

STRATHERRICK & FOYERS COMMUNITY COUNCIL  
MINUTES OF MEETING HELD 26<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2024  
AT THE WILDSIDE CENTRE, WHITEBRIDGE  
WITH VIDEO LINK OPTION

**1. Present**

Mark Hindley (MH) – chair, Olivia Grant (OG), Gary McGowan (GM), Craig Lightbody (CL), Janet Hobson (JH) and Chris Joyce (CJ)

Sharon Ferguson (Admin)

**Public attending**

Cllr Fraser, Alex Sutherland, Kyra Motely, Keith Readdy, Fiona Ambrose, Elly Russell, Peter Faye, Margaret Campbell, Tina Jordan and Keith Oversby

**Apologies**

Helen Grainger and Mike Slater.

**Conflicts**

Email received from MH's partner. OG's work has a micro grant app in.

**2. Forestry Land Scotland – James Reid with update on South Loch Ness Management Plan and Concerns Regarding Tree Loss**

Ewan Wiseman from FLS also attended. James brought along draft printed maps that attendees were able to ask questions about and put notes on. These maps will be available online from Jan 25 then a consultation period will follow. Topics covered –

Mitigation for wildlife – Surveys are done ahead of any felling and if rare breeds are found and no other habitat available nearby, the trees will be left standing. FLS has an environmental team that oversees this. Asked why they don't trap for mink; they don't have the staffing to check the traps. Point raised about old fencing rolled up being left for years.

Cumulative effect of so many schemes happening in the area – FLS shares the concerns that the CC has about this. Ultimately HC are the body that should control this with traffic management plans.

Roads and transport – No planned changes to the logging routes. Any drivers of FLS wood Lorries driving inappropriately should be reported and action will be taken. Driving in tandem is not allowed and should be reported.

Re-planting – The area will be re-stocked. The normal is to leave an area for 5 years before re-planting. This is to allow the pine weevil, which cause huge damage to new trees, time to not be an issue. Survey for pine weevil done after 1 year. The plan would be to see what natural generating took place before re-planting at 5 years as naturally regenerating sites are less susceptible to large pine weevil damage than planted sites. Natural regeneration is also more environmentally friendly as the seed source is already there and the trees from these seeds can be more successful. Any re-planting will be done with native and broadleaf trees. FLS will try where possible to leave any birch and oak that are currently in place. Many areas, including around Boleskine House, were never thinned when planted many years ago and this has affected the management. Question was asked if the 10 hectares at Boleskine have to come out at the same time; yes due to safety issues for operators. It will be scheduled for the winter when roads are quieter and FLS happy to work with

the community on any other mitigation ideas. No possibility of leaving a line of screening trees as they would then be vulnerable to wind blow and would be a safety issue.

### **3. SSEN Transmission – Foyers Substation, Proposal of Application Notice**

The works proposed are no longer permitted development the works are extending the boundary line and now have to go through the planning process, of which, the proposal of application notice is the 1<sup>st</sup> stage. There will also now be further community consultations starting next week. A temporary construction compound (about 100m x 100m) on FLS land has now been added to the plans. This will either be restored after construction completed or left as is for community use. It currently has FLS trees on it at the moment but they are due to come down. FLS answered that it is a phase 3 area so they will be coming down about 5 years early. Kyra Motley raised that she has done an FOI to FLS and it stated that SSEN had not been in contact about using FLS land for this. Ewan Wiseman stated that he had not seen this FOI and asked for it to be forwarded to him. Michael from SSEN stated that they have to show somewhere on the plan for a temporary construction compound and this seems like a sensible and logical site but not fully decided yet. Once a contractor on board, further work will done to decide whether that is a suitable site. Concern that this area will not be re-planted for many years as it will be covered in hard core and will have a significant visual impact on a special landscape area. Keith Readdy asked Michael if an independent survey could be done on the trees and if SFCC could instruct that; anyone can do a survey on the woods but SSEN would not be paying for it. They are using Scottish Woodlands who are impartial to SSEN. Kyra raised that storage containers have already been moved onto the site and no planning has been requested for this; this is for ground investigations and they don't require planning as temporary buildings. Cllr Fraser asked Michael to provide in writing exactly what is on the site then the CC can ask the planning department if it does require planning. Cllr Fraser also requested that SSEN keep the community informed ahead of moving such things onto site. Kyra asked Maren from SSEN how people can respond to the consultation if they can't attend; if they can access the website, they can respond on there or write or SSEN will visit homes if requested. MH asked if there was any changes from the pylon up the hill; no changes. MH raised that it would be beneficial to ask the CC ahead of setting dates for consultation as there is so much on.

### **4. Adoption of minutes – 29<sup>th</sup> October 2024**

Minutes of the CC meeting on 29/10/2024 were adopted as a true record of the meeting. Proposed by CL, seconded by OG.

### **5. Matter arising not on the agenda**

Bus routes – admin still looking for feedback on new bus routes ahead of meeting with HC. Admin to push for date for a meeting.

Grit bins – CL, admin and some others in the community have been checking grit bins and now have a spreadsheet and will get them on a map. CL found some areas that could do with more. The fire service filled them last year and individuals have filled some. Two on Killen road need filled; suggestion to ask Norman to fill them. Admin could ask HC to drop piles off too. Still plenty grit in the pile opposite the Stratherrick hall.

Parking in Foyers – car and trailer has now moved so issue resolved but wider discussion on marking that area for a bus stop.

## 6. Micro Grant Applications

BCC – £500 towards costs to do a feasibility study and business plan to look at the Community acquisition of the Foyers shop. £28k total cost, with BCC contributing £3k and SFCT also contributing £3k with an application to the Scottish Land Fund for the rest – all agreed (OG abstained as per conflict noted)

Joint steering group of BCC, SFCC & SFCT working well on this project.

Community and Culture Group – £375 for children's Hogmanay party at Errogie church. New group that are independent of the Trust but running events in the Errogie church – all agreed.

FIRA - £465 for Christmas voucher for all local High School aged children – all agreed

Admin to ask the Trust if they could pay the £5k that they hold for the CC to top up the micro grant fund as after these paid, the fund will be down to £1,

Discussion had on previous application from individual to get a de-fib at Allt-na-Goire; admin to pursue getting one either at the phone box in Errogie or the church. Also to look into any other solutions for areas that don't have a public building.

Request for further training on de-fibs – admin to arrange.

## 7. Reports

### Treasurer report from Janet Hobson

Main account - £22,513.85

Micro grant account - £3,101.37

DONATIONS FROM TOILETS AT FOYERS SINCE 1ST November via Stripe - £22.24

MH to chase up signatory forms that admin handed into the back and address on statements.

### Boleskine Community Care

#### Services

Foot care - Eva remains fully booked. She is doing two dates in December to fit in those who missed their November appointment due to the weather.

Hearing Clinic - Quintin from Highland Hears attended the Hub in November. He saw 12 local patients for ear wax removal.

Opticians - Hall Opticians will be attending the Hub on Wednesday the 11th of December. All eye tests are free of charge. They will bring a wide selection of glasses to choose from for those who decide to purchase a pair.

#### Activities

We had a Temple Spa pamper evening at the hub, this was a lovely night and raised £50 for BCC.

Unfortunately, due to the weather our Back to Basics art class was cancelled on the 18th but will go ahead on the 25th. We have a Christmas card making workshop organised for December.

#### Community Transport

As you may have seen, we have started a recruitment drive for volunteers with 4x4 vehicles to join our community transport scheme. This would mean we could still offer essential journeys to those that need it most during the winter months. This is not a big commitment as we split journeys between all the drivers, the more drivers we have the less each one will be asked to do.

#### Events

Pizza Night - Due to the snow, the Pizza Night has been rescheduled to Friday the 29th of November. We hope everyone can still come!

Car Boot Sale - Spaces are filling up quickly for our car boot sale on Sunday the 1st of December. We hope to see lots of people at the Hub grabbing some bargains!

Christmas card Workshop - As mentioned above, we have a Christmas card workshop organised for December. Stacey Hinton has very kindly offered to run this workshop free of charge however, as always, we kindly request donations towards BCC.

Volunteer Thank You - Jo is organising a Cheese and Wine Evening to thank all the carers and volunteers for everything they have done for the community throughout the year. This will take place on the 12th of December at 6pm and she is currently in the process of sending out the invitations.

Hub Building - As you may have seen on social media, we successfully applied for a grant to construct a Community Larder at the Hub. Olivia has met with multiple communities that have their own larders for help and advice on setting up the service. We hope to start work on this in January.

Christmas Opening Times

The Hub will close on the 20th of December for Christmas and reopen on the 6th of January.

Discussion on follow up from complaint made regarding loss of the vaccination clinic. Cllr Fraser will keep pushing to get this re-instated.

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

Jewels Lang has been selected as the new CEO of the SFCT and will start work in the New Year. She has indicated that she will be attending the SFCT AGM on the 27th November to introduce herself. It's great to see that the Trust board meetings are reverting back to monthly meetings. This will help alleviate the load at each meeting and keep them on track for a more sociable finishing time.

SFCT legacy projects:

As you can see from the minutes, three of the main legacy projects have stalled.

The Gathering Place, (Errogie Church), Foyers Bay and Riverside Field projects all have plans have been permitted or permitted in principle at the Highland Council Planning department.

We are told that The Gathering Place is going through a "reset", the current Foyers Bay slipway plan is deemed "Not fit for purpose" and alternative measures are in place and the Riverside Field has stalled. In my view, the community council and the new board of the Trust needs to get together to discuss these plans with a view to help the board with full and honest reporting of the progress of these projects and help in any way we can to reduce the community negativity around these and future projects. (See the latest minutes for each of these projects on the Trust's website).

It's good to see that the Trust's staff are being given ex-gracia payments to reflect the extra work and sharing of responsibilities to cover the absent positions of CAP officer and CEO. This is well earned and I propose that the community council publicly thank the staff for the great job they are doing.

We should also recognise Maureen McGuire for stepping into a consultative position, keeping everything together and providing surety to staff that their roles are secure and appreciated.

4 applications to become a director of the SFCT have been received by the Trust, for the four vacancies open at the Trust AGM. This means that they will be accepted at the AGM and no voting will be required to take place.

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

No meeting

## 8. Foyers Public Toilets

At the next ward meeting, Cllr's will discuss the mechanism for distributing the car park money. The payment system for the waste point is now up and running.

## 9. Planning applications lodged since last SFCC meeting

None received

Tree loss at lodges in Foyers; CL had got in touch with FLS but couldn't get a response due to legalities.

MH reported that he has sent 3 emails about the navigation light at Corriegarth but no reply; Cllr Fraser to chase this up.

## 10. Energy Schemes

- **Glen Earrach Energy Pump Storage Hydro** –
- **Foyers Substation extension (SSEN)** –
- **Aberarder Windfarm (SSE)** – going ahead with original plans for 12 turbines at 130m. SSE bought from RES. MH and GM attended a CLG meeting in Farr on 12<sup>th</sup> Nov. A few items raised, mainly speeding on roads and driving behaviour. GM has emailed since to highlight that in Scotland, the HGV speed limit is 40mph on single track roads as SSE had said they could only request 40mph. Road report on B862 still to be done by SSE, GM to chase this up.
- **Cloiche Windfarm (SSE)** – Consented Dec 23 (ext to Stronelaig). 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-Cllr Fraser to pursue as per planning note.
- **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. MH thanked everyone for attending last week's special meeting with Statera. Email received following the meeting from Julie Harvey who attended the meeting; deep concern over how attendees were spoke to by Andrew Troup of Statera and also that Statera claimed that they have made several attempts to contact Colin Ross HC roads dept) and secure a meeting but had never had a reply. Julie herself contacted Colin to confirm is this was the case. Cllr Fraser was cc'd in on the email and has picked up on this and will report back.

Nature Scot and SEPA have objected and await HC's response. Colin Ross has pointed MH to a road survey that was done for HC and it categorically shows that the local roads are not able to cope with the construction traffic for Loch Kemp. MH has also been in touch with Nature Scot and asked why they had only commented on the designated site; they responded by saying that anything outside the designated site is covered under their standing consultation response. There is lots of nationally important lichen out with the designated sites and Nature Scot have an obligation to designate the Loch Kemp site a SSSI under the 2004 act. MH has written to them accordingly. All agreed to update the CC's objection to HC. Concern that the CC haven't made enough impact on the powerhouse being above ground and this should be re-iterated. Memo received from Statera following the meeting and they have now agreed to do the visualisation from Ben Scurrach.

- **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.

Ness Weir II; this work is being planned by Statera. Scottish Canals have forwarded on the document requested by FOI before we knew who was behind the plans. Cllr Fraser said that Cllr's would need to know all the cumulative effect and have impact assessments for all the different scenarios.

Statera said at last week's meeting that Loch Na Cathrach (Red John) owned by Statkraft, was having to go back into planning due to a change in stop times. Cllr Balance to contact Statkraft to confirm as no one else has heard this.

Save Loch Ness SG petition being heard this week at the Scottish Parliament.

Still awaiting workshop date from HC on CBN and planning; Cllr Fraser to chase up. Other CC's are paying planning consultants and this is something we could consider but would need funds for it.

## 11. Roads

Re-calibration still needed on speed signs in Gorthleck and Does.

Gritting has been an issue with the 1<sup>st</sup> snow fall of the season. Meeting requested with HC to go over the priority routes and timings and review. Admin to follow up with Cllr Fraser and send map of priority routes round the CC members. Local person cleared some of the routes not covered by the gritters but this was done voluntarily. The community trust are planning to pay a local contractor to clear Trust and community buildings.

## 12. Correspondences

Visitor levy – Anna Low wrote an email to the CC regarding her concerns about the proposed levy. HC have a consultation open until 7<sup>th</sup> Feb 25. MH proposed that due to time constraints, we will put this off until the January meeting but will publicise to the community to raise awareness.

Consultation on energy infrastructure consenting – this has just come to the attention of the CC but consultation closes this Friday. Very serious issue of lose the automatic right to an public enquiry and to shorten the time that CC have to respond from 3 months to 6 weeks. Pros are better PAN process. Admin to request an extension and MH to write response and pass round.

### **13. Up and coming events**

SFCC AGM - 27<sup>th</sup> November

BCC pizza night – 29<sup>th</sup> November

### **14. AOCB**

Proposed road closure for next year's Remembrance service; GM raised that after attending the service this year and witnessing the road safety issues, the CC should look into a short road closure for next year's service. All agreed. Admin to email Alister MacLeod at HC.

South Loch Ness Trail Diversion – GM raised that the diversion signs are still not effective and he has had to stop many walkers who are still trying to follow the route to the bridge that has been washed away. VILN have put a post on their Facebook page and updated walk Highland but the Loch Ness 360 website that is run by VILN still talks about that section of the route and shows a picture of the bridge. Admin to contact VILN to arrange another meeting and invite Cllr's, HC and FLS. The CC have already met with VILN as previously had complaints similar to this but nothing has been progressed. Tina Jordan asked if the CC could arrange a special meeting next year to look at the protection of the area; to go on the January agenda.

Local Cllr's – MH raised that we have 4 local Cllr's but only get contact from Cllr Fraser and Cllr Ballance. The 4 Cllr's do cover 14 CC areas but they will have a conversation with the other 2.

Peter Faye asked Cllr Fraser and Cllr Balance if HC has any compulsory purchase powers; contact details to be forwarded for the HC property department and empty property officer.

MH thanked everyone in the community for their reliance this year and to all the members of the community council and admin for their work in what has been a particularly challenging year. MH was also thanked for the huge effort he has put in this year.

### **15. Next meeting**

**Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> January 2025 7pm at the Wildside Centre**