

Glengarry Community Council
Minutes of meeting with SSEN on 21st February 2024

Present: for SSEN and subcontractors: Maren Ebeling (ME), SSEN Community Liaison Manager; James McDowall (JMcD), RJ McLeod (RJMcl) Site Agent; Daniel Sutherland (DS), SSEN Project Manager; for Glengarry Community Council: George Cross (GX), vice chair; Lea MacNally (LMacN), treasurer; Cecilia Dyckhoff (CD), secretary; Ken Brown (KB); Neillie Stewart (NS); Philippa Maltby (PM); Gillian Carruthers (GC); nine members of the public. Apologies: Kevin Sutherland (KS), chair.

Presentation by ME, JMcD and DS

The subject of the meeting was the forthcoming roadworks on the C1144 road to Kinlochourn and maintenance of access tracks. The purpose of the works as at present stated is to facilitate access to existing SSEN assets and for timber removal, and potentially for the proposed reinforcement of the Skye pylon line, if that goes ahead. The information was presented with a slide show, a digital copy of which will be made available on request.

The works will involve widening the public road in 33 places between Tomdoun and Coire Shubh, as well as upgrades to 40 existing passing places including some enlargement of them, and the creation of 25 new passing places and laybys. It will also involve the repair of 15 km of existing access tracks on private land. The work on the road will take place within the existing statutory road boundaries. All bridges, retaining structures and cattle grids are to receive structural assessment. There will also be ditch and scrub clearance. The extent of the work has been agreed with Highland Council (HC). The work will cover only the road from Tomdoun to Coire Shubh. Bringing in aggregate and machinery will be necessary.

In some places the widening will have to take place on both sides of the existing road. A desktop exercise and a survey have already identified some difficult areas and rock outcrops. HC has given permission to change the location of some passing places.

The length and width of passing places and the road would depend on the ground conditions at each location. Access by extra long vehicles will have to be allowed for; 5.5m width is the norm for single track roads, but 6m will be provided where feasible.

The 52 weeks allowed for the road project will not apply to the C1144 alone; all the works between Fort Augustus and Skye are to take place during that period. The C1144 works would probably take 30 weeks. The works will be done on consecutive areas, minimising the area to be done in each tranche. If more than one area is to be worked on at once, the intention is to leave two laybys between them, to ease access. The process used during the recent Timber Transport Scheme improvements has been noted, and it is intended to follow or improve upon that.

Site cabins and machines have been brought to Kingie already. More machines will be brought in. The first ground work, starting on 26th February, will be to restore the existing track up to the surge shaft above Kingie. Work on other hill tracks will follow after that.

There will be no works on the public road until the first week of April, when works will start from Tomdoun westwards. In the intervening weeks, machinery will be brought in; aggregate will be brought in from Torlundy through Spean Bridge; and the site offices will be established at Kingie.

A large volume of materials will be required: several thousands of tonnes of aggregate and hundreds of tonnes of tar. At present, it is intended that materials will be brought in by convoys of lorries, which will also return in convoy. There are likely to be two inbound convoys each day when this is taking place. An estimate of the number of convoy movements each week will be given in advance. They will be timed to take account of school buses and other regular uses of the road.

A road closure order will be obtained to allow road closures for worker safety reasons. The times of road closures will be intimated weekly, with a map of the areas involved. In general, to assist road users, there is likely to be an over-estimate of the amount of work to be undertaken each week. Closures are likely to take place every weekday.

The work in the passing places will involve excavation, backfilling from small stock piles, and completion with surface layers, planing in to the existing road surface. Small dumpers will be used to transport materials, in order to minimise damage to the road surface.

In answer to questions:

- Emergency access along the road will always be available, even at times of closure; the road surface will always be passable with care as any ramps will be small;
- Having been told that delivery drivers have misunderstood road signs at the A87 junction in the past, assuming that the whole length of the road was closed, and understanding that it could be misleading to refer to work locations by names not used in GPS systems, JMcD said that he would try to ensure that this would be done; he also asked if residents would advise him of the generally used names of key points on the works map in due course;
- Asked if there would be resurfacing of the road, he said that at present there is no plan to resurface the existing road, but that there will be an ongoing survey of the condition of the road by HC; damaged areas will be made good;
- Crushing aggregate from new or existing borrow pits will not be possible owing to the regulations involved;
- At Kingie the existing laydown area beside the road will be used for site cabins; the work on the surge shaft track will be to scrape and resurface it to its previous width, and to provide drainage for it, this being in order to obtain access to the hillside above for maintenance and in accordance with the general programme of works there;
- Speed restrictions of at most 30 mph at Kingie and Inchlaggan were mentioned; JMcD said he would arrange for signage and brief drivers about this;
- All of the structures on the road, including bridges, have been surveyed and the consultants' report is with HC; when the calculations have been done and reported to RJMcL they will be used in making appropriate remedial measures before heavy vehicles pass; at the moment there is nothing to prevent vehicles of normal axle weight to pass;

- Access by tourists including hillwalkers was mentioned; the times of road closures will be announced;
- The normal working hours would be 07.00 to 18.00, Monday to Friday, starting with briefings; lorry convoys would not take place that early; the convoys would be managed in order to ensure that sections of the road, including the junction with the A87, are not blocked by vehicles waiting for the convoy to assemble, as it will be coming from some distance; collections from the quarry cannot take place before 07.00, so the convoy will not arrive in the glen until well after that, and probably not before 07.30 or 08.00; there will probably be no more than two convoys per day; the working of the convoy system will be managed and kept under review; the daily work timetables of residents will be taken into account in arranging the times of convoys; convoys will not take place late at night or very early in the morning.

JMcD said that RJMcL will in due course be advertising jobs connected with the project and CVs from any local people interested in these would be welcomed; some of the employment will require specialist experience and some will not; for example, there will be cleaning work at the site offices.

He also said that RJMcL has a charity fund which has in the past been used to provide sports kits and other equipment to schools. Applications to this fund will be welcome forthwith.

Setting up Community Liaison Group (CLG)

ME proposed setting up a CLG consisting of between 8 to 15 members of the public and the Community Council. For the present, the remit of the group would be the road works, but it could be prolonged if the proposed renovation of the Skye line goes ahead. Meetings could be held quarterly and their minutes would be circulated. She said that they would not be closed door meetings, but that members of the public with concerns could attend. She asked for applications for membership of the group to be made to her. She has a draft of the possible terms and conditions of the group. Membership of the group could change according to any changes in the impact of the works.

Concerns in relation to the works can be raised not only through the CLG but direct with the people whose telephone numbers appear below.

Contact telephone numbers

Maren Ebeling, SSEN Community Liaison Manager - 07721 462330

Cal Lancaster, SSEN Project Manager - 07721 425524

Daniel Sutherland, SSEN Project Manager – 07721 418380

James McDowall, RJ McLeod Site Agent – 07918 617352

Alan MacKay, RJ McLeod Site Foreman – 07501 221450