**Strathglass Community Council**

**23 April 2025 at 7.30pm @ the Main Hall, Cannich Hall**

**Meeting Notes – agreed by email**

Members:

Humphrey Clarke - Chair

Georgina Parker – Vice Chair & Secretary

Gordon Buckley

David Tulloch

Lee Carlyle - Treasurer

Karl Falconer

Councillor: Councillor David Fraser

25 members of the public

Apologies: Councillor Chris Ballance

1. Welcome, apologies and conflicts of interest: The chair welcomed and thanked members of the public.
2. Approval of minutes and review of actions: Minutes approved. All actions completed or on the agenda
3. Partner Updates – moved to next meeting
4. Changes to FLS car park charging at Glen Affric (inc. Plodda) - Paul Hibberd and colleagues from FLS

Paul Hibberd Visitor Services Manager, FLS – responsible for trails, car parks, public toilets, etc.

Car park charges introduced in 2012 were not received well by local residents. Consultation happened and charges at Plodda and Loch Beinn a Mheadhoin were removed. Car park passes were made available to Strathglass residents and a share of funds back to the community

Parking in recent years has achieved £10,000 to £15,000 per annum at Dog Falls and River Affric car parks, compared to approximately 100,000 visitors to Glen Affric overall and an estimated 50,000 to dog Dog Falls.

Dog Falls and River Affric was increased to £3. This went to FLS to contribute to costs including cleaning and maintenance of toilets, tracks, etc.

Recently Dog Falls has been developed to enlarge the carpark, maintain/repair toilets and bridge repairs.

Paul stated that Glen Affric is the ‘Jewel in the crown’ for FLS. However, costs are increasing and their response is to increase the spread of charging within carparks:

Proposals:

* FLS to retain all of the car park money to fund maintenance of Glen Affric
* FLS to increase the car park charges to reflect a premium site to £5 per day, install more reliable parking meters with improved signal to offer card payment, as cash is less common and the ringo system is available but people forget to pay afterwards
* FLS to introduce car parking charges at Plodda, Chisholm Bridge (previously known as the walkers’ car park) and at Loch Bienn a’ Mhedhoin.
* Public question re walkers’ car park and walkers trekking for multiple days: Paul responded that they are sometimes contacted by people re this and that multiple days worth of tickets would need to be bought and displayed.
* The public displayed significant resistance to charging local residents to park at Glen Affric car parks.
* Paul asked for a show of hands as to how many people in the audience have car park passes.
* The Secretary put forward that due to the structure of the roads to the car parks, which are single track roads, all of the traffic going to Glen Affric and Plodda goes past the houses of many residents. She added that the community have only been given around 30 passes over recent years and that the fact that most of the people who have the passes have attended this meeting demonstrates their commitment to the community and their surroundings. She stated that such residents are a helpful in looking after Glen Affric, removing rubbish, reporting issues, etc. A member of the community confirmed that they often pick up rubbish including potentially dangerous glass each day from Glen Affric.
* Paul referred to the recent incident of abuse of the island in Loch Beinn a Mheadhoin and the action that FLS was taking in relation to that.
* The Chair ended the item here to proceed with the agenda.

ACTION: The Chair to follow up with a letter to FLS.

1. Bingally and Fanellan Substation Applications
* FLS representatives remained to discuss the sale of FLS land to SSEN.
* Ian – FLS Planning Manager – found out about the Bingally plans at the same time as the community. Looked to see what was on FLS ground. Tried to work out what the effect on them would be. Decided whether they would formally object to the planning application or not. SSEN can compulsory purchase and take the ground. FLS have to consider FLS related issues with it. A member of the public asked whether they could object for the community. Ian confirmed that they cannot look at objecting in relation to community issues, as this could have impacts somewhere else. Need to be quite blunt. FLS can object. Main concern would be habitat loss but this is not a concern for this site as it was recently felled.
* Question from the public re peatland, flora and fauna. Ian responded that any habitat damage has to be replaced elsewhere.
* FLS look at what is to be done in the local area – there is peatland and native woodland that requires restoration, so this is an opportunity.
* FLS land for compulsory purchase is 120 hectares (296 acres) if they agree to the sale it is 70+ hectares (172 acres)
* Question from public re specific water vole habitat in the burn alongside the site. The speaker said water vole have been present since at least 2000 and in recent years. Water vole are protected under UK and European law. FLS were unaware of the presence of water voles on site.

ACTION: SCC to include the presence of water voles in their comment.

* The Chair thanked FLS for their input and FLS left the meeting
* Water run off mitigation was raised by a resident who lives close to the intended site, who was concerned regarding flooding.
* The Chair confirmed the dates for comment and encouraged members of the community to comment in their own right by 4 May 2025.
* The Chair confirmed that SCC will be responding as a statutory consultee and SCC has an extended deadline of 31st May – GP confirmed that there will be a further opportunity to influence our SCC response including at our May meeting. Feedback is also welcome via email, facebook, in person or via the website feedback form.
* The Chair reminded attendees that hard copies were available to inspect in the foyer of the community hall and at Cannich Stores SPAR.

Concerns raised by residents and community council members included:

* Impact of Traffic - traffic plan (EA Volume 1) refers to 18 hours of traffic per day
* The impact of traffic through Glen Urquhart was raised by Glen Urquhart resident, who was concerned that there had been no consultation by SSEN with residents of Glen Urquhart despite the impact of traffic and upon the local landscape which they enjoy as local people.
* Impact of noise is a concern both during construction and operation as shown on the EA. A Tomich resident also raised concern regarding the noise from the access road. Lack of clarity regarding timings of completion of the access road – residents felt strongly that, should the project go ahead, it should be a condition that the access road be in place prior to any other construction work to avoid traffic going through Cannich and Tomich. Changes to the design, including additional bunding, need to be put in place to reduce noise at the substation (construction and operational)
* Speed limits, timing restrictions and traffic measures would need to be put in place beforehand. A member of the public asked for the speed limit from Invercannich and across the bridge to be reduced to protect the safety of residents, including children travelling to school and holiday makers.
* Cumulative impact with this and other sub-stations including Fanellan
* Cumulative impact forestry and SSE
* Cumulative impact with other energy projects
* Glen Urquhart road will also be cumulatively impacted.
* Water voles, lekking black grouse sites, other red listed species and protected species including skylark, as well as pine marten and otters
* The public felt that there had been poor consultation, but David Fraser advised that this is not a material planning consultation.
* Significant concerns re fire safety given the single route in and out of Tomich.
* Impact on tourism – errors in application with businesses missed, people come to Glen Affric for peace, nature, beautiful landscapes and walking/ cycling / canoeing. They will not want to come to an industrialised area. (This is recognised in the Landscape document in the planning application but then ignored in the Planning Statement)
* Minimal GVA for Highland in Socio Economic report (main GVA in England) – so highly likely that tourism jobs lost will not be replaced locally – substation unmanned. Negative impact on local jobs.

The meeting was allowed to run over time until residents had all been given the opportunity to put forward their views. There were no comments in support of the proposal.

Both the Bingally and Fanellan substation proposals have a date for public response of 4th May 2025. Members of the public were advised to make it clear in their any response to the Highland Council Planning Portal as to whether they are ‘objecting’ ‘supporting’ or ‘commenting’.

1. Bingally to Fasnakyle connection: no further update following the ‘consultation’ event. Although there appeared to be options to underground the cable, some attendees felt that this was not a real option and that decisions had already been made to take the cheaper option, to proceed with OHLs and further destroy the landscape. DF confirmed that the application for this will go to the ECU.
2. Community Action Plan and Local Place Plan for Strathglass
* GP confirmed that the first meeting of the sub-group took place before this meeting. Members has been appointed and bids from 3 of the 4 consultants approached had been received and considered. A decision was made to recommend one of the applicants and a bid for funding will be drafted.
* GP had taken notes for the first meeting but Karen Edwards would take over as secretary for the sub-group, David Tulloch is the member for SCC. Details of other members will be available in the meeting notes and posted on the SCC website alongside the SCC meeting notes.
1. SCC Member Updates: Deferred to next meeting.
2. Treasurer’s report – LC

The 2023/24 accounts approved at the extraordinary meeting were submitted by the deadline of 31st March 2025.

LC confirmed that the allowance from Highland Council is unlikely to cover the costs of the community council.

ACTION: LC to establish full running costs and SCC to prepare a funding request for ward funds if necessary.

1. Additional items/community communications:
	1. Hazardous road conditions (inc. speed in Cannich)

GP wrote to the contact provided by David Fraser. To date she has not received a reply. DF explained that the person has been on holiday

* 1. Signal switch off – Tomich - Reports of alternative meter solutions being arranged with a plan B if it does not work due to lack of digital signal.
	2. A member of the community requested that SCC try to find out whether other alternative networks to the existing EE provision might become available. Other members confirmed that the EE signal is good. Community members are encouraged to engage with their service provider or swap to EE if/when not under contract.
1. AOB – Concerns regarding the condition of the bank along the Tomich road where ancient woodland had been felled, chopped up and left randomly down hillside and along verges. ACTION: Ascertain contact for landowner, thought to be Fasnakyle Estate.

The Chair thanked members of the community for their attendance and participation and closed the meeting at 9.40pm.

The Secretary/vice Chair thanked Gordon Beckley for providing and setting up the Audio Visual equipment.

1. Date/Time of the next meeting: 7.30pm on 21st May 2025