

**STRATHERRICK & FOYERS COMMUNITY COUNCIL**  
**MINUTES OF MEETING HELD 20<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2024**  
**AT THE WILDSIDE CENTRE, WHITEBRIDGE**  
**WITH VIDEO LINK OPTION**

1. Present

Mark Hindley (MH) – chair, Helen Grainger (HG), Gary McGowan (GM), Craig Lightbody (CL) and Chris Joyce (CJ)

Sharon Ferguson (Admin)

Public attending – 24 members of the public

Apologies - Olivia Grant, Janet Hobson and Mike Slater.

2. **Statera Energy – proposed Loch Kemp pump storage hydro scheme**

Andrew Troup, Development Director, spoke of the company. No introductions to the team but admin got a list supplied after the meeting –

Kirsty Cassie – Project Developer Public Affairs

Fraser Smith - Development Manager

Kevin Murray - Deputy Project Director – Pumped Storage Hydro

Steven Reid – Project Manager - Pumped Storage Hydro

James Scott - Civil Engineer – Pumped Storage Hydro

Andrew asked if SFCC has received the 18 page response from Statera to SFCC's objection; no.

Topics discussed –

**Roads and traffic** – MH raised that SFCC feel strongly that the baseline data used in the roads and transport report is not correct and have raised that as one of their objections. MH read out a report from Colin Ross from HC roads department which states that ¾ of the B862 is not even of B class standard. Andrew stated that this was the 1st time he had heard of this objection, despite it being in SFCC's objection. He is aware that works will need done on the roads. They have not been able to get hold of Colin Ross yet but if the roads cannot be made suitable, the project will not go ahead. There would be a traffic management plan agreed with HC. Andrew said there was a potential idea of running convoys from a holding area on the A9. Phil MacIntosh from Strathnairn CC asked if the traffic would be coming from and back to the A9 on the same route; yes. Concerns over HGV's meeting HGV's on the single track carriageways. Anna Low raised concerns about the level of traffic with so many schemes potentially being constructed at the same time; Andrew feels that these projects will have to be phased by the Government as not possible for them all to be constructed at the same time but the Government are also aware of the balancing that is required on the national grid that pump storage can provide. Ken asked if they had considered the timber haul tracks; no but will look into this. Member of Strathnairn CC asked how familiar those attending from Statera are of

the local road; Andrew said he had driven them about 6 times. Steven Reid stated that he is aware of local road issues as worked on Stronelairg WF and has offered Colin Ross at HC roads department an unspecified major contribution to roads improvements but Colin hasn't replied to them. Phil MacIntosh said that Loch Na Cathrach are looking at a looped traffic route, could this not be considered; the transport report was done taking into account the other schemes. Statera stated that no other figures have been presented to counter the figures that SFCC dispute.

#### **Connection route – Andrew**

**Water levels** – MH asked where the figures have come from that state a 4 hour dispatch time; Andrew answered that this came from Statera's own projects and market analysts. Concern that these figures underplay the cumulative effect on the water levels. Discussion had on the proposed raising of the weir at Dochfour; this is to avoid curtailment issues when Loch Ness is at lower levels. The need for this compounds the CC's concern that there is not enough water in the Loch Ness for all the proposed pump storage hydro schemes. This weir would be managed by an independent party and a lot of work still to be done on the plans. Andrew talked about the Government's new Cap and Floor scheme, more information can be found here - <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-scheme-to-attract-investment-in-renewable-energy-storage> Andrew stated that categorically there will be much more variation of the water levels on Loch Ness as this is a consequence of any pump storage hydro scheme. SEPA will ultimately control the levels of Loch Ness.

**Visual impact** – It was raised that the CC had been told it would cost too much the power house underground but now a similar amount is being spent on the raising of the weir. Mark raised that the CC had requested visual impact images from Beinn Sgurrach but these had not been done; visualisations are agreed with HC so we should speak to them to request this. Mark raised the issue of powerhouse that will be a considerable eyesore and the CC don't feel that using the fact that Foyers pump storage that was built in the 70's, as good reason to have another one further down the loch side. Andrew told the meeting that throughout the consultation period there was not one person said they did not like the look of the above ground powerhouse; the CC's objection to the early consultation clearly states that they object to the powerhouse being above ground. Issue raised that it will also cause light pollution on what is currently an uninhabited length of the shoreline of the loch.

**Additional information** – in the additional information that Statera provided, MH noted that SEPA have refused to allow them to use all of the spoil which means that approximately ¼ million cubic metres of spoil, which equates to circa ½ million tonnes of spoil and if that has to go out by lorry, this will massively increase the HGV traffic; Andrew answered that this would be used for the switching station. The CC had previously been told that was a separate planning application and had to be considered as such. Some excess material can be taken away by barge.

Discussion had on community benefit with no defined outcomes. Discussion followed on road safety as it was felt strongly by people attending that cumulative effect is not taken into account on traffic management plans and this is of great concern with several wind farms and Loch Na Cathrach PSH on this side of the loch already having planning; Andrew stated that Loch Na Cathrach will have to go back into planning as it needs more storage capacity. This was new information to the CC. Andrew stated that he felt any traffic management plan would have to involve sequencing as all the construction of the schemes could not be running at the same time. Julie Harvey raised that in the additional information, there is no information on the cumulative effect and asked if Statera would do an updated report including all schemes like wind farms as well as PSH; Andrew stated he would share the work on the traffic management plan that they will do with Colin Ross at HC but didn't

state if they would do an updated report as requested. MH raised that many issues being raised are material planning issues and felt that many queries were answered with that it will be dealt with in the individual management plans i.e. traffic management plan. Andrew replied that the planning system covers a lot of this in its conditions that then they will deal with real time conditions.

**Road users** – Anna Low raised that what also has to be taken into account is visitor road users and how all this will affect the visitor experience and the knock on effect on local businesses, local jobs and the local economy. It was also raised that our rural roads are not just for vehicles, they are for all road users, where our children wait for and get off busses and often our paths. Laurie Piper from Scottish Canals stated that they are looking to take as much of the loads as possible on the canals and are part of a regional transport forum to discuss issues.