**Strathglass Community Council**

**19 March 2025 at 7.30pm @ Main Hall, Cannich Hall**

**Meeting Notes**

Present: Humphrey Clarke (Chair)

Georgina Parker (Vice Chair & Secretary)

David Tulloch

Leeson Carlyle (Treasurer)

Karl Falconer

Gordon Beckley

Councillor David Fraser

Apologies: Councillor Chris Ballance

22 members of the public.

1. Approval of minutes and review of actions
	1. The minutes were approved
	2. Actions were all completed except for the accounts sign off
	3. Action: Extraordinary meeting to take place next week to sign off accounts. This would be online via Teams.
2. SSEN Online meeting:

The Chair thanked Gordon for setting up the AV system for the meeting.

4 members of SSEN joined via Microsoft Teams online

SCC explained that the meeting had been scheduled to align with the expectation that planning application for the ‘Bingally’ substation will have been published on the Highland Council planning portal late February/early March. At the time of the meeting, it had not been published so the meeting was going ahead with SCC and members of the public not having had access to the planning application.

Brief summary:

Topics raised by SCC and members of the public included: security risk, fire risk, peatland destruction, traffic management, noise control, emergency services, community impact, tourism impact, construction road, biodiversity net gain and landscape impact.

* THC had advised that the application had been submitted and was considered invalid and asked when will a valid application be submitted SSEN advised that the application was technically invalid and is still going through the validation process at the moment and should have the rest of the information to the council over the next week.
* The Chair asked why is is necessary to have 3 new substations within 12 miles of eachother within an area of stunning natural beauty, where much of the local income is derived from tourism. SSEN responded that they can only comment on Fasnakyle and Bingally. The explained that it was due to the ‘wider net zero side of things’ and not fundamentally to do with the renewable connections coming into the area but that it was due to the need to upgrade a second circuit to 400KV. He said that the existing Fasnakyle substation is 275KV and cannot become 400KV. The Chair asked for this to be confirmed in writing. SSEN agreed.
* The Chair asked a question regarding security risk/terrorist threat: SSEN stated that there are spare transformers that can be replaced in strategic storage. Timescale dependent upon extent of damage.
* The Chair raised the issue of continuous overhead lines being easy to vandalise; SSEN responded that repairs dependent upon damage.
* The Chair suggested smaller substations in a mesh configuration would make us less vulnerable to bad actors
* The Chair asked what arrangements were in place for oil containment, SSEN replied that the oil would be within a sealed plant which will sit within a bund. This would reduce the risk of oil contamination apart from very exceptional circumstances (bunds would probably not stand terrorist attack).
* The Chair asked how site screening was going to be handled and whether there would be stepping, screening and bunding: SSEN replied that the application has a landscape habitat management plan for the substation and the access track. There would be Scots woodland planting, heathland restoration and peatland restoration as well. The planning application has 3d visualisation at strategic vantage points (7 or 8), based on 1 year and then 15 years to give an idea of what it will look like.
* The Chair asked re damage to peatland. SSEN said they would be restoring peatland around the substation site where recent commercial felling had damaged the peatland.
* DT asked about fire risk in light of peatland and recent massive wildfire in 2023 across the same ridge as the proposed development. SSEN responded to part of the question saying that they have done extensive peat probing and would not be planting in areas of deep peat. Claimed that the peat would be wet so it would be a fire risk.
* DT explained that the peatland is largely dry on the hills and GP pressed regarding the 2023 wildfire which was the largest on record in the UK, and at that point there was a retained fire service. Currently there is no retained fire service. They stated that a wildfire risk assessment is not statutory but they are undertaking fire risk assessments as an ongoing process. The Chair suggested that if the project went ahead then SSEN should provide financial support to strengthen local and regional fire services.
* GP raised the concern that the village of Tomich lies down a single track road with only one way in/out. The previous wildfire travelled across the ridge and over Bingally hill. Residents understood the danger presented by fire and the impact that this had on the village, so it is a serious issue. SSEN did not respond. GP asked for confirmation that this aspect would be taken seriously and addressed in the planning application. SSEN responded that they couldn’t confirm that in terms of the planning application because it was submitted by they could provide feedback to SCC about the plans but couldn’t feed that into the planning application.
* The Chair asked a question about how they could reduce the noise impact, reminding SSEN that the machinery noise, transport noise, workers shouting, etc. in the investigation stage had impacted upon the wellbeing of people in Tomich. SSEN advised that the working hours would be up to the council and that the standard hous March to September would be 7am to 7pm and then within daylight hours from October to February 7am to 5.30pm (7am to 1pm on Saturdays.
* The Chair asked whether the statement at the consultation event that SSEN would not be lighting the site was still correct. SSEN said that there may be task lighting but there should not be any working at night, at 10 at night or 6.30 in the morning.
* The Chair asked re Traffic management and how SSEN would enforce traffic not going through Cannich and Tomich. SSEn said that they had feedback re traffic going through Tomich previously and that is not what is wanted. He said the planned access track bypasses Tomich and the main traffic to the substatin site will use that. He added that there would be a car park site close to the start of the access track providing a bus so to try to limit the amount of traffic going on the access track. There would be a traffic management plan in the planning application. They added that “there will be no requirement for anybody to travel through Tomich to get to site once the construction road is established, but there’s some work to do to make that happen.”
* DT said that there was also concern regarding Cannich and that SSE/contractor vehicles had been driving above the 20mph speed limit in Cannich, which is particularly dangerous with the primary school being there.
* DT pushed the point regarding contractors. SSEN accepted that the contractors in relation to the substation will be their responsibility and stated that they understood the concern. SSEN suggested that we feed back concerns regarding this on the application.
* Question re peat landslide risk assessment. SSEN said they would put their developments away from the high risk areas.
* The Chair asked when the construction road would be completed and would traffic go through Tomich until it is completed? SSEN stated that would depend on any conditions from the Highland Council. He said he didn’t have the dates in front of him for the contract stages but the priority is to get the construction road up and running as quickly as possible.
* The Chair said that it would be a good idea for the road to be in place before any work was started. SSEN said that is broadly the intention that their contractor is working towards.
* The Chair raised concerns regarding access via the wider road network (A831) much of which was single track including from Struy, and cumulative impact of this together with logging lorries. Current plan is that no construction traffic will come via the Beauly Cannich road but that they cannot guarantee that workers would not use public roads.
* The Chair asked how many hard copies of the planning application would be provided for residents to access. SSEN said that they did not need hard copies because it was a ‘non EIA’ application. GP requested hard copies. SSEN agreed to provide.
1. Treasurer’s report – LC
	1. Current balance £1,652 in bank
	2. Contingencies for receipts and expenditure in place
	3. Upcoming expense is local council insurance on 1st April
	4. SCC IT hardware is covered in above at no cost
	5. Claim from Soirbheas for defibrillators not paid despite submitting invoice.
	ACTION: GP to chase Tina on behalf of Chair re above.
	6. Extraordinary meeting to take place on Teams at 7.30 with single agenda item meeting to
2. Other Engergy Projects:
	1. Bingally and Fanellan Sub-Station Proposals
		1. Bingally Proposal Invalid. Information sought from SSEN and publication on the website will take place upon completion.
		2. Fanellan submitted by not published on website as yet.
		3. Initial comments should be submitted by the public a.s.a.p. upon publication.
	2. Fasnakyle to Bingally 132kV Connection 25 March 4.00-7.30
		1. Nicole from Cannich stores offered to promote future consultations if leaflets were provided by SCC.
		ACTION: Secretary to provide copies of any future consultation leaflets to Nicole to display.
	3. Fasnakyle BESS awaiting publication on THC website.
	4. SSEN: Public raised that there are already issues with speed of traffic and alternative routes such as Kerrow are being used when they should not be (as mentioned at the last meeting). Ensure these are incorporated into comments regarding the substation application.
3. Any other updates
	1. A member of the public raised concerns regarding the speed of traffic through Cannich. David F meeting with roads manager tomorrow and will provide an email contact for the manager of road safety around schools.
	2. Community Action Plan and Local Place Plan: Agreed a bid would be made to Soirbheas to develop a CAP and LPP. Karen Edwards of Tomich had offered to be part of a sub-group and to commence a procurement exercise for a consultant. Agreed that there would be a sub-group set up to progress and requested volunteers to come forward. The sub group would meet on 23rd April, prior to the normal SCC meeting.
4. Date/Time of the next meeting 23rd April 2025 at 7.30pm