**STRATHGLASS COMMUNITY COUNCIL (SCC**)

**Minutes of the meeting held at Cannich Hall on Wednesday, 5th September 2022 at 7-30pm**

**Present:** Nigel Ellis (Chair), Paul Stirling, Georgina Parker, Alan Hood, Leeson Carlyle, Humphrey Clarke.

**In attendance:** Cllr. Chris Ballance, Alan McDonnell (TfL), Carol Masheter (Soirbheas) and 20+ members of the public.

**Apologies:** Cllr. David Fraser.

**1. Welcome.**

The Chair noted that there was a quorum, welcomed all those in attendance and declared the meeting open.

**2. Minutes of the previous meeting.**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 25th July 2022 were proposed for adoption and unanimously approved subject to an amendment to para. 5d) that should read “applications for the Soirbheas Apprenticeship funding will close on 24-10-22”.

**3. Matters arising from the previous meeting.**

All matters arising were included within the agenda for this meeting.

**4. Police report.**

No report had been received.

**5. Beaver translocation to Strathglass and surrounds.**

a) Alan McDonnell began by explaining that five landowners in the area were supporting the idea of translocating beavers to Strathglass and have appointed Trees for Life to undertake public consultations. The consultation period will close on 3-10-22 after which TfL will put together a report, with recommendations suggesting the scope and timescale for translocation, to NatureScot within 6 weeks. No translocation can take place without a NatureScot licence and, even assuming a licence is provided, it will not take place before Spring 2023. He also explained some of the measures that could be employed to mitigate damage to the existing environment.

b) There followed an intense series of questions and comments from community councillors and other attendees that are summarised below:

* The short timescale and lack of public awareness suggested this consultation to merely be a tick box exercise with no intent to actually act on the views of those living and working in the area.
* When questioned as to why this glen had been selected, the answer that it was “suitable” was widely regarded as inadequate.
* The presentation provided no sound social or economic benefit for beaver reintroduction; quoting biodiversity alone was inadequate given the serious problems foreseen.
* Areas in Strathglass already have flood risks and beavers will add to that risk.
* Salmon fishing is part of the local economy. There does not seem to have been any thought given to about how beavers will affect the salmon population and other existing species. There is no evidence that a proper ecological study has been undertaken.
* Although NatureScot would be responsible for managing local populations, it was noted that beavers are protected species and have no natural predators in the UK. It was suggested that in-fighting would be a significant control factor.
* The effectiveness of mitigation measures is likely to be minimal as NatureScot have limited funding available.
* It was pointed out by a member of the public that under the law there is no compensation for flooding caused by beavers and it is an uninsurable risk. It was also noted that beaver reintroduction could result in the loss of productive land and destroy businesses without any opportunity to challenge the decision or seek compensation.
* Any mitigation is of hollow comfort, even if is available, because a flood to one property caused by beavers elsewhere can only be undertaken at the discretion of the person on whose land the mitigation is required.
* Another member of the public pointed out that a beaver dam bursting upstream of a hydro turbine dam could result in blockages to the turbines and even overtopping of the dam leading to substantial damage.
* It was also observed that in Tayside the population had exploded, leading to calls for a cull, and that the beavers were riddled with parasites that could be detrimental to other species.
* It was also noted that reckless acts causing damage to others are criminal offences and that this plan comes into that category.
* It was explained that UHI Inverness are carrying out surveys of people’s views of beavers and some bio-analysis of the area which will inform NatureScot and be shared with TfL.
* Representatives of NatureScot had been invited to attend this meeting but were not available. It was agreed that the Chair would re-invite (copied to HC councillors) to our next SCC meeting.
* It was of noted that despite an unusually high number of attendees, no local person spoke in favour of beaver translocation.

**6. SCC matters.**

1. Windfarms and energy storage update:

i) Loch Liath WF – proposal now for 13 turbines of 200m blade tip height, a public exhibition was held

30-8-22 at Cannich Hall with a planning application to ECU expected in late 2023.

ii) Tomnacrasky WF – proposal for 29 turbines of 220m blade tip height, a public exhibition is to be held at Glenmoriston Hall on 21-9-22.

iii) Bhlaraidh WF Extension – proposal for 15 turbines of 180m blade tip height was consented by ECU

30-8-22.

iv) Fasnakyle ES – proposal for up to 50MW of battery storage, a public exhibition is to be held at Cannich Hall on 28-9-22 and on-line until 13-10-22.

v) Crathaich WF – proposal for 17 turbines of 180m blade tip height, a public exhibition will be held at Cannich Hall on 18-10-22.

vi) Fiodhag WF – no further information.

vii) Bunloinn WF – no further information.

1. Struy bus / public shelter:

The Erchless Estate Manager (on behalf of the land owner) has verbally offered a 5 year rent free licence for the preferred site for the erection of a timber shelter and the SCC has been authorised to sign when it is available. The Chair to obtain quotes for site preparation and wall buttressing. CM advised Soirbheas will consider funding if 10% can be matched from elsewhere.

**7. SACC matters.**

a) Cannich Hall is in use but demand is considerably reduced when compared to pre-2020 and there is real concern about the impact of rising energy costs.

b) There are plans for a Bonfire in November.

c) A Community Action Plan is being considered and alternative methods of its creation and of local public engagement are being contemplated.

**8. NP Working Group.**

The group is continuing to meet regularly to study land use alternatives and the Scottish Government’s Land Reform Consultation. A website is expected to be launched shortly.

**9. Treasurer’s Report and financial matters.**

a) The bank balance is £2606.98.

b) The balance of available funds (after ring-fencing £423.54) is £2162.44.

**10. Planning**

Planning applications in period are:

a) a PAN for the aforementioned Energy Storage Facility at Fasnakyle.

b) three Log Cabins 300m south of Eagle Brae.

There were no planning decisions made in period.

**11. Forestry matters.**

Felling of a coop at Fasnakyle has started and one at Cougie will begin shortly. PS reminded all that there are agreed limitations on speed and movement of HGVs through villages, and that being able to report specific registration numbers of offending vehicles is more effective than non-specific complaints.

**12. Deer management.**

Nothing new to report.

**13. Correspondence.**

The Chair provided a summary of correspondence received since the last meeting.

**14. Any other business.**

a) Chair and AH to ask David Fraser to raise with John Taylor (HC) about materials for Cannich Bridge painting.

b) The Chair raised the issue of Cannich Xmas lighting given the likely costs of using HC personnel. AH undertook to examine alternative arrangements.

**15. Next meeting.**

There being no other business, the meeting closed at approx. 9.15 pm. The next meeting will take place on Monday, 24th October 2022, commencing at 7-30 pm, at the Cannich Hall.

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