has been arranged for Wed 20<sup>th</sup> November as noted at point 8

## **13. Next meeting**

**Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> November 2024 8pm at the Wildside Centre – to discuss Loch Kemp and Dochfour Weir II proposals**

**Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> November 2024 7pm at the Wildside Centre – full CC meeting**