

STRATHERRICK & FOYERS COMMUNITY COUNCIL
MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 22nd MARCH 2011
AT THE FOYERS PRIMARY SCHOOL

Members present:

Mr A. Sutherland (Chairman)	Mrs E. Merther (Secretary)
Mrs K. Grant (Treasurer)	Mr D. Forbes
Mr K. Fraser	Mr S. Hunt
Mr A. MacPherson	Mr F. Ross
Mr J. Sharp	

Also present:

Police Constable A. Mathieson	Councillor M. Davidson
Councillor D. Hendry	
Mr Paul Owen and Mr Duncan McAdam (Scottish & Southern Energy)	

Apologies received:

Mr M. Houston	Mrs J. Hunt
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1. SSE - Foyers 5mw Recovery Project

Mr Paul Owen presented a brief history of the Foyers Falls Power Station and the failures which resulted in the pipe burst which occurred in December 2009. He explained that SSE's objective is to install a new penstock, pipeline, and carry out all the necessary work to secure a generating supply from this Station for the next 24 years, when the next major overhaul will be due.

He presented the proposed key dates in this programme, which is expected to take place from early April until the Station's return to service in December this year. The work having impact on the local community will be delivery of the pipes, and the pipe laying, which will involve periods of road closure. This is expected to be during the period from mid April until early August, but SSE hope that this work will take considerably less time, unless they meet with unexpected difficulties, and they hope to limit road closures to around two days. Diversions and the necessary signposting, will be provided for traffic to Lower Foyers. The pipes are to be shipped in to Inverness harbour, and Cllr. Davidson suggested that the possibility of delivery to Foyers via the canal might be considered. Mr Owen said this could be looked at..

Cllr. Davidson expressed concern about road closures taking place over the summer tourist season, particularly August. Mr Owen noted this concern, and hopes that all necessary road closures can be completed before August.

There was discussion about the importance of liaison with the local community and local businesses. The provision of a notice board was suggested, so that regular updates can be posted on work progress and any scheduled road closures. Mr Owen agreed that this could be done. Contact details for the Site Manager will also be provided so that any problems can be reported.

The Chairman thanked Mr Owen and Mr McAdam for the information presented.

2. Adoption of Minutes

Minutes of the meeting held on 22nd February 2011 were adopted as a true record.

Proposed: Mr A. MacPherson Seconded: Mrs K. Grant

3. Matters Arising from Previous Minutes

(a) Key Worker/Affordable Housing

The Secretary reported that there had still been no response to our emails. Cllr. Davidson informed the meeting that the budget cuts mean there is no money available for these schemes at present. However, the Highland Council is planning

to build some additional council houses, and the various options for these houses are currently being examined. Mrs Grant noted that much of the interest in the Gorthleck scheme was from elderly residents. Cllr. Davidson said that where new council housing is built the local needs will be taken into consideration, so that suitable accommodation is provided. It is not yet known where these houses will be built.

(b) Fraser Monument & Burial Ground

The Secretary has spoken to Historic Scotland and has a contact who should give us more detailed advice. She has the name of a local mason in Dingwall who may be able to provide a quotation, and will make enquiries for a third contractor. It should then be possible to start making contact with possible funding providers. She felt that we should aim for a possible start date for the work in Spring next year, and members agreed. It was noted that the monument and burial ground are on Mr Forbes' land, and grant providers will need to see that we have written permission to carry out the work. Mr Forbes agreed that he is happy to provide this.

(c) Broadband Provision

Cllr. Hendry informed the meeting that a "How to .." guide is currently being produced for communities interested in seeking a solution to lack of broadband coverage. He will keep us informed.

The CC has been told that Highlands & Islands Enterprise have succeeded in having the Highlands & Islands included in the proposed trials of superfast broadband, but it is not yet known which areas will be chosen for this, or how extensive the coverage will be. Cllr. Davidson advised that we should write to HIE to urge that the rural communities are not excluded from this trial, and to emphasise the importance of broadband provision to our tourist industry in this area. It was agreed that a letter should be sent.

(d) Care in Strathnairn

Mrs Grant has emailed Paul Davies, the Co-ordinator, and is awaiting a reply.

(e) Bottle Banks - Whitebridge

One or two possible sites were suggested. Cllr. Davidson suggested we contact Alan McKiddie of TEC Services with a view to checking suitability.

(f) Notice Board - Foyers Car Park

The blocked drains which were causing the flooding have now been cleared. Work is currently under way to tarmac some areas, including that around the notice board. Long term use for this board is still being discussed.

(g) Drumtemple Cemetery Gate

The Secretary has spoken to Mr Fridge, and he is aware of the difficulty with closing the gate. He is going to inspect it to see what work is required.

4. Correspondence

Highland Council Correspondence:

City Forum - Notice of meeting 08.03.11 (circulated)

Advance notice of new guidance for CCs on Constitution, Standing Orders and Code of Conduct

Notice - E-Kerbside recycling calendars

Other Correspondence & Circulars Received:

Community Councils Forum - Agenda for meeting 04.04.11 (circulated)

Northern Constabulary - Review of Scottish Policing Structure

5. Treasurer's Report

Account balances were reported as follows:

Ordinary A/c - £1594.85 (including £362 in grant money for Fraser Monument)

Project A/c - £27,586.58

6. Planning Matters

Cllr. Hendry took no part in discussions.

New applications:

House & granny flat - land north of Bridge Cottage, Torness (Full)

(This is an amendment to an application already submitted and inspected.)

Utility room extension - Dell Bungalow, Whitebridge (Full)

Members inspected plans and there were no objections.

7. Fire Brigade Report

Mr Kirkland was not present, but no new matters had been reported.

8. Policing Matters

Constable Mathieson reported that the vacant post at Drumnadrochit is currently being advertised. Once this is filled the Fort Augustus Station will no longer have responsibility for the Drumnadrochit area, which should take some of the pressure off their resources.

9. Roads and Signage

(a) Outstanding Matters

Surface damage road to Lower Foyers - This work has now been done, with two stretches completely resurfaced, and patching of other damaged areas. Members agreed that an excellent job has been done, and thanked Cllrs. Davidson and Hendry for their efforts in pushing for this work. It was felt that the work probably took longer than necessary due to an apparent lack of co-ordination with organisation. Cllrs. Davidson and Hendry agreed that there are issues which need to be addressed, but it was noted that TEC Services are under great pressure at present following the severe winter damage to roads throughout the Highlands.

Roadside tree clearance - The Chairman reported that a contractor is currently at work in the Inverfarigaig/Errogie pass. He understands that they hope to close this road, possibly for six weeks, in order to complete the necessary work. More information on this should be available shortly. He will again point out to the contractor several hazardous trees which he feels should be removed.

Errogie and Foyers speed limits - These are progressing. Legal notices for the next stage have been received.

Bus shelter Lower Foyers - It is hoped this will be installed in the next few weeks.

Run-offs Torness brae - These have not yet been cleared, but the work is scheduled.

Pot-holes Ardochy road - No new information has been received.

Timber lorries Trinloist road - Mrs Grant reported that the Council has repaired one area of damage caused by the lorries, but the number of these extremely heavy loads is continuing to damage the road. At one point lorries were noted to be passing approximately every five minutes, with traffic going on from 6.00 a.m. until after dark. Cllr. Hendry asked if some specific details about timings and lorries involved could be noted so that reports can be followed up with the people responsible. Cllr. Davidson felt that the total lack of communication with either the CC or local communities regarding these extraction programmes was quite unacceptable. She will make

further enquiries

Verge at An Clachan - Mrs Grant reported that this has not yet been done. Cllr. Hendry will make enquiries.

(b) Bridge at Lower Foyers

Further discussion took place regarding the possible option of a replacement footbridge. There was concern that if we back the suggestion of a new footbridge we may well jeopardise the chances of ever getting a new road bridge. The community and our Councillors worked very hard to get a new road bridge on the Capital Programme, and although it may be several years away, it is not at the bottom of the list. Cllr. Davidson was rather more optimistic that if all the preliminary work and design is done, we may get an opportunity to get our bridge earlier with 'slippage' from larger schemes. After discussion it was agreed that our first priority must be to continue to push for a replacement road bridge. Only if, for any reason, this is removed from the Capital Programme, should we lower our sights to a footbridge. Cllrs. Davidson and Hendry will encourage the relevant TECS departments to have the necessary design and preliminary work done to avoid any delays if an opportunity arises.

(c) Other Roads Items

Mr Forbes reported that a parapet wall near Boleskine Lodge is leaning and in danger of collapse. There is also a dip in the adjacent road.

Mr Sutherland reported some damage to upper portions of two of the bridge parapets on the Inverfarigaig pass road.

Mr Fraser reported a large pot-hole at the Calanour junction (B851/B862).

These matters will be raised with TEC Services.

The Chairman reported that the Rights of Way Officer has agreed to have repairs undertaken on some of the Core Paths network, but asks that the CC will agree to seeing that maintenance work such as drain clearance on these paths is carried out for the next 10 years. Members agreed to this.

10. Water and Sewerage

There were no new matters to report.

11. Community Project Gorthleck

Work is ongoing as previously reported. Volunteers are still needed to help.

12. Renewable Energy and Community Benefit

Cllr. Davidson passed on papers regarding Forestry Commission offers of land for green energy schemes (hydro and wind farm), together with opportunities for local communities to have an involvement. The CC will express an interest in this.

The Chairman reported that negotiations on the Dunmaglass and Corriegarth schemes have not yet been concluded.

Highland Council have produced a helpful guidance paper on community benefit negotiations and distribution.

Notices have been received from SSE regarding the Balmacaan and Stronelaig wind farm proposals. The Secretary has requested that they attend one of our meetings to present information.

13. Any Other Competent Business

(a) Mr Hunt wondered if we could ask SSE to replace the unsafe footbridge behind the fish farm at Lower Foyers while they are undertaking their major work this summer.

Enquiries will be made.

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(b) Mr Forbes reported that a resident of Upper Foyers is looking into the feasibility of operating a water taxi from Foyers. It was agreed that this would be a very popular tourist facility. British Waterways are still to carry out their planned survey of the Foyers jetty. Cllr. Davidson will enquire about this.

(c) The Chairman reported that the Community Trust has difficulty in finding a quorum at times for its meetings due to the eight year residency rule before members can vote. He asked if the CC would relax this rule to five years. After discussion it was agreed to retain the eight year rule overall, but to allow no more than 30% of voting members on the committee with five years residency. The Chairman agreed that this will solve the problem.

(d) The Chairman reported that the Trust is hoping to go ahead with its project at the Errogie corner at the top of the Inverfarigaig pass. This will involve demolition of the existing cottage, re-alignment of the road to straighten out this dangerous corner, and the building (in partnership with the Highland Housing Alliance) of two new semi-detached cottages. Some funds have come from other sources, so the Trust will only be funding the building of the new cottages. However, this will mean a large capital outlay, so in the short term there may be less money available for smaller, local projects. The Trust would like a letter from the CC to support this course of action. It was agreed that this is an excellent project, as well as an investment for the Trust, and the CC was happy to offer its support. Cllr. Davidson noted that there may be ways to spread the capital outlay to lessen the impact in the short term, and the Chairman confirmed that the Trust is looking at this possibility.

(e) The Chairman presented a letter which had been received from Mr Hugh Nicol regarding continuing problems with anti-social behaviour in the vicinity of Gorthleck Hall. Its contents were noted. Constable Mathieson reported that the Police are working with other agencies involved in this situation towards a long term solution, but unfortunately the processes involved take a long time.

(f) The Chairman informed members that the annual Litter Pick will take place on 10th April, starting at Does at 11.00 a.m. and finishing at the Cafe in Foyers. He suggested that we write to invite the Forestry Commission, as much of this is on their land.

(g) The Secretary has made a request for the Gorthleck Christmas tree to be moved to its original position, but has not yet had a reply.

(h) It was noted that the public toilets at Foyers are to be closed. This will be discussed at our next meeting.

(i) Some problems in relation to snow clearance were raised. Problems encountered during this winter will be discussed at our next meeting.

14. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be on Tuesday 26th April 2011 at the Stratherrick Hall in Gorthleck.

The meeting was closed at 9.30 p.m.