**Laggan Community Council – Ordinary Meeting**

**Meeting 28 – Monday 15th May 2023 - Held at the Wolftrax Centre from 1840**

**Approved Minutes**

**Attendees Present**

Community Councillors: C Morgan, J Warner, A Gallagher, L Hendry, V Macpherson, M Khazaka. Highland Councillor: Russell Jones, K Thew (minutes). 5 members of the community attending and participating in the discussion by Gilkes Energy – 2 attendees.

The meeting was declared quorate and no new declaration of interests were made.

1. **Gilkes Energy - Loch Earba Pumped Hydro Scheme**

CM to send maps and information provided by Gilkes at the meeting.

A consultation meeting was requested by Gilkes Energy to identify appropriate viewpoints for their environmental assessment impact report. Gilkes have a scoping opinion from ECU and the next stage is to conduct surveys to establish all correct data for this from their consultees, of which LCC is one. One additional viewpoint was identified. There will be two separate planning applications – one for the Hydro Scheme by Gilkes Energy and another by SSE Networks for a future substation. The two proposals are NOT running concurrently. This is a concern to both LCC and Gilkes who have already received a connection agreement from SSEN for the hydro scheme into the grid, but a new substation is required. LCC has received NO plans for any substation.

SSE have to do their own “optioneering study” in respect of any potential cabling routes and the siting of the substation. CM asked for the specific SSEN contact from Gilkes.

Other comments from attendees:

Rewilding and biodiversity net gain, community financial. Noted that Power lines will be underground, outward dam walls likely to be rock faced, internal walls could be rock, cement, membrane/rocks, grass and planting will be re-established and tracks/footpaths re-laid. (Main tracks to dam and substation would be required for maintenance.)

No Community Benefit arrangements have been offered and will be subject of additional discussions with Gilkes Energy, however it was noted that no such benefit for this type of renewable energy scheme is included in SG guidelines.

1. **Approval of draft minutes of LCC Meeting 27 held on 20th March 2023** - Proposed by MK; seconded JW without amendment.
2. **Matters Arising**

* Primary School Mothballing – CM had circulated a set of notes about the meeting held with Education officials on the potential closure of the school. These were accepted as an accurate record of the meeting held 19/04/23 and will be published alongside CC minutes. LCC has been advised **informally** of a likely proposal to close the school. This proposal will be presented to a meeting of the Education Dept & HC officials in September 2023 and if sanctioned, will trigger a series of multiple official consultations with various bodies, staff, parents, and the Community Council before any final proposal is sent to Scottish Government. The protracted nature of the consultation process will mean that a final decision is not likely until mid 2025.
* School garden – at present, there can be no community involvement in the garden area. LCC is awaiting an update from Ian Jackson on this.
* Public Bus Proposal – LCC expressed frustration and disappointment that there has still been no formal response or discussion about Public Bus proposals made. RJ noted that a Ward meeting is scheduled for 3 weeks’ time with David Summers (council officer for transport) RJ will keep LCC updated. It was noted that there is no incentive for Stagecoach to consider timetable changes as changes can only go ahead if zero cost. CM/LCC to provide a strongly worded response to present to the forthcoming ward meeting.
* Dark Skies. RJ has spoken to John Allen about street lighting in Gergask Avenue, either switching off or providing new LEDs, which will automatically dim after midnight. The meeting noted that the street lights had significantly cut down on any unwanted behaviours in the village.

1. **SSE Renewables Community Investment (Benefit)**

It was verified that the preferred option would be to continue with an existing (revamped) local panel and concurrently set up a new company to manage the C.B. fund going forward. Other communities have done this successfully and employ a Development Officer, potentially funded by the scheme. LCC will appraise SSE to take this forward.

1. **Financial Report**

Bank account balance at last meeting: £7,722.07

2 payments made totalling £1,805.94; Secretarial services £30.00; Defibrillator £1,775.94

Current bank balance: £5,916.13 – with the following money is ring-fenced (£5610.53):

* £4,999.46 for SSE Micro Grants
* £500 from Highland Council for the instillation / signage for Defibrillators
* £111.07 from CNPA for environmental / litter projects

Available for the general use by the Community Council is £305.60

JW has also finalised formal annual accounts for submission/approval at AGM, after which the HC grant of £438 will be sent. It was noted that to RJ, that Community Council’s should receive additional funds to run their affairs.

1. **Statutory Items for Community Council to note and discuss**
2. Planning Applications update.
3. SSE Cloiche – HC decided not to put in an objection so the review is now determined by Scottish Ministers. There is likely to be some amount of community benefit from this scheme if approved and when commissioned.
4. SSE Melgarve – There are still plans to overground (pylons) down the valley into the substation. LCC would object to this proposal.
5. CNPA Call-in Consultation Request for ATV tracks on Coul Estate. The meeting was appraised by the estate owner of the intended plans and sought to reassure the meeting that potential parallels drawn with an application from Pitmain/Glenbanchor were incorrect. Suggestions were made to provide further evidence of the nature of the woodland to CNPA (i.e. traditional native woodland species to be preserved and not for commercial harvesting). Tracks are to allow for safe ingress/egress for land, for wildlife habitat and preservation management. LCC agreed to submit a response noting that no objections had been received from any local community members. The estate owner will be responding to the CNPA accordingly and the meeting thanked him for clarifying.
6. Crathie Lodge. Revised planning proposals for Crathie Lodge were noted. Previous plans were approved, new proposals show minimal amendments. LCC remains neutral to all residential applications.
7. Easter Breakachy - Solar array. Ground based array due to configuration. Will be surrounded by trees and not visible beyond the property.
8. 2022 Balgowan Planning Update. RJ reported that during the Area Planning Committee meeting held in August 2022 to discuss Balgowan, the clerk had unintentionally not resumed recording the meeting (as is required) following a break. LCC had objected to the planner’s assessment of their response. MK requested that this correspondence be attached to these minutes. RJ will forward latest e-mail from Planning Officer to Chair. LCC to provide a response to RJ re outstanding planning conditions – meeting noted that 2 conditions may not have been addressed. Noted that 2 other outstanding planning applications (one for a new build house and another to remove a Static Caravan will lapse in March 2024). Also noted that Aire site is very active in recent weeks.
9. Community Housing – Picnic Site Housing Meeting – 30th March 2023. Meeting advised that a set of notes from the meeting had been provided to the secretary and circulated to Councillors. It was noted that all Gergask Ave Residents attending had objected to a new road in front of Albyn houses and access via the Avenue. Concern was noted about a flood risk at the site and the removal of existing community amenity space. It was not known what next steps will be.
10. Licencing Updated – Nothing to report.
11. Roads – Bear Road Safety Manager came to investigate the wild goat issue and was able to witness at first hand. Transport Scotland to make the decision to approve any warning signage.
12. Report from Public Sector Agencies – No Police report provided.
13. Highland Council – (i) Public toilet - No change known. (ii) Online Planning training now available for CC members. To be circulated.
14. **Village Amenity Group.** Thanks given to all community members for volunteering to manage and clear the Play Park, Litter, Richardson Memorial Garden, etc. In addition, KT agreed to “manage” the Village planters this year. Bedding plants should be delivered in early June. Awaiting confirmation. Other volunteers available to assist.
15. **Other Questions from members of the public**

Youth group funds. JW advised that there is an old youth group fund (circa £400) needing a “home”. It was suggested that this could be added to the existing Richardson Memorial fund (Circa £1400) on behalf of the Community. A proposal to create a bursary award scheme for young people in the village e.g. for needs of higher education/apprenticeships/Driving lessons etc. JW to discuss with Helen Richardson and a separate sub-group of LCC to be established to finalise terms of reference.

1. **AOB** Bin in Village lay by. The large commercial bin was removed in early April by the Waste Management team because of repeated use for domestic rubbish. It was noted that the Waste team had identified properties who had used this bin inappropriately and had decided, without discussion with the Community Council, to remove the large bin and replace it with a smaller bin on a concrete base. The bin is noted for “litter only” and not for domestic rubbish. CM to contact Highland Council Waste Management team to report a significant safety and environmental hazard. The bin was being emptied but any additional rubbish not in the bin, is being left.
2. **Proposed Date of next meeting**

**Please note a change in the date of the Community Council’s AGM to be held on Tuesday 13th June at 19:30 Venue: Laggan Community Hall.**

**Approved at meeting of Community Council on Tuesday 13th June unamended.**