

# KINGUSSIE AND VICINITY COMMUNITY COUNCIL

## MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 5<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2011 IN TALLA NAN RÒS, KINGUSSIE

**Present:** Councillors Mr a Davidson (Chairman) Ms G Wright (Vice Chairman) Mr J Taylor (Treasurer) Mrs V Emmett (Sec) Mrs M Brown, Highland Councillor Mr D Fallows

**Apologies:** Cr. Mrs A Schofield, Mr M Stone.

**Visitors:** Mr C Kelly (Kingussie Postmaster), Mr I Wallace (BLRC), Mr A Macpherson Fletcher (Balavil), Mr and Mrs A Scott (Kingussie residents).

1. **Minutes of the Meeting held on 1<sup>st</sup> Feb. 2011.** The minutes were approved as a correct record. (Prop GW, Sec. JT)
2. **Matters Arising:**
  - Item 6 Kingussie Service Point.** Cr Fallows said he would speak about this again in his agenda item.
  - Item 9(i)** The secretary referred councillors to the report provided by Cr Schofield in her absence about progress with the purchase of the new notice board.

### 3. Police Matters

In the absence of Police Sgt Crawford this item was not taken. The Chairman regretted the police absence since he wished to raise matters about street disturbances in Kingussie the previous weekend.

Cr Mrs Brown reported she had spoken recently to Insp. MacLeod about 20mph limits for Kingussie, he had suggested she contacts Mr A McKeever of Highland Council's TECS dept.

### 4. Future of Kingussie Post Office (Mr C Kelly)

Mr Kelly reported that, together with the Postmaster for Newtonmore, he had attended MP Mr Alexander's recent constituency surgery. They had conveyed their great concerns about the UK Government's proposed changes affecting the future of the Royal Mail and, as a consequence their own livelihoods and the future of the local post offices. Mr Kelly reported many people had written to object to the proposed changes. Mr Alexander had told them there was to be a big investment in the Royal Mail. However, Mr Kelly said people were generally concerned that investment would go to city centre POs and not to small rural POs. The MP had assured them he would contact the Minister for the Royal Mail to convey their concerns. Mrs Emmett expressed some dismay that Mr Alexander had not already done this, since he had written to Mrs. Schofield after their meeting with the MP earlier in March assuring her he would do so.

Mr Kelly reported he planned to do a newsletter for residents telling them about all the services the Post Office in Kingussie provides, e.g. paying Council tax, taxing motor vehicles, paying bills via the PO, etc.

It was agreed that people should be encouraged to make more use of the PO and to increase the footfall, in case the Government and Royal Mail intend to reduce the range of services provided by rural post offices.

Cr Mrs Brown commented that it would be disastrous for the community and the older people particularly if the PO should close or the number of service be reduced

It was agreed to try to coordinate the timing of Mr Kelly's proposed newsletter with the forthcoming Community Council newsletter. The secretary agreed to contact Cr Mrs Schofield about this.

## **5. Planning**

(In Cr Schofield's absence the regular agenda item on Planning was not taken. The secretary referred councillors to Cr Mrs. Schofield's notes where she reported there was nothing on the weekly planning list for 31.3.2011 and also gave other planning information.)

### **Allt Duine Windfarm.**

KVCC has been asked by the Scottish Government to respond to the application by 13<sup>th</sup> April. The application for the proposed wind farm above Kinraig has now been submitted by RWE npower renewables. The developers had provided a large mass of documents (15kg in all) and Cr Mrs Schofield has made a detailed study of them and prepared a draft response from KVCC – already circulated to Councillors. Copies of all the RWE documents have been on public display for consultation for at least a month in the library. Cr Emmett reported she had prepared posters and put them around the town informing residents about the public consultation and urging them to take part. Cr Emmett also brought to the meeting a more recent folder of photomontages illustrating where the turbines would be visible from a range of viewpoints along the Strath and from many of the mountains.

Cr Davidson reminded councillors that in discussion they should comment as Community councillors and not give personal views.

Highland Councillor Fallows did not take part in the discussions, he left the room.

Cr Davidson, Taylor and Emmett reported on the meeting held in Kinraig Hall on Mon 4<sup>th</sup> April, organised by Kinraig CC to enable local communities to meet and question representatives of the developers. In their views the meeting in Kinraig was well organised and very useful. The developers had answered residents' questions openly and frankly. Several areas of concern had emerged at the meeting.

Community Gain: The question of community gain was not up for discussion, the developers said that would be dealt with separately if planning permission was granted.

The main areas of concern focussed on the construction of the wind farm and associated traffic. A full discussion of these concerns ensued.

### **Construction and Traffic**

- The construction will take place over a two year period, although there will be no major work during the main four-month winter period because of the potential difficulties of

accessing the site high up in the Monadhliaths. Construction work will therefore be concentrated into eight months each year, largely in the main tourist seasons.

- A road 5m wide will be constructed to the site from the Leault farm access off the A9. It will utilise part of an existing estate track, which will need widening. A new road is required at higher altitudes. Special care will be required with gradients and contours. The developers assert that the road at higher altitudes will not be visible from the A9 or other viewpoints locally.

**Employment opportunities:**

- Councillors were disappointed to learn that opportunities for employment for local people are likely to be very few. The work is likely to require only 100 workers with relevant skills during construction, and once the wind farm is up and running it will generate a maximum of six permanent full-time equivalent jobs.
- All the construction work will be put out to tender across Scotland, so some companies could come from the south and west, as well as from the Inverness direction. The developers assume the contractors will bring their own work force.

**Road congestion** along the A9 and the potential for serious accidents is likely to be a major concern.

- The proposals are for 31 turbines. The concrete bases of each turbine will require 54 lorry loads of ready mix concrete, likely to be sourced from companies in the Inverness area. This will result in 108 ready mix lorry journeys for each base travelling along the A9 in a day when pouring is taking place. Mr Macpherson Fletcher commented that the developers are hoping to mix concrete on site, using available stone where possible.
- The developers provided estimates of the average number of daily journeys to the site from other construction traffic. It could amount to about 400 vehicles a day accessing the site from the A9.
- The developers gave an undertaking that construction traffic will not use the local road through Kinraig, but will be confined to journeys along the A9.
- Concerns were expressed about potential use of the A86 through Kingussie by traffic from the south turning off the A9 at Newtonmore to use the cafe there and then proceeding along the A86 through Kingussie, or coming from the Spean Bridge direction along the A86 through Laggan and Newtonmore.
- The turbine masts and blades will come from the parent company in Germany, and the developers hope they will arrive by sea at either Invergordon or Inverness ports and be transported by road from there on low loaders. There was no information about the size of nor how many lorry journeys would be involved in this aspect of the construction.
- Cr Emmett had calculated that at peak times of construction, a vehicle could be entering or leaving the site and accessing the A9 roughly every two minutes during the twelve hour working day Mondays to Saturdays.
- It was surprising to learn that no provision has been made in the planning application for a parking bay or similar lorry holding centre, or for a traffic island or other traffic calming measure at the entrance to the site from the A9. Councillors expressed concerns about

the potential for serious accidents in view of the past history of accidents and fatalities on the stretch of the A9 near to Kincaig.

#### **Electricity generation.**

- At the Kincaig meeting, the developers estimated that the efficiency of output of the turbines is 30%. This was later amended to a lower figure by the developers in correspondence to the secretary of Kincaig CC. It is still unclear just how much electricity the wind farm will provide to the grid, it could be much lower than many people anticipate.
- The John Muir Trust recently published a report about the amount of electricity generated annually by existing wind farms across Scotland over a two year period, and it indicates their efficiency is very low. The report shows there were 51 continuous days when there was insufficient wind across the whole of Scotland for any of the wind farms to generate enough power for the National Grid. In the two year period of the study, wind farms produced less than 10% capacity for one-third of the time and less than 20% capacity for half the time. These figures are disappointing. Questions were asked at Kincaig about what happens for the rest of the time, the developers response was that it is a matter for the Scottish Government to solve.

#### **Effect on Wildlife.**

- Questions were asked at the Kincaig meeting about the immediate and long term effects on the wildlife, especially nesting golden eagles and rare wading birds. The developers gave assurances that a detailed environmental study had been made and they considered the presence of the wind farm would not pose a risk to the nesting birds.

#### **Restoration**

- Concerns were expressed at the Kincaig meeting about permanent effects to the integrity of the land and loss of pristine wilderness. At the end of the life of the wind farm, estimated at 25 years, the site will be restored; but restoration will only involve removal of the concrete bases to one metre below the current soil surface and the remaining concrete will be covered with fresh soil and turf. Damage to the original site will be permanent.

Mr Macpherson Fletcher of Balavil spoke about the opportunity the wind farm gives to the local landowners, all of whom have owned their estates for a long time. Their intentions are to plough back any financial gains into their estates, which could also bring benefits for the local economy.

Cr Davidson pointed out that the site of the wind farm is a Highland Council supported site, identified as one of three on the Monadhliaths they currently recommend for development.

At the completion of the discussions, councillors agreed that the KVCC response should still be couched along lines that neither supports nor object to the wind farm. Additions should be made however to the draft response. In particular, we should express our concerns about the potential traffic congestion on the A9; the high number of construction vehicle movements; the potential

increased risk of road accidents and fatalities, effects on tourism both short and long term. We should request that traffic should not be allowed to use the A86 through Newtonmore or Kingussie at any time, but should be restricted to journeys along the A9. We should also request that heavy and slow loads should be moved at night when other traffic densities are normally low.

The secretary agreed to provide notes to Cr. Schofield of the main points made at the Kincaig and KVCC meetings. Mrs Schofield, in collaboration with the chairman, will finalise KVCC's response and ensure it reaches the Government office before the deadline of 13<sup>th</sup> April.

Highland Councillor Fallows rejoined the meeting at this point.

6. **Treasurer's report.** (Cr Mr Taylor)

Cr Taylor reported he is displeased with the timing of monthly Bank statements, which are produced on the 25<sup>th</sup> of each month. The current balance in the KVCC account stands at £3848, the discretionary grant from Highland Council has recently been received. The costs of the new notice boards were discussed. The grants from the Highland Council and the National Park will leave a slight shortfall, which can easily be met from KVCC's funds.

The Community Children's Party account stands at £2016 and the Senior Citizens Christmas Party account at £5064. Cr Taylor reported that this account had only earned 32 pence interest. He also reported a recent letter from the Bank that interest on all Treasurers' Accounts will cease as from 6 June 2011.

Following further discussion it was agreed the Treasurer should investigate setting up high interest accounts.

Cr Taylor reported that Peter Munro has agreed to audit the accounts maintained by KVCC and there would be no fee for the first year.

7. **Highland Councillor's Matters** (Cr Fallows)

- (I) **Service Point changes.** Cr Fallows reported the news that the Kingussie and Grantown on Spey Service Points are only going to be open for half the current hours. The members of staff still do not know how they will be affected. In Grantown, the Service Point is the front door for other users of the building and implications of the reduction of opening hours has not been resolved. In Cr Fallows view the matter has been badly handled; the logistics have still not been fully sorted out. Cr Mrs Brown commented that while the travelling expenses of staff, who are redeployed to other areas, are paid for six months after that time they have to pay all their own travel, etc. with long term implications for their living costs. Cr Fallows commented that opportunities might arise for applications for other local posts.
- (II) **Grass Cutting** The latest news is that none of the current employees is going to lose their jobs or be transferred to the new organisation. Highland Council staff will do other jobs, but there will no longer be any seasonal contracts for additional workers. Most of the grass cutting will be done by contractors.
- (III) The Highland Council no longer takes cash or cheque payments.
- (IV) **Museums and Art Galleries.** Highland Council has decided to set up an arms length charitable Trust, which will be responsible for the running of the art galleries and

museums. Both of the Highland Folk Museum's sites (Am Fasgadh and Newtonmore) will be transferred to the new Trust.

- (V) **Allotments.** Cr Fallows urged people to register an interest if they have not already done so. The Ward Manager, Ms Sue Palmer is to organise a meeting of those interested in acquiring an allotment, the date will be decided shortly.
- (VI) **Care at Home.** A meeting for staff took place recently and note of their concerns was taken. Cr Fallows is hopeful of the outcome.

8. **Ward Forum Report.** (Cr Mrs Brown)

Cr Brown reported that the planned topic for the Ward Forum was hijacked by a lengthy discussion about Transport Scotland's proposals to erect snow gates on the Slochd. Most Community Councils are opposed to this proposal.

The planned topic for the Ward Forum – "Care for People with Dementia" was not developed fully in the time left and it has been agreed to reorganise the meeting at a future time. Nevertheless the presentations were good, as well as information about how the project will deal with how provision should be made. The community care plan is currently being printed out for circulation. A Service Level Agreement will be made by Highland Council with NHS Highland, who will deliver the care.

The "Change Programme" will be fronted by someone with good experience. If it is to work as intended, Self Directed Care needs to access lots of different private organisations, but in rural areas these do not exist. There are opportunities though for individuals to become private carers. The need for appropriate training and certification e.g. SVQs, licensing and quality assurance is acknowledged.

9. **Our Community A Way Forward.** (Cr Mrs Brown)

Am Fasgadh Project. Cr Brown reported that the group has purchased an electoral roll and they are in the process of finalising all the documentation needed to send off to the Community Assets Branch for their advice.

10. **Correspondence Received.**

The secretary reported correspondence from

- (i) SNH: A new document about SSSIs.
- (ii) CNPA: New Standing Orders about Planning matters. These have been passed to Cr Schofield.
- (iii) Northern Constabulary: Community Consultation by the Northern Constabulary about Scottish Government proposals to reorganise police forces across Scotland. Cr Davidson is heading up this matter on behalf of KVCC.
- (iv) CNPA: A reply from the CNPA concerning KVCC's letter the 300 house development in Kingussie.

11. **Any Other Business.**

- (i) **Presentation by residents, Mr and Mrs Scott.** (This item was taken towards the beginning of the meeting to avoid detaining them for the whole meeting.)

Mr Scott expressed the wish to address the Council about the matter of his planning application for extensions to his house. He explained that his planning application for an extension has been revised following reports from the Highland Council's Planning Officers. He said he had received KVCC's comments on the earlier plans and he hoped KVCC would support his new plans.

KVCC secretary asked about the timing of the submission of the new plans, explaining that Cr Schofield, who usually looks at planning applications along with the Chairman on behalf of the whole KVCC, was absent from the meeting. She had indicated in her notes to councillors there were no Kingussie application on the recent weekly list (31 March) from the Planning Office. Councillors were, therefore, unaware if they were to be consulted again, and while they were very agreeable to listening to Mr. and Mrs Scott about their new plans, they were not in a position to and would not make any decisions during the meeting. KVCC's comments to the Planning Department, if required, had to be made objectively by the Councillors on their own.

Councillors agreed Mr and Mrs Scott could address the Council.

Mr Scott explained that the new plans were for a scaled down extension; he had submitted them on the 11<sup>th</sup> February, but for some unexplained reason they had not been entered on to the Highland Council's PC until the 28<sup>th</sup> March. He also explained that as an employee of Highland Council in the Kingussie Planning Office, his application was being dealt with by the Inverness Office.

He was aware of earlier KVCC's concerns, but wished to assure councillors he had no intention to overdevelop his property. He hoped the revised plans address issues raised by the previous planning application.

The new plans increase the number of parking space at the house to four. The family is seeking to make some internal changes to the house, to construct additional porches at main entrances to the house and to erect a one and a half storey detached building housing a garage and a room to serve as an indoor barbecue area on the ground floor, with a bedroom and shower room over. He explained that the current property is insufficient to accommodate all the family, which includes parents and they have no room for visiting family members and other guests. Hence the application for a guest bedroom and shower room over the garage. A survey has been carried out of the incident light on surrounding properties and he has been assured neighbours will not be unduly affected by the new building. His nearest neighbours have recently erected a conservatory on the back of their house – facing his property, but the survey indicated they would not be affected by his development. In addition some adjacent large trees have been removed by British Telecom in an attempt to increase the Broadband reception along the valley towards Laggan.

He provided a copy of the new plans and a supporting statement. Councillors thanked him for his presentation and the secretary agreed to pass on the plans and the supporting statement to Mrs. Schofield for the Council's consideration. If asked to do so, the Council would offer their views in due course to the Planning Department.

Mr and Mrs Scott left the meeting at this point.

(ii) **Work of the Badenoch Learning and Resource Centre, Kingussie.** (Mr I Wallace)

In advance of the meeting Mrs Grant of BLRC had asked if Mr Wallace might address the Council and update them on the work of the Centre. Councillors had agreed.

Mr Wallace provided a verbal résumé of the range of courses currently on offer for adults in Badenoch and Strathspey through the BLRC.

The courses include several in Art; Computing; Dancing; Photography; Languages - several on offer, Food Hygiene and COSH. In addition the Centre provides invigilation for students undertaking higher level courses.

Community Workshops have been well attended and more are planned. "Make A Splash": a series of art and craft workshops intended to encourage people to become engaged in art have benefited from financial support from a charitable organisation and about 80 people have taken part. An exhibition of the work they have produced is planned for the afternoon of Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> April from 2-4 p.m. in the library.

The Centre suffers from a long standing problem of providing suitable accommodation for all its range of courses; in addition to space in the library, use is made of Talla Nan Ròs, the Iona Gallery, St John's Episcopal Church at Rothiemurchus, Kinraig Hall and the High School. More suitable accommodation is still needed. There is a need for a dedicated IT suite plus general and administrative areas. The current accommodation in the library suffers badly from noise intruding from the adjacent Sports Hall below and on occasions teaching has had to stop until noise ceases. The Centre directors have considered several options, e.g. taking over a shop which is for sale on the corner of King Street, but sadly it is not suitable.

Councillors asked if they had considered the large vacant shop premises on the corner of Gynack Street, formerly known as All Days? It was also suggested they contact the Northern Constabulary about the potential use of vacated space the Police Station, since it is now closed to the public.

There being no further points for discussion, Mr Wallace was thanked for his presentation.

- (iii) Cr Wright reported that several town centre street lights are not working and she provided details. The secretary undertook to contact Scotland Transerv since they are on the main A86.

The meeting closed at 2200 hours.

Date of Next Meeting: Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2011 in Talla Nan Ròs at 7 p.m.