

STRATHERRICK & FOYERS COMMUNITY COUNCIL
MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 1st SEPTEMBER 2009
AT THE STRATHERRICK HALL, GORTHLECK

Members present:

Mr M. Houston (Chairman)

Mrs K. Fraser (Treasurer)

Mr K. Fraser

Mrs L. MacGregor

Mrs E. Merther (Secretary)

Mr M. Bateman

Mr P. Higham

Mr A. Sutherland

Also present:

Councillor D. Hendry

Apologies received:

Mr A. MacPherson

Councillor H. Carmichael

Mr N. Kirkland

Mr A. Nicol

Councillor M. Davidson

1. Adoption of Minutes

The Minutes of the last meeting were adopted as a true record.

Proposed: Mr M. Bateman

Seconded: Mr A. Sutherland

2. Steading Project Lower Foyers

Mr Donald Forbes attended the meeting to report on the response to a meeting called by himself and his wife with regard to possible development of the old farm steadings as a community/visitor centre. The building would be given over, in some way to be determined, to the community. He reported that some concern had been expressed about the size of the building and possible running costs as a community centre. He emphasised that the vision was of a wider range of uses, with the community centre being just one part of it. Possible uses included provision of some wet weather facilities such as indoor sports; outdoor sports such as tennis courts, bowling green; a snack bar; craft workshops/retail outlets; agricultural and industrial (aluminium) heritage museum.

A number of people had expressed interest in the project, and a willingness to be involved. Mr Forbes reported that Highlands & Islands Enterprise are due to look at the buildings to see if they will provide funding for a feasibility study. Assuming that a study is funded, and that the result is positive, then major funding would need to be accessed for the project. It is understood that there may be a limited time to apply for funding which is currently available to community groups.

If the initial funding issues can be solved, then there will need to be support and enthusiasm from the community to take the project forward.

Mr Forbes and his wife hope to provide some other tourist facilities locally to encourage tourists to spend more time and money in the area. They are currently looking at facilities for camping/caravanning, and additional facilities for tourists arriving by boat, possibly to include a new mooring jetty. They felt that the steadings project could complement this, as well as providing a much needed focus for village activities.

3. Matters Arising from Previous Minutes

(a) Key Worker/Affordable Housing

An enquiry had been received from HSCHT regarding land ownership in relation to a surface water drainage issue at the Gorthleck site. The Chairman had supplied the information, and was told that work is continuing to move the scheme forward.

(b) Community Web Site

The Chairman reported that he is getting in touch with Mr Holt, and believes that the site is ready to go.

(c) War Memorial at Gorthleck

The Secretary reported that the grant has been received from the War Memorials Trust for the repainting of the lettering, and all bills have been paid. The CC is indebted to the Trust and to Highland Council for their assistance. The Trust covered 75% of the cost and Highland Council the remaining 25%. We are grateful to Louise McCaul our Ward Manager, and Mr Iain Wallace of TEC Services for arranging the Council contribution. A letter of thanks has been sent to the Trust.

A short piece about the Memorial has been submitted to the Boleskine Bulletin together with a photograph.

(d) Tourist Route Signs

The Secretary received an email indicating that signs are being prepared for Foyers, Whitebridge and Inverfarigaig. Cllr. Hendry reported that he believes signs for Gorthleck and Errogie are planned for the 'second wave' of signs.

(e) Wade's Bridge at Whitebridge

Mr Bateman reported that steady progress is being made, and that more support is always welcome.

(f) Fraser Monument & Burial Ground at Foyers

The Secretary is contacting Historic Scotland to discuss this.

(g) Photocopier

The Chairman has been in touch with Canon about servicing the photocopier. They declined to attempt a service, as they say it is now obsolete, and they would be unable to supply parts. They suggested a new machine, but the costs involved would be more than the CC could afford. There was some discussion about whether a new machine is necessary, and the possibility of obtaining a second hand machine, which would do all that is required. This matter will be held over for further discussion.

(h) Right of Way through Knockie Estate

The Secretary had received an email from Stewart Eastaugh, the Access Officer. He had been to see the estate owner, his agent, and the manager. Mr Eastaugh requested that anyone with knowledge of a right of way through the Knockie Estate should contact him. Several members indicated that they would get in touch with him, and also pass the request to other people who had concerns.

4. Correspondence

Highland Council Correspondence

Notice of meeting - LEADER projects, 4th August, 2009 (Circulated)

Notice of meeting - Public Transport in Aird & Loch Ness, 31st August 2009 (Circulated)

Note - this meeting was later cancelled.

Notice of Ward Forum Meeting - Highland Wide Local Development Plan, 17th September 2009 (Circulated)

Notice - Action for Planning Transparency

Small grants - Community projects for Highland Homecoming festival (Circulated)

Nomination form - Highland Council Quality Awards 2009

Highland Wide Local Development Plan - Highland Council has requested responses to the proposals. This will be considered at the next meeting.

Other Correspondence & Circulars Received

Notice of Glendoe Energy Efficiency Fund meeting - 23rd July 2009

Energy Efficiency Fund Procedure (Circulated)

Inverness Area Community Councils Forum

Agenda for next meeting - 15th September 2009 (Circulated)

Inverness South CC Notice of Highland Housing Fair - 7th September 2009 (Circulated)

Information on petition regarding incinerator at Invergordon (Circulated)
From Malcolm Sutherland:

Information on First Monster Challenge -12th September 2009

Information on Loch Ness Marathon - 4th October 2009 (Circulated)

Notice about Council for Voluntary Services, Inverness

Invitation from Highland Small Communities Housing Trust for the CC to join the Trust,
and to nominate a representative. Mr Higham agreed to undertake this.

Letters Sent

Letter to Scottish Water regarding water main crossing old bridge in Lower Foyers

Letter of thanks to War Memorials Trust for grant

Letter of thanks to Lord Burton for information on bailey bridges

Letter to Highland Council Access Officer on right of way through Knockie Estate
and reply

Reply to Parent Council, Stratherrick School regarding community minibus

Reply regarding grass cutting on shinty pitch

5. Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer reported account balances as follows:

Ordinary A/c £1286.89 (including £124.03 held for Mr J. Campbell - Senior Citizens Fund), and Project A/c £3663.58.

Since the last meeting the following amounts have been received:

Highland Council grant: £993.48

War Memorials Trust: £870.00

The following cheques have been written:

For the War Memorial: £870.00

Boleskine Bulletin: £125.00

6. Planning Matters

(a) Applications

Note - Cllr. Hendry left the meeting during discussion of planning matters.

(i) Since the CC meeting in June the following applications were received. Site visits were made and responses sent:

Erect sun room/bedroom at Migovie Cottage, Gorthleck - No objections

House & garage, Easter Drummond Lodge, Whitebridge (outline) - No objections

2 house plots NW of Heatherly, Errogie (outline) - The CC expressed concern about the dangerous access onto the road due to very poor visibility. Concern was also expressed as to whether the proposed site was large enough for two properties.

2 house plots, South Muirnich Farm, Gorthleck (outline) - There were no objections to the plans as such, but the CC noted that it was planned to use the public system for foul water drainage. A concern was raised that the public system was believed to have capacity only for the planned affordable housing development, and that allowing other properties to access the system might jeopardise this development.

(ii) Erection of 80m. high meteorological monitoring equipment at Sidhean Dubh, Whitebridge, and at Meallan Odhar, Whitebridge (two applications).

There were no objections.

(iii) Forestry consultation documents (forwarded via our local Councillors):

Planting at Ardochy, Whitebridge (Areas of native woodland planting, native woodland regeneration, and conifer planting - A comment had been sent from the CC requesting a clear access corridor to the hill top in the area concerned, and no planting

within 100m. of the summit. A meeting is to take place regarding the preferred access corridor.

Planting at Gorthleck and Farraline (Native woodland planting) - There were no objections.

It was noted that Forestry Consultation documents are not sent to the CC through the usual planning channels as they come under different regulations. Some concern was expressed about situations where new road accesses might be constructed for these schemes. Cllr. Hendry indicated that responsibility for these would fall to the Roads Department. CC members felt that the CC should have an opportunity to have some input where road matters are concerned in these applications, not just for construction of new access roads, but also in relation to repairs to existing roads following forestry operations. Cllr. Hendry will make enquiries.

(b) Other planning matters

The CC has been notified that the following applications have been granted:

House at land 170m. SW Upper Cultie, Gorthleck

Workshop at Foyers House

Sun room/bedroom at Migovie Cottage, Gorthleck

Change of use from agricultural to residential development, Drive Park, Foyers

7. Fire Brigade Report

Mr Kirkland was unable to attend the meeting, but had emailed his report. A new Fire Station is planned adjacent to the current site, but the timing of this will depend on when funding becomes available. The fire appliance has been fitted with a new high tech Firelink radio system. This has an on-board computer system with touch screen and gps locator. It is similar to the system used by the Police. He has been training other stations in its use.

Finally, the Fire Brigade is holding its annual fund raising Car Wash at the station on Saturday 19th September from 10.00 a.m. to 1.00 p.m. They will be happy to deal with dirty vehicles, and will be showing people around the station.

8. Policing Matters

No new matters had been reported.

9. Roads & Signage

(a) Progress on Outstanding Matters

Following the on-site meeting with TEC Services in June, a letter has been received detailing the intended work.

B862 Collapsed culvert 900m. beyond Newlands junction - If this cannot be repaired it will be replaced this year, probably in October. Meantime depression in the road will be monitored and patched if required.

B851 Collapsed culvert 200m. beyond B862 junction - It will be replaced this year, probably in October. Meantime depression in the road will be monitored and patched if required.

B862/B851 junction - It is intended to reconfigure this as a simple T junction and change priorities so that traffic to and from Farr has priority. Possibly before this winter, but if not, then will be done next spring.

B862 Narrow section south of Torness - Improvements to signing and road marking, and cut back vegetation to improve safety. By 31st October 2009.

B862 Loch Ceo Glais - Improvements to signing and road marking to improve safety. By 31st October 2009.

Inverfarigaig Pass - Vegetation to be cut back in next few months.

Leadclune road - Sections looked at have been included in this year's resurfacing programme. Defective cattle grid will be replaced by 30th September 2009.

B862 Improvement from Glendoe money - Land owner has been contacted and meeting will be arranged to discuss land acquisition. It is hoped road widening could start later this year.

CC members reported that work has started on a number of these projects.

(b) Bridge at Lower Foyers

The Secretary reported that a short article had appeared in the Inverness Courier, following which the BBC Alba Gaelic news programme came out to record a short piece. Mr Sutherland (our resident Gaelic speaker) and the Secretary presented information on the bridge problem.

The Secretary has written to Scottish Water to make sure they are aware of the risk to the water main in the event of a collapse of the old bridge.

Cllr. Hendry said that he would enquire as to the date of this month's meeting regarding priorities for the capital programme.

In the meantime contractors have been out to Lower Foyers to firm up the deck plates on the bailey bridge and reduce the noise. They have tack welded the plates together and have patched the splits in some plates. At least for now the bridge is quiet.

(c) Other roads issues

(i) The Secretary noted that the approach to the old bridge in Lower Foyers had a 'No through road' sign, and requested that a sign should be placed at the approach to the bailey bridge. This year in particular there has been a steady stream of tourist traffic crossing the river, driving around Riverside, and even as far as the forestry gate behind Foyers Mains, looking for a route through to Whitebridge or Upper Foyers. Cllr. Hendry said that he would request a sign.

(ii) Several members reported areas where verges have either not been cut at all this year, or where new growth required further cutting. Two mentioned particularly were the Trinloist road and the Loch Bran road. It was also noted that cutting back of vegetation along the lochside between Foyers and Dores was not as good this year as previously, and visibility in a number of places is very poor. Letters will be sent.

(iii) The issue of surfacing of bell mouth entrances at new properties was raised. The CC understands that the Planning Department is in the process of checking where this work has not been done, and enforcement notices will be issued where necessary. There was also some discussion about the dangers presented by rocks and other solid obstructions being placed at the roadside adjacent to property entrances on our narrow rural roads.

10. Water & Sewerage

An enquiry was made as to whether there are any plans to increase the capacity of the public drainage system in Gorthleck. There are no plans known.

11. Community Project

The Chairman reported that there should be more detailed information available to present to the CC by the next meeting.

12. Renewable Energy & Community Benefit

(a) Mr Sutherland reported that the Forestry Commission are looking at the potential for a small scale hydro-electric scheme in the Inverfarigaig gorge. It was noted that such schemes have been very successful in other areas.

(b) He reported that there had been further discussion with SSE regarding energy efficiency monies. Unfortunately a further layer of bureaucracy in the accessing of funds

has been imposed in the form of the Scottish Charities Foundation, but he is hopeful that this problem can be resolved. Residents who requested home energy audits should be hearing about this shortly.

13. Any Other Competent Business

(a) Mr Sutherland had circulated details regarding the construction of an unsightly hill track on Beinn Bhuraich in Stratherrick, and the possible damage this might cause. He had established that projects like this are not subject to the usual planning regulations as they come under the heading of agricultural use. He felt that this is an unsatisfactory situation where projects on this scale can potentially have significant scenic and environmental implications. Further enquiries are ongoing.

(b) Cllr. Hendry reported that funds are available for tourist signs where the provision of dual language English/Gaelic signs is proposed.

(c) The Secretary requested that members check the minor amendments to the CC Constitution before the next meeting, so that a copy can be submitted to Highland Council.

14. Dates for Future Meetings

22nd September 2009	Foyers Primary School
27th October 2009	Stratherrick Hall
24th November 2009	Foyers Primary School
15th December 2009	Stratherrick Hall
26th January 2010	Foyers Primary School
23rd February 2010	Stratherrick Hall

Any changes to these will be notified.

The meeting was closed at 9.05 p.m.