

ARDGAY & DISTRICT COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Draft Minutes of meeting held on Monday, 11th June 2012 at 7pm in Ardgay Hall

Present: Elected members: David Hannah, Chair (DH), Peter Armstrong, Secretary (PA), Alan Lawrence, Treasurer (AL), Phil Olson (PO), Marion Turner (MT), Bob Sendall (BS), David Laver (DL), Betty Wright (BW)

Invited Guests: Gavin Steel, Eric Grant and John Henderson of SSE; Bill Robertson, Way Leave Officer CKG Galbraith

Also present: Highland Councillor George Farlow (GF)

Members of the public: Margaret Ross, Barbara Gemmill, Willie MacLaren

Minutes Secretary: Mary Goulder (MG)

Apologies: Morven Smith SSE



Item 1. Welcome/ SSE Presentation. David Hannah opened the meeting welcoming everyone and inviting Gavin Steel of SSE to address the meeting. Gavin introduced himself as the Community Liaison Manager, with his colleagues being Project Managers on the two phases of the project to upgrade the transmission infrastructure serving the north of Scotland. SHETL (Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission Ltd) is a division of SSE dealing with the transmission system north of Perth including upgrading the towers and conductors on the transmission line from Dounreay to Beaully and the building of two sub-stations at Loch Buidhe and Ardross. The transmission line was previously only utilised along one side of the towers and is now being upgraded to use both, with the older conductors being replaced and the towers strengthened as required. Where faults are found in the existing system they are repaired as part of the upgrading. There are around 150 people working on the project including local sub-contractors Norpower in Muir of Ord. Benefits to the local economy are shared through the area using various B&B establishments near to work areas, shops, fuel purchases, etc. Archaeology, bird and wildlife specialists are employed, as are two full time environmental advisors and an environmental manager all of whom work closely with SNH, RSPB and local communities over such issues as breeding periods, over-wintering, etc. A successful re-siting of an osprey nest using an artificial nesting site is just one of the achievements in this area, with the birds sitting on eggs once again this year. The thinking behind the choice of the Loch Buidhe site for the sub-station was explained as was the consideration given to the most effective access while maintaining the minimum disruption locally. Work should commence on the sub-station in March/April 2013 and is expected to complete in November 2015 with the transmission line work on Phase 1 finishing in 2013 and Phase 2 running between May 2014 and June 2015. No disruption to household supplies is anticipated during these working periods. A public presentation/exhibition is scheduled in Ardgay Hall for Wednesday 20th June between 2pm and 6pm with a second the following night in Ardross. The issue of litter and general rubbish left after work has been carried out was raised by Barbara Gemmill. She was assured that every step is taken to clear up and also that if a complaint is lodged it is followed up and dealt with promptly by SSE. There being no further questions most of the team left at 7.40pm with Gavin opting to stay on to observe the rest of the meeting. Barbara Gemmill and Margaret Ross also left at this time.

Item 2. AGM. See separate Minutes.

Item 3/4. Apologies/Police report. See above. The last attendance by any Police representative at an Ardgay CC meeting was in December 2011. While it is understood that it is not always possible for someone to attend, a report and/or apologies would be welcomed. MG to advise PC Hunter in the hope that at least a brief summary report could be presented each month. **MG Action.**

Item 5. Minutes of last meeting. The Minutes of the May meeting were accepted as a true and accurate record; proposed by Phil Olson, seconded by David Hannah.

Item 6. Matters arising. (1) BW asked if there had been any liaison with the GPs in Bonar Bridge following the presentation by Gareth Dixon last month with regard to the possible establishment of a **dispensing pharmacy**. PO had had a brief discussion with Dr Chris Mair who had not indicated a definite view on the possible effects of the changes this would incur. **(2) Christmas lights.** DH has discussed the proposed requirements with Robbie Gunn, Chief Lighting Engineer for Highland Council who indicated that HC would be able to supply most of what was asked. Robbie Gunn and Paul Whittock will now liaise directly. A local Brora company has been identified to supply the frames required. It is hoped that the new sockets at the school will be installed during the summer.

(3) CC logo. The new logo met with approval and should be used in future on all CC headed paperwork. BS questioned whether the Kyle of Sutherland logo should be included in the heading. It was agreed to discuss with Creich CC to gauge the feeling there as to whether or not both CCs should add that logo to their documentation. Discuss at next meeting. **Agenda item.**

(4) Multi-member Highland Council Wards in Sutherland. A draft letter, prepared by PO, was passed round for opinion with the Chair proposing that this now be sent to a lengthy list of recipients including Highland MSPs, John Thurso MP, Highland Council, Highland Councillors and the Scottish Boundaries Commission. The aim of the letter is to highlight the difficulties encountered in the quality of service due to the large areas Councillors are expected to cover. A move to smaller, single member wards would help to lessen these difficulties. BW seconded the proposal to send the letter which will now be circulated accordingly. **PA Action.**

Item 7. Correspondence. Scot Rail. PA advised no solution has yet been put forward by **ScotRail** regarding the request for signage to indicate the departure platform of the early morning train. Willie MacLaren stated that the branches he previously complained about which limit sightlines by the railway bridge, have now grown to obscure half the roadway. The Secretary had been advised by Network Rail that this issue had been dealt with, along with repairs to the damaged fencing. He will follow this up right away. AL reported that the litter on the track on either side of the platform is appalling. DH highlighted the ongoing **traffic lights issue at the Ardcrone Quarry** where the railway banking has fallen away leaving the road liable to subsidence. Secretary will put all these issues to Network Rail once again, urging attention. Cllr Farlow will take the matters to HC as he believes it could arrange to clear the litter, charging Network Rail for the work. He will also speak to Simon Young, Chief Engineer, to see if anything can be done quickly to repair the banking and the road where the surface is now wearing unevenly. **PA/GF Action.**

Recycling point on South Bonar Industrial Estate. Litter around the bins is an ongoing problem. Potholes at the entrance to the area have deepened and are hazardous to vehicles, deterring people from driving to use the bins. As the new Highland Council household programme begins and people are forced to take their glass waste to the recycling point this will become a major issue with the likely result that the public will stop recycling glass altogether.

Item 8. Windfarms update. Rosehall. The last liaison meeting will be held tomorrow, 12th June. The installation should go live in August. **Glencassley.** PO and MT attended the exhibition by SSE in Rosehall. The number of turbines has been halved and those originally sited on the ridge have been moved thereby improving the visual impact on the Shinness area. **Sallachy.** Discussions are ongoing regarding community benefit. **Achany.** The next deadline for grant applications is 2nd July with decisions made in August. **Glenmorrie/Rock-by-Sea.** Nothing new this month. **Beinn Tharsuinn.** A further tranche of due funds has been paid into the CC accounts for the next year of distribution. No progress has been made in securing amendments to the application form. Procedure re-established that MG will circulate applications as quickly as possible on receipt from Phil Tomalin. CC members should then return their queries to her promptly in order that they can be put to the applicants ahead of the next meeting and thus save time at the decision discussions. **MG/All Action.**

Item 9. Treasurer's report. The Treasurer's Account balance stands at £1283.76 with no outstanding payments; Project Account at £3033.39 with outstanding payments of £156 and the Toilets Account at £488.65 with outstanding payments of £189. Next month will therefore be the last month payments can be met without the receipt of the Highland Council grants. The meeting approved the action of moving money from the Project Account if necessary to cover any delay in receipt of HC funding. A thank you letter has been received from Mr & Mrs Calder in respect of the £50 donation to Help for Heroes in lieu of their accounts auditing fees.

Item 10. Feedback from Community Benefit Seminar. Three CC members attended from Ardgay. They were encouraged to see that over 50% of attendees were either CC members, local development officers or similar. All found the event afforded a useful exchange of views. Ardgay, with Creich and the Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust, appeared to be ahead of most of the groups represented in their approach to and dealings with community benefit although several different methods were shown to be in place in other areas. The Achany apprenticeship scheme was particularly noted and perhaps is being seen as a pilot scheme for others. Housing trusts and transport schemes are being considered in some areas. Several have opted not to become registered charities, finding the regulations restrictive. One CC, Udny, has designated 10% from its funds to be allocated outwith its own area; this can be utilised anywhere at the discretion of the CC. Udny also owns its own single turbine. A full report on the seminar is expected in due course.

Item 11. Open Shop Week. A date has not yet been chosen but will be circulated as soon as it is. PA will liaise by email with members to set up a meeting to discuss the format to be followed. A survey will be compiled to gauge public opinion and ideas but care must be taken not to raise expectations. People must be encouraged to put forward

their own plans as to how they see their ideas being brought to fruition. Free hall slots will be secured with the help of KOSDT Development Officer Lynsey Burns, with tea and coffee being available in a friendly atmosphere – perhaps a ‘garden’ like scene with outdoor furniture recreating a relaxing venue. A gazebo/tent will be set up outside as a first-stop point from which people can be directed into the hall to find more information and engage in a further exchange of views. KOSDT will be asked to help supply materials required such as white/black/display boards, charts, pens, etc. **PA/MT/All Action.**

Item 12. Newsletter/ distribution. The newsletter is now in the hands of new printers with the costs rising to £1.50 per copy. (350 produced four times per year bringing the cost to around £2,100 per annum.) The newsletter is seen as a great asset, a good vehicle for communication and the distribution by CC members affords excellent opportunities for discussions and exchanges of views with the community. It would be a sad loss. This is to be an agenda item next month to discuss how to continue to produce and fund future issues. **Agenda item.** Several ‘inserts’ are being included with the newsletter this month. DH not happy about doing this but agreed that the issues this time are important enough to warrant it. One of the inserts is a request for signatures of those approving the move to register an interest in a **Community Right to Buy** with regard to the land and buildings at the Lady Ross. The legislation is in place with many steps which must be followed, the first being the gathering of signatures of 10% of the voting population to indicate approval. The Lady Ross is the first site under consideration but others within the village are being considered. Registering an interest safeguards the community interest in a property if and when it should be put on the market for sale. Bob Sendall registered his strong feelings that the wording of the survey form was contentious and inflammatory and does not give any indication as to what the procedures are or what the site might be used for should it be purchased by the community in this way. Other CC members felt that action has to be taken now as the site has lain unused for three years and is visibly deteriorating. Should it be placed on the open market before a Community Right to Buy option has been registered, the community could well miss out on the opportunity. If the 10% is reached and registration achieved the community would then need to put together a business plan after intensive local discussion, advice sought and a steering group set up. Funds would need to be in place to proceed, but this would also require the further approval of 50% of the population. Simply registering an interest does not automatically take the process to the next stage; in fact there have been several cases in the region where the next steps have not been taken, for a variety of reasons.

Item 13. Any other competent business. Phone boxes. DH has priced the paint to refurbish the boxes - £65 for 5 litres of original Post Office red. Approval given to buy the paint and distribute it to the volunteers. **DH Action.**

Recycling. Dissatisfaction with the new Highland Council recycling service, coming into effect in July, was discussed. Many people are unable, through illness, disability, age, lack of transport, etc to take glass to the recycling point which will result in glass once again being placed in the general bins for landfill. Highland Council should be urged to make appropriate arrangements to improve their service; they could do worse than follow the excellent example set by GREAN which they are replacing. Sutherland’s elderly population is increasing rapidly and Highland Council must take on board the difficulties the new regulations will make for them. **SYHA Carbisdale Castle.** There are still no local signs to indicate that the hostel is closed. BW offered to laminate some and place them at appropriate points locally to help avoid wasted journeys by visitors. **BW Action. Guidelines for BTWF applicants.** Bob Sendall passed round copies of the Guidelines for Applicants to the Beinn Tharsuinn Windfarm Community Benefit Fund which are sent by Creich Community Council to all their applicants. Members were encouraged to consider them and put forward their own ideas for a similar document to be issued by A&DCC. Ideas and comments can be circulated by email amongst members prior to this being an agenda item next month. **Agenda item.**

Item 15. Date of next meeting. The next meeting will be held on Monday 9th July in Culrain Hall 2012 at 7pm. PA will book the hall. **PA Action.**

Meeting closed at 9.30pm.