

STRATHERRICK & FOYERS COMMUNITY COUNCIL
MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 23rd FEBRUARY 2010
AT THE STRATHERRICK HALL, GORTHLECK

Members present:

Mr M. Houston (Chairman)
Mrs K. Grant (Treasurer)
Mr K. Fraser
Mrs L. MacGregor
Mr A. Sutherland

Mrs E. Merther (Secretary)
Mr M. Bateman
Mr P. Higham
Mr A. MacPherson

Also present:

Councillor M. Davidson
Mr R. Evans (TEC Services)

Councillor H. Wood
Mr G. Irwin (North British Windpower)

Apologies received:

Mr A. Nicol
Councillor D. Hendry

Councillor H. Carmichael

1. Adoption of Minutes

Minutes of the meeting held on 26th January 2010 were adopted as a true record.

Proposed: Mrs K. Grant

Seconded: Mr M. Houston

2. Update on Corriegarth Wind Farm

Mr Graham Irwin representing North British Windpower attended the meeting to present the latest information. Since the initial proposals four to five years ago, negotiations have been undertaken with Highland Council TEC Services to agree the various transport issues including principal access route; road upgrades; restoration of roads following completion of contract. It has been agreed to concentrate on a single access route from the A9 via Daviot and Croachy, with improvements to narrow sections and to the very sharp corner at Errogie, and improved signage at villages and schools.

Planning consent has now been obtained for 20 turbines for a 25 year period. Mr Irwin was unable to give an exact timescale, but thought that construction would probably begin within three to four years. He indicated that refurbishment of the turbines at the end of the 25 year period was theoretically possible, and a further planning application would be required for that. However, his own belief was that alternative renewable sources would be available by then, in which case the turbines would almost certainly be removed. This would mean complete clearance of the site, with only the concrete bases remaining. Money for decommissioning is included in the costings.

NBW is currently awaiting the grid connection offer, which will indicate the proposed route for connection to the National Grid. This aspect is under the control of the National Grid, and Mr Irwin confirmed that the Community Council will have an opportunity to express its views on the proposals.

Mr Irwin reported that community benefit from NBW and the landowner for this project would amount to £100,000 per year for the 25 year life of the scheme, paid direct to a suitable Community Trust. Mr Sutherland informed him that a Community Trust is already in place, handling benefits from the Glendoe hydro and River E schemes. Mr Sutherland also enquired about the feasibility of more community involvement in the form of purchase of one of the turbines. Mr Irwin confirmed that this was possible, and has been done on some other schemes. He felt that this would need to be agreed in the early stages of planning a scheme, and it would now be difficult to

renegotiate agreements in order to make this part of the Corriegarth scheme. The problem was raised of fast traffic on local roads, particularly in relation to children walking to school. It was noted that this had been a problem during the Glendoe construction. Mr Irwin agreed that a suitable traffic management plan would need to be in place to control speed and other safety issues. Cllr. Wood also reported that he has raised the matter of prompt repairs being carried out to roads after construction, as there were problems with delays following the Glendoe scheme. The Chairman thanked Mr Irwin for attending and presenting the information.

3. Winter Gritting & Road Maintenance

Mr Richard Evans of TEC Services attended to discuss recent problems in relation to the winter conditions.

Members informed Mr Evans of major problems in clearing roads due to large numbers of fallen trees, and also trees and vegetation overhanging with snow. This meant that in many areas the snow plough/gritter was completely unable to gain access to clear roads. Mrs MacGregor reported that she had spent many hours on the telephone trying to arrange clearance of roads for medical and ambulance access, and also for some elderly residents who were without fuel. She had been unable to obtain any assistance.

It was agreed that the problem of trees and vegetation too close to the road is a long-term problem which has been neglected over a number of years, despite CC requests for work to be done. Mr Evans reported that a press release had been published reminding landowners of their obligations to keep roadsides clear, and agreed that a programme of clearance is necessary. In many areas the landowner in question is Forestry Commission, and other landowners will need to be identified and contacted.

Members will compile a list of problem areas for Mr Evans, and try to indicate priorities.

Another problem was reported in relation to blading of roads. It was felt that this has arisen because the contractor has to change his gritting load from salt to sand, depending on the priority of the roads being treated, meaning that he has to return to the depot to change loads when moving from salted to sanded routes. This has resulted in delays to lower priority routes being bladed. Mr Evans will look into this.

The Chairman thanked Mr Evans for attending for discussion.

4. Matters Arising from Previous Minutes

(a) Key Worker/Affordable Housing

The Secretary has now received a reply from Albyn Housing about progress on the Gorthleck scheme. They now have information on the housing mix and numbers, and wish to present their proposals to the CC prior to submitting their planning application. It is hoped that Helen Mackie (Development Officer with Albyn) will attend the next meeting to present these proposals. Confirmation is awaited.

(b) Wade's Bridge at Whitebridge

Mr Sutherland reported that an application had been made to the Community Trust for £45,000 towards this project. Approaches had been made to the various landowners concerned, but none is prepared to make any contribution. The Trust felt that it would have difficulty in justifying a grant of this size for such a project. This information has been passed back to Mr Townshend, and it was felt that other funding sources or a cheaper scheme would have to be considered.

(c) Fraser Monument & Burial Ground at Foyers

The Secretary met with Craig Frew of Laing Traditional Masonry, who took photographs and measurements and inspected the Monument and burial ground. He now has all the information required to provide a survey and estimate for the work necessary. An application was made to the Ward Discretionary Budget for the cost of the survey. A grant of £150 has been received and the CC will contribute a further £50. Another £212 is needed to meet the cost of the survey (£411.25p including VAT), and it was agreed that an application will be made to the Community Trust.

(d) Right of Way through Knockie Estate

Mr Sutherland is meeting with Mr Eastaugh to look at the proposed change of route, and the Chairman will post the information on the Community Web Site to request any feedback on the proposal.

(e) Dog Fouling - Children's Play Area, Lower Foyers

Mr Nicol was unable to attend so further information was not available. As suggested by a resident, the Secretary had arranged for each household in Riverside to receive a letter reminding them of their responsibilities in this matter.

(f) Photocopier

Constable Mathieson had notified the Secretary that the second hand machine he had mentioned was unfortunately no longer available.

5. Correspondence

Highland Council Correspondence

Notification of Planning Committee hearing on 26th March 2010 - Dunmaglass
Wind Farm application

ePlanning News - February 2010

Notification of intention to re-site Christmas tree at Gorthleck

Oil paintings in public ownership

Other Correspondence & Circulars Received

Renewable Energy Systems - update on proposals for Dunmaglass Wind Farm

Minutes of Stratherrick & Foyers Community Trust: Meeting 9th February 2010

AGM 9th February 2010

Scottish & Southern Energy - Update on repair work starting at Glendoe (circulated)

Scottish Natural Heritage - Knockie Lochs Review of SSSI

Circular - NSPCC Helpline

Catalogue - Sutcliffe Play

Letters Sent

Further enquiry to Albyn Housing about affordable housing in Gorthleck

Letter to Highland Council regarding negotiation of community benefit arising from
green energy projects

Letter to TEC Services regarding cattle grid at Bochruben on B862

Letters to Riverside residents regarding dog fouling problem

6. Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer reported account balances as follows:

Project A/c - £5663.58

(A cheque for £1000 had been paid for management of the Community Project since the last meeting.)

Ordinary A/c - £786.70 (Including £150 grant for Fraser Monument and £11.73 held for Mr J. Campbell, Senior Citizens' Fund)

7. Planning Matters

Cllrs. Davidson and Wood took no part in discussion of planning matters.

Applications

Erection of house at West Drummond Cottage, Whitebridge

Erection of House and Garage - land 50m. W of Cairns Croft, Whitebridge

Site visits had been carried out and there were no objections.

House at land 170m SW of Upper Cultie, Gorthleck. (Mrs Grant declared an interest in this application.)

Detailed plans received, a site visit having already been carried out. Members inspected the detailed plans and there were no objections.

New Applications

3 Houses at sites N of Wester Drummond, Whitebridge

A site visit will be carried out.

Other Planning Matters

A reply had been received from Mr David Polson in Planning in relation to the CC's request for guidance on a planning matter. Members felt that there are issues in his reply which require further discussion, and it was agreed to invite him to our next meeting.

8. Fire Brigade Report

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

9. Policing Matters

Constable Mathieson was not present, but no new matters had been reported.

10. Roads and Signage

(a) Outstanding Matters

A reply has been received regarding problems with the cattle grid adjacent to Bochruben Schoolhouse. The grid itself has been inspected and is in good order, but the problems were thought to have been due to 'frost heave', which has now subsided somewhat. However, there are proposals for future replacement of the grid and improvement of the adjacent road.

Following further representations by Cllr. Davidson, the Council has agreed to provision of a bus shelter in Lower Foyers in the 2010/11 budget. The Secretary is meeting with Neil Young of TEC Services on 10th March to look at a suitable site.

(b) Bridge in Lower Foyers

Cllr. Davidson reported that the capital programme has been delayed, so there is still no news about the bridge. The importance of simply getting a new bridge onto the programme, even if it is not at the top of the list, was agreed.

The Secretary had looked at the proposals given to Cllr. Hendry for dealing with an emergency situation in the event of the bailey bridge being closed, and felt that these still leave a lot to be desired. The principal problem in the event of a serious fire or life threatening medical emergency is the time it will take to implement any of these proposals. She will contact Cllr. Hendry to obtain the name of the person responsible so that the CC can forward a detailed note of concerns.

11. Water and Sewerage

There was nothing new to report.

12. Community Project - Gorthleck

A meeting had taken place with the Project Manager. She has been hard at work preparing grant applications, the largest of which will be to the Lottery Fund. Things are now slowly moving forward.

13. Renewable Energy and Community Benefit

A Planning hearing regarding the Dunmaglass Wind Farm proposal is to be held on 26th March.

Mr Sutherland reported that he has a meeting arranged with William Gilfinnan and representatives of Strathnairn and Strathdearn CCs to discuss community benefit which may arise from this project. He is also hopeful that arrangements will be made to produce a standard negotiation procedure for these situations, leading to more structured consistency.

Details will be published in the next Boleskine Bulletin of the first tranche of energy saving expenditure on houses already surveyed. The Trust wishes to encourage more householders to come forward.

A meeting is to take place with the Forestry Commission regarding the proposed hydro scheme on the River Farigaig, with a view to the possibility of community involvement.

14. Any Other Competent Business

(a) Mr Bateman presented the Community Trust Report and Financial Statement for the year ended 30th June 2009.

(b) It was noted that the large number of wind blown trees and those brought down by the recent snow throughout the forestry plantations, pose a significant fire hazard.

15. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be on Tuesday 23rd March 2010 at the Foyers Primary School.

The meeting was closed at 9.20 p.m.