Glengarry Community Council (GCC)

Minutes of the meeting held in the Community Hall
on 5th October at 19.00

1. Present; apologies; and conflicts of interest
   Present: George Cross (GX), chair; Lea MacNally (LMacN), treasurer; Cecilia Dyckhoff (CD), secretary; Ken Brown (KB); Philippa Maltby (PM); five members of the public, including Chris Rose (CR), Highland Council (HC) Countryside Access Ranger, North Lochaber; John Gordon (JG), Ronald Stewart (RS); Ross Lynn (RL); Hector Rogers (HR); and Irene Rodgers (IR).
   Apologies: Kevin Sutherland; Gillian Carruthers (GC); and Cllr Liz Saggers.
   Conflicts of interest: none were intimated.

2. Minutes of meeting of 7th September
   The minutes of the meeting held on 7th September were adopted. Proposed: LMacN; seconded: KB.

3. Matters arising
   (a) CR was present by invitation to explain his role and answer questions. He said that he patrols the area at weekends looking for campervans, caravans and tents, meeting people and if necessary educating them in access code issues, monitoring traffic and van issues, and reporting litter, abandoned tents, and fly-tipping. He will provide data concerning the numbers of vehicles in due course. He does some litter picking but cannot deal with fly-tipping, though he knows it is prevalent here. After an average weekend, his van is full of bags of rubbish. He works during the summer months from 07.00 to 10.30, and in the evening until 21.00, noting overnight stays. He has no specific power, though he may be getting more; he reports illegal activity to the police. He is from Fort Augustus and recognises that it is important to reassure local residents. In this area he goes from Aberchalder Bridge to Bun Loyne. He does not visit sites on the C1144, though he has visited JG at Lochournhead. He recognises that traffic along the glen road is expected to increase following the road improvements. He does not have any powers on private land. He suggests that GCC should approach HC and ask for the C1144 to be included in his remit. In reply to a question from GX about how to deal with problems on private land, CR advised that fly-tipping should be reported to HC by their online form. He had reported fly-tipping himself, but it had not been dealt with. A photograph of the waste should be supplied to HC, along with a What Three Words location code. CR said that if several separate reports are made there is more likelihood of the matter being dealt with. He said that he has sent an email about this, and will also send a link to GX. In reply to a question from JG, CR said that What Three Words could also be used to report campervans. He also suggested that Angus MacFarlane and Paul MacPherson could be useful contacts in HC Waste Management. Finally, he suggested that he could also be contacted by members of the community either through his email address (chris.rose2@highland.gov.uk) and also by telephone at 07384 246516. He was thanked for his input.

(b) GX reported that Deirdre MacKinnon has said that no payment will be required from GCC for posting information in Ness News. She had also suggested that Invergarry residents should be reminded that the Screen Machine regularly visits Fort Augustus with films, and that members of our community are warmly welcomed to attend. Ness News is published four times a year; it was agreed that GCC should aim to supply copy twice a year. CD has produced a draft entry, and members were encouraged to contribute to this.

(c) KB said that members occasionally come to informal agreement by email between meetings, such as recently in relation to Tomdoun church, and that these agreements are not minuted. CD and GX said that when this occurs, any concern should be mentioned at the next meeting, for formal minuting.

4. Financial report

LMacN provided printed copies of the financial report and the September invoice of the Village Officer (VO). The main account contained information from the bank statement for the period 10th to 28th August. It had received no income and had incurred expenditure of £1,203.25: being £834 for the skip, £20 for the Hall let, £343 for the VO and £6.25 for bank charges. The closing balance was £19,745.61, with a ring fenced sum of £2,810.53, leaving £16,935.08 available funds. The Post Office had received £52 income and incurred no expenditure, leaving a balance of £1,492.53.

LMacN reported that the annual payment from HC had been received, though it does not appear on the reported bank statement. It amounts to £799.15. A payment of £3,711.82 has also been received as part of the funds disbursed by the Shinty Club on behalf of Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS). These payments will bring the main account balance to approximately £20,000. He suggested that consideration should be given to making payment for secretarial expenses, and that village groups should be reminded that they can apply for funding for projects. The playpark and the community garden group were mentioned in this regard. LMacN will contact GC about the playpark. LMacN reported that the VO uses his own mower for village work, and that it is now having mechanical problems. It was agreed that GCC should consider providing funding for the purchase of a new mower, to be given to Glengarry and District Community Association for use by the VO for community purposes, as has been done on a previous occasion in relation to other equipment. LMacN will investigate the cost of this.

In September, the VO had cut grass at the Hall several times, and at the church, the chapel, and the road junction, as well as for senior citizens who were unable to do this. He had also cut scrub and bracken along the river path from the White Bridge to the Hotel, and on from there to the war memorial. He had also cut scrub at the chapel and bushes at the church. He had removed a fallen branch from the Post Office layby and cut the lime tree coppicing there and above the playpark. He had cut back branches along the pavement at Craigard and picked up litter through the village to the cemetery. This amounted to 23.5 hours' work and also involved the purchase of petrol for £19. His work was commended.

LMacN noted that an email from HC had been received on Friday about a change in procedure for installing Christmas lights in the village. He read out the email. Very short notice had been given for GCC to agree to a substantial increase in the cost of doing this, from £150 to £491.50 including VAT. The new procedure would involve HC obtaining a quotation for the work, and not doing the work until the quotation has been agreed and paid. It was noted that the lights on the tree at the church are much appreciated, and that GCC currently has ample funds. There are technical considerations to be taken into account when erecting the lights. It was agreed that the sum called for this year should be paid; but, on RS's suggestion, that consideration should be given to an alternative method of providing the lights in good time before Christmas 2027.

5. Community Liaison Groups' (CLGs') reports
   Two CLGs had not held meetings, but the Skye Line Group had met. KB said that it is not known when the works will start, and nor is it known from where the aggregate will be supplied. Various possibilities have been proposed but not confirmed. There are issues about how the aggregate is to be stored before onward delivery. Such information as has been gathered has come from a lorry driver. The group has been told that a different quality of aggregate will be used for hill tracks and for where such tracks join the public road. JG said that landowners oppose the use of aggregate not sourced from the land on which it is used. They are also concerned at the number of lorry loads that will be required. He referred to the aggregate that had been used unsuccessfully to stop flooding at the road works near the Poles loch (Loch Coire nan Cnamh); the attempt was unsuccessful and had resulted in contamination of the loch by silt.

6. Convention of Community Councils update
   Cameron Kemp had advised GCC of the open letter sent on behalf of the Rural Convention of Community Councils to members of the Scottish Government and others about the impact of infrastructure projects on rural areas. The submission had been circulated to members. It was agreed that a government commission to regulate such infrastructure would be desirable.

7. Consultation on Dark Skies and reducing light pollution
   Melissa Lumsden of HC's Development Plans Team had contacted GCC to advise that HC is launching a public consultation on draft guidance on reducing light pollution across the region. This would have implications for environmental protection, public wellbeing and tourism. The guidance would be intended to limit the use of outdoor artificial lighting to that which is necessary. The GCC website gives a link to HC's consultation form, which individuals are encouraged to complete. It was noted that no map is given, and nor is there a specific reference to mast lights, including those that are not visible, which have been an issue in this area. After discussion, including reference to the possibility of street lighting being necessary for pedestrians in rural locations, and to the effect of outdoor lighting on nocturnal wildlife, it was agreed that GCC would support lighting only where it can be shown to be necessary.

8. Post Office report

GX reported that the sub-committee had met on 17th August. It was noted that though Glengarry Community Development Trust (GCDT) is now working through solicitors to purchase the land, GCC still has a residual responsibility for the management of the Post Office, in relation to the lease and the building insurance. The lease falls due for automatic continuation early next year. The insurance has been advantageously renewed. The sub-committee is of the view that GCDT should be invited to take over the residual responsibilities. Members agreed that GCDT should be contacted about this. A solicitor has already been asked for an estimate of the cost of reviewing the position. The postmistress has been kept informed of these developments. It was agreed that the security of her position is important to the community.

9. Correspondence
   CD had circulated a handlist of correspondence. GX noted that Cllr John Grafton had sent an email today about short term lets and the visitor levy. It was confirmed, at LMacN's request, that no reply from HC had been received about roadside grass and bracken cutting; this issue is to be pursued. In reply to a question from JG, it was confirmed that whilst roadside vegetation is dealt with annually as far as Kingie as a matter of course, the rhododendrons beyond there are regularly brought to HC's attention and cut as required, usually biennially. GX also said that a Drynachan resident had raised complex issues in relation to a number of topics; and it was agreed that he, LMacN and CD should consult about this.

10. Planning
    (a) Tomchrasky windfarm: It was noted that although the site is outwith the GCC area, GCC has been invited to comment. Fort Augustus and Glenmoriston CC (FAGCC) opposes the development. It was agreed to support the FAGCC position.
    (b) Scottish Water development of personnel facilities at Inchlaggan: members supported the application.
    (c) Leachan Dubh alteration and extension: It was recalled that a 'no comment' response had been made about a previous withdrawn application; and it was decided to maintain this stance. KB, who had made the previous response, was instructed to write to this effect.
    (d) Quoich Tee: GX noted that his house is named as a neighbour. KB reported the current position in detail. Permission has been granted for the works relating to the spur line, including pylons and their associated crane platforms, and road and access track improvements. A very large number of traffic movements is planned, which could correspond to one vehicle passing every three minutes during the working day. The Energy Consents Unit has agreed to the pylon proposals. Worker accommodation, welfare facilities and office space is to be provided at Kingie compound. Permission for this will expire in 2027. There is a condition that noise from the compound will be restricted to 0800 to 1700 every day. It is noted that GCC, which opposed the application in 2024, is to be consulted about a traffic management plan. KB offered to write to the planning officer; and this was agreed. He said that the Skye Line CLG will be dealing with the case. CD suggested he should represent GCC's view of what consultation implies and how it should be conducted. LMacN said that neighbouring estates at Kingie may not

have been informed of the use to be made of the compound. It was agreed to support the CLG's representations about the status of the compound, and that relevant estate owners should be contacted.

(e) Loch Fearna project update: GX reported that the DPEA has been informed about GCC's wishes about the remaining issues. Brodies, the applicants' solicitors, have asked if we have any documents to add. We had been left off the list of interested parties but have been reinstated. Documents about earthquake risk and invertebrates have been received. There has been a delay in asking for further written evidence. Three matters are in hand: a grid scoping report; a note of matters to be agreed with HC about landscape and visual impact; and a report from NatureScot abut biodiversity enhancement. We had replied carefully to a question about the foundational documents that would be required. It is our position that everything possibly relevant should be included. Brodies have agreed that further additions can be made later.

Various ancillary issues were mentioned including the following: the implication of the Raeshaw Farms case, to the effect that grid connection should be considered at the same time as a major energy infrastructure project, in particular because it is not yet known whether any grid connection in the glen would be on the south side of the river or within the corridor around the present line; Brodies have today intimated that they wish the Reporter to issue requests for documents, which may mean that less time will be given to respond; HC may have instructed a landscape specialist; and the fact that implications of biodiversity mitigation measures such as floating rafts for nests have not been fully considered.

11. Expert advice for planning matters

GX had circulated a paper setting out the possible advantages and disadvantages of GCC engaging a planning expert in two scenarios: in relation to general advice on planning matters; and in relation to the formulation of aspects of the Local Place Plan (LPP). After discussion in which RL participated, support for the second option and some reservations about the first were expressed, as well as support for the possibility of obtaining training such as that offered by HC. It was noted that HC is the body that makes decisions in planning matters, and that GCC has a role in presenting community views, even though those views may not always take into account strict planning principles. The possibility was also raised of obtaining other types of expert advice such as in technical matters of engineering and construction. GX undertook to consider the discussion and to revert to members.

12. Any other competent business

(a) HR had written to GCC about the mobile library service, expressing regret that its current vehicle – a small van – is insufficient for library use, being too small and not providing sufficient protection to users in rain. It is not surprising that the number of people using it has fallen off. HC is apparently planning to supply improved vehicles. The current van has been in use for about eighteen months. It would be far preferable to have a proper van able to contain a reasonable number of books and for members of the public to enter, ideally with lift

assistance for those with mobility difficulties. It was agreed that representations should be made to HC.

(b) RS asked if there is anything to report about the Black Bridge. GX confirmed that GCDT has taken over the responsibility of discussing the matter with FLS. It was noted that GCC is still keen for the matter to be resolved to the community's satisfaction; and it was agreed that GCDT should be asked for an update on the position.

13. Date of next meeting

The next meeting will take place in the Community Hall on 2nd November at 19.00