

Glengarry Community Council (GCC)

Minutes of Meeting

held on 5th February 2024 at 19.00 in Glengarry Community Hall

1. Present

Kevin Sutherland (KS), chair, Lea MacNally (LMacN), treasurer, George Cross (GX), vice chair, Neillie Stewart (NS), Ken Brown (KB), Cecilia Dyckhoff (CD), secretary, Philippa Maltby (PM), Gillian Carruthers (GC); for SSER: Jade Clark (JC), Stakeholder Engagement Manager, Malcolm Grant (MG), Coire Glas Liaison Manager; for Fred Olsen Renewables: Kirsty Rider (KR), Project Manager, Nathan Riddell (NR), Assistant Project Manager; four members of the public including Mars Projects Ltd (MPL) representative: Kenneth Knott (KK); and two representatives of Kilfinnan Road Group: Brian Heys (BH) and William Schroeder (WS).

Apologies: Cllr Andrew Baldrey

2. SSER Coire Glas project

JC reported that there had been a delay to the works owing to difficult ground conditions which require investigation; but tunnelling is likely to resume towards the end of February or in March. These are exploratory works and they are expected to be complete this summer. Further details about this will be shared when they are available. She said that her colleague Carol Masheter (CM), the Community Fund Manager, had hoped to be at this meeting, but was unfortunately not available. She lodged a paper describing possible methods of fund distribution and stating that discussions are to take place with GCC and other bodies about this. It is hoped that the value of the fund will be announced by summer. She stressed the importance of GCC's participation in determining the distribution of the fund, and of taking steps as soon as possible to organise this. JC and CM will supply more information in due course. In response to a question by KB, JC confirmed that the information about the fund is public. In response to a question by CD, MG said that the decision about whether the project will proceed will be made by summer 2026. Works on the road will have to be undertaken before that, though, and any risk will be borne by SSER in the event of the project not proceeding.

3. Fred Olsen Renewables Cullachy project

KR and NR reported that the project now comprises eight turbines (a reduction of two) with a 57 megawatt output including battery storage. An application is being made for it to be linked to the Fort Augustus substation. There will be community benefits amounting to £280,000 per annum to be split between the affected communities. Consultation has been undertaken, with a closing date of 2nd February, though late submissions will be accepted. GX confirmed that GCC's response has been sent to the Energy Consents Unit. KR and NR said that a decision was expected by the end of 2025 and that an enquiry was expected to take place in 2026.

The components for the masts will be delivered by road: the blades from Kyle and the tower components from Corpach. Construction would take place from 2026. The

blades would be moved through Invergarry village. Following a question from CD, KR said that it had not yet been determined whether the benefits were to be divided between the affected communities pro rata according to the area of each community's land occupied by the project, or by some other method. KB said that there were four such communities. It was noted, following advice from LMacN, that when blades for another project were brought through the village an extra payment was made to the community was made on account of the disruption. KR will write to GCC introducing herself and her colleagues.

4. Minutes of last meeting

It was noted that following the last meeting, NS had agreed to take over the playground project, because of his previous involvement. The minutes of the meeting of 8th January 2024 were approved. Proposed: GX Seconded: KB

5. Matters arising

a) Playground equipment

NS reported that he has obtained brochures of equipment which he has shown to the school's Parent Council. They have not yet decided what would be desirable, but have indicated that they hope to attend GCC's March meeting. GC showed a collection of letters that he has received from children at the school, which say that they would like a roundabout, that the paint is peeling from the shelter, that there is litter in the playground, and also that the climbing frame is weak and often broken, and should be replaced. CD is to write thanking them for their input and interest. NS confirmed that a 'hamster wheel' was also proposed for the playground.

b) Constitution document

GX confirmed that he has the signed document, which is to be kept by CD with other GCC paper records.

c) Kilfinnan road

GCC held a meeting on 23rd January with Brian Heys (BH), representing the Kilfinnan Road Group. A draft response to the current planning application in respect of road works has been circulated to GCC members. It was confirmed that this should be sent to the Planning Department forthwith. A note of the meeting, together with a copy of the note supplied in advance to the meeting by BH will be appended.

d) Road issues

CD has written to BEAR about traffic control through the village. BEAR's NW Correspondence section has replied that the matter will be monitored over the summer months. It was agreed to revisit the issue in the autumn.

CD was instructed to write to Highland Council about potholes on the C1144, including one which caused a tyre blowout recently, and the Mandally road, and also to note a report of a culvert on the C1144 near Inchlaggan House which has

been blocked or damaged recently. KK told the Council that he had written to Highland Council (HC) about the state of ditches on the road.

CD was also instructed to write to BEAR about the culverts on the A82 at Drynachan and Aberchalder which have flooded in the recent heavy rain.

It was also noted that HC's brush clearance works have extended as far as the rhododendron thickets beside Loch Quoich.

e) Loch Fearna project

The email by Fraser Allison of Gilkes, offering a meeting about the project, was noted. It was agreed that a meeting in the summer months should be proposed.

f) Community Plan survey

The email of 22nd January from Valerie Leonard in relation to managing the response of GCC to the Community Action Plan consultation had been circulated to members. It was noted that she had written, in relation to the responses of community groups, that they were invited to provide their "insights from a group perspective into what the community would require for growth and sustainability", and that she would be happy to take part in a Teams meeting. She had also said that an extension of the time to reply could be accommodated. After discussion including a query about the status of GCC as a consultee, it was agreed that GX should draft and circulate a written response.

g) Derelict house

It was agreed that GCC has no locus to become directly involved in the issue. However, CD was instructed to write to HC asking if they were in a position to take action.

6. Financial report

LMacN had copied the financial report to members. In response to questions from KB, LMacN said that the uncashed cheque is for the village officer's fee, that the figure for skip hire includes the skip provided for the Highland Games, that the invoice for the pig trap has been received and will be met shortly, and that funds are available for GCC's obligations.

7. Piper for Remembrance Day

Malcolm Heeles, the piper, had asked if any fee to him that might be in contemplation should be donated to the Sailors', Soldiers' and Air Force Association (SSAFA). LMacN confirmed that in the past £150 had been given to the piper, who lived in Glasgow, to cover his expenses. It was agreed that this sum should be donated to SSAFA, and that CD should write to him confirming that this was being done and to thank him for his piping.

8. Post Office

There was some discussion of how the question of the Post Office lease review was being handled and what steps should be taken. Communications between KB, Kate

the tenant, and KS were noted. It had been mentioned that other parties might seek to take over legal responsibility for the premises. It was regretted that the exchanges between the tenant and KB had received some publicity. It was agreed, on GX's proposal, that the process of reviewing the terms of the lease should be re-started. Once again, it was noted for the benefit of new members that HC recommended that Community Councils should not hold assets, but that this should be done by means of an arms' length entity such as a SCIO. Reference was made to there having been technical difficulties with regard to this in the past.

It was agreed that contact should again be made with MacPhees solicitors in Fort William, with whom KS and LMacN had already set up an account. KS said that it would be important to discuss matters with the tenant in due course. KB reported that the substance of his discussion with the solicitor (Rebecca Fraser) at MacPhees who subsequently left to join another Fort William, was to obtain advice about whether the existing lease is fit for purpose, whether it should be updated, and what the implications are of part of the building being used by Royal Mail, which, it was noted, is a separate legal entity from Post Office Counters. He had told the tenant that the lease could not be amended without involving her. She believes that the use of part of the building by Royal Mail is permitted in terms of her lease. Progress in the matter having been stopped by GCC being in abeyance following the elections, it was decided that CD should write to MacPhees and to the tenant.

9. GCC administration and website

The website designer previously identified by KB is no longer in the area. WS advised that he is aware of a local designer who could be of assistance.

GX said that he has a copy of GCC's historic digital archive.

10. Mars Projects Ltd (MPL)

This had been carried over from the meeting of 8th January. KK said that offers made and concerns raised by MPL had not been addressed by GCC. CD reminded the Council that there had been extensive correspondence with Sharon Machado (SM) of MPL, and recalled the meeting that had taken place to address the issues, of which a Minute had been sent to h(SM); if KK has not seen a copy of the Minute, CD will send one to him. KK asked for details of the procedure by which a member of the public can complain about the actions of a Community Council; he was referred by GX to the statutory provisions of the Scheme for Community Councils. GX will write to Dot Ferguson (DF), the Area Manager, for advice. KK will write formally to GCC to state MPL's current complaint.

11. Planning

Application for a telecommunications mast at Loch Quoich ref 23/05742/TPNO: Andrew Bainbridge, a glen resident with professional knowledge of some of the issues involved in telecommunications, had been of assistance to GX and CD with regard to their personal responses to this application for a preliminary determination, the exact status of which is uncertain. He had calculated that the proposed location would not materially improve mobile phone coverage for

residents in the western part of the glen. It was noted that the desirability of improved communication might be outweighed by the disadvantage of a proliferation of masts in areas of natural beauty. It was also noted that questions about the general strategy in relation to the provision of telecommunications, and the location of masts over the whole area of the Highlands, had been called into question and is under active consideration. It was decided not to take any action, in the circumstances.

12. Any other competent business

- a) Meeting with Maren Ebeling (ME) of SSEN to discuss road works on the C1144 in relation to the Skye reinforcement line: a meeting on 19th January has been proposed; but ME has suggested that the subcontractors would be happy to be present to give information. She is to contact us with proposals for an alternative date.
- b) Constitutional issues: a question has been raised about what constitutes a public meeting of GCC. During discussion, GX suggested that a public meeting is one at which formal decisions are made by GCC and he gave examples of types of meeting which do not make a decision, such as training meetings and meetings to receive information; and CD noted the significance of whether a meeting has a formal agenda that has been intimated to the public in the constitutional way. GX offered to seek the view of DF.
- c) Recognition of Catriona Menzies (CM): it was agreed that in recognition of CM's lengthy and valuable service to the community as a member and chair of GCC, a gift to the value of £100 should be made to her, with an additional gift of flowers. LMacN and PM will organise this.
- d) KS mentioned the election of the two new members of GCC: GC and GX. He congratulated and welcomed them.
- e) KB had circulated an email to members with three further matters of interest, as follows:
 - (i) He had been informed in a personal letter from Alison McLennan of RSPB that the consortium which the Society had led in applying for Nature Restoration Fund grant aid had not been successful. Landscape protection methods using herbivore management rather than fencing would be used; and it is hoped that funding will be obtained from other sources.
 - (ii) Community recipients of the Beinneun wind farm community benefits scheme have been told that Angus Robertson is no longer the administrator of the Fern Community Fund. The benefits will now be administered by Foundation Scotland, whose website suggests that their priorities and criteria may be different.
 - (iii) KB has been told by the assistant manager of the MOWI Loch Garry Fish Farm that there is a defibrillator on the premises which is constantly powered up and covered by CCTV. It is understood that Archie Johnstone of MOWI would be happy to discuss its being made available to the community, complementing the equipment already available at Ardochy House. LMacN offered to carry this forward.
- f) There has been substantial recent storm damage in the village, including the destabilisation of some large trees along the river path, which remain in a

dangerous state. LMacN has inspected them with the HC Access Officer, who asked him to obtain a price for their professional removal. HC does not have funds for this. After taking advice, LMacN has obtained a quotation of £1,500 [from Simon Dakin of Blue Green Forestry – details obtained after the meeting] to do the work. GCC is in a position to pay this from recent income from the FLS hydro schemes, and it was agreed to go ahead with instructing the work on this basis.

13. Date of next meeting

The next meeting will take place on 4th March 2024 at 19.00 in Glengarry Community Hall.