

## Minutes of Strathard Community Council Meeting

**Place:** Kinlochard Village Hall

**Date:** 5<sup>th</sup> October 2017

**Present:** Michelle Colquhoun, Ros Dingwall, Trevor Geraghty, Andre Goulancourt, Fiona McEwan, Geraint Short, Colin Smith, Stuart Stephen, Fergus Wood

**Apologies:** Jimmy Quinn, Police Scotland

**Approval of minutes:** Proposed by SS, seconded by CS. One amendment: AOCB last item should refer to Ben Bhan Forest Group, not FCS.

**Attending:** John Hair (FCS), Cllr Martin Earl, Toto McLellan (Minute Secretary) 1 member of the public.

**1. Welcome & Introductions:** Chair Trevor Geraghty welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced John Hare, head of Forestry Commission Scotland's Planning Team.

**2. Matters arising:** Carried forward.

**3. Open Discussion with John Hair, Head of Planning for Forestry Commission Scotland:** Mr Hair gave a description of the National Forest Estate, which is based in Aberfoyle with a second office in Glenbranter. The 66,000 hectares of forest are owned by Scottish Ministers, and internal structure consists of Planning, Environmental, Operational, Recreation and Administration Teams and Civil Engineers. **Restructure:** A major restructure is underway which by April 2018 will see our own area of Cowal & Trossachs become a much larger region, and FCS Scotland will be replaced by Forest & Land Scotland, which is part of the devolution of forests to Scotland. Concern was expressed at potential loss of employment, Mr Hair assured the meeting that any loss will be felt at managerial level. **Reinstatement of land following forestry works and access:** Mr Hare explained, with support from FCS area map of current activity, that there are minimal permanent main arteries in the forest for extracting timber, and a network of temporary tracks which are used for restocking of trees, extraction of deer, and maintenance. These have no surfacing, no hardcore base, and are left to revert naturally to nature over a period of five years once work in the area ceases. Whilst full planning permission is needed for construction within 25metres of a public road, elsewhere a Land Management Plan is produced covering all road construction termed 'permitted development' and requires only notification. This does require an EIA, submitted to FCS Local Conservancy Office. Concern was expressed at this being handled internally. It was noted that FCS no longer enjoys Crown Immunity, and they are subject in this instance to the same measures as other forestry companies and agribusinesses. Mr Hare was asked to comment on LLTNP's effectiveness regarding submitted plans or notified works, he answered that they can ask for more information, will highlight any sensitive issues, and generally have a turnaround timescale of six weeks. Mr Hair was asked where guidelines for EIAs etc will come from following the breakaway from the UK-wide forestry structure. Current guidelines will continue to be followed, but this is seen as an opportunity to fine tune managerial protocols. **Transport:** FCS acknowledges that residents are seldom happy to have timber lorries passing their homes, and strive to work with residents to minimise inconvenience. A schedule of restricted travel times was displayed to illustrate how this is achieved. 40,000 cubic tonnes of timber are extracted from our area per year. Mr Hair outlined the variances in costings of transportation using different exits from the forest, which makes travel through some

residential areas an economic necessity. The current area will be cleared by March 2018. Mr Hair drew attention to the Strategic Timber Fund, which may be accessed to fund repair to public roads used for timber extraction. Details on this will be forwarded to Councillor Earl and the Community Council. **Culling:** 30 goats were culled this year to protect trees, and 3700 deer, rising to 4200 next year. Mr Hair was asked if culling was selective, and if FCS liaised with RSPB on this topic. Mr Hair stated that they have very little contact with RSPB, each organisation culls its own land. It was thought that LLTNP or SNH should be overseeing this, to ensure that transiting herds do not become repeat targets. Culling quotas are based on visual counts and dung counts, numbers are available from SNH. The question on selective culling was not answered. Concern was expressed that based on research with sheep, there is a possibility that female goats recently doted with contraceptives may not kid again. **Replanting:** Felled areas are left for 5 years before replanting to allow dieback of pine weevil population, which minimises the necessity of using stock treated with insecticide. Stumps are left to decay, the release of nutrients from this process minimises the need for fertiliser. Assurance was given that scenic crags will be encouraged as native woodland, current replanting will be sensitive to heritage sites, wider margins will be given to power lines and to waterways. FCS are committed to maintaining healthy riverbanks, and have been successful in reintroducing water vole populations at various locations. **Apprenticeships:** Funding for apprenticeships was withdrawn two years ago, a new scheme is starting shortly at Barony College. **Problems:** FCS are facing the problem of budget cuts, forcing them to close pathways etc that they can no longer afford to maintain, and also the difficult problem of replacing experienced staff who are leaving for the private sector as a result. **Consultation:** Mr Hair said that FCS are working on issues highlighted in the excellent feedback received from the recent consultation, and that they are keen to work in conjunction with the community council. It was felt essential that Aberfoyle is seen as an attractive recruitment area, and it was agreed that anything that can be done currently to improve things in the future for both FCS and the community would be considered valuable by both parties. Mr Hair was urged to let Strathard CC know of any developing problems in advance, as there are many skilled residents in the area who may be able to help, and the community council may be able to address funding otherwise inaccessible to FCS which may be to their mutual benefit, such as contributing to the upgrade of core paths and facilitating signage which benefits both tourism and Forest branding. Mr Hair appreciated the support, and looks forward to working with us in the future.

**4. Road Closure:** The proposed road closure at the Rob Roy from 23<sup>rd</sup> October was discussed. The road is to be surfaced with a product which will last 25 years, and can not be done at night. Access will be possible for 30min intervals through the day, and after 3.30pm. School buses will not be affected, it is not yet known what provision is made for service buses, and a drop-off system for access to buses at the Rob Roy was suggested should this be a problem. Electronic signs will be strategically placed, and a letter drop to nearby properties is intended. It was agreed to ask SC to increase this letter drop, to have information leaflets left in prominent sites, and to ensure that the Duke's Pass is gritted for use as a diversion. Deliveries, primary school pupils, carers and medical provision were identified as concerns, but it is hoped that with communication, minimum disruption will be experienced.

**5. Treasurer's Report:** £500 has been received from SC's Connect Fund, and £25 was paid for hire of Aberfoyle Village Hall.

**6. Planning: Altskeith Hotel:** The appeal re canopy has been upheld. **FCS:** Notification of a 40m temporary track at Loch Chon. **Blairuskin Mhor:** Application for significant extension and

remodelling. **Ledard:** Application to retain 385m of temporary track at Ledard, to allow quad bike access for maintenance. It was noted that the track is just two metres wide, and largely unseen. The applicant has been asked to give details of landscaping. Access by Vodafone to lay armoured cable to existing mast was mentioned, but some doubt was raised regarding whether this cable will be used. **Altskeith Hotel:** The owner informed the meeting that three applications will shortly be submitted, for electric gates to property, addition of a balcony to an existing building, and conversion of an existing building to honeymoon suite. The right to request a change of delegated officer within the Planning Department was discussed.

**7. Correspondence: Police Scotland:** Apologies for non-attendance. **Stirling Council: Community Engagement:** Consultation imminent. It was noted that there is a move mooted to merge community council, although this is more likely to affect urban areas.

**8. Stirling Council Issues & Councillor's Report: B829:** A proactive plan is needed to address improvements to the B829. Councillor Earl suggested a comprehensive photographic audit of all faults should be compiled, area by area, and cross referenced to a local map. Following the audit, Councillor Earl will accompany CC members to a meeting with David Crichton and Nicole Patterson of Stirling Council to request a programme of works on the grounds of safety. This can be tied in with an application to the Strategic Timber Fund mentioned earlier. Formation of a sub-committee to achieve this was discussed. It was stressed that volume of reported incidents is what generates action by the roads department, and residents should be urged to photograph and report every concern. **Flooding:** Councillor Earl has asked for an assurance of commitment to deliver on this subject, which was not given. Concern was expressed that priority of allocation for flood alleviation funding is based on business numbers; at present Aberfoyle is experiencing an economic breakdown due to businesses closing as a direct result of the flooding, and it is feared that by the time the 6year cycle of Government funding comes around again, hugely decreased business numbers will result in lack of qualification for the scheme. An application to Scottish Government on grounds of overriding need for economic regeneration was strongly suggested, and it was noted that the taking out of a loan by Local Authority to finance desperately needed works is not an unprecedented course of action. Councillor Earl advised that it is imperative to insist on Stirling Council allowing sight of plans generated to date, which have not been released, and to request consultation on whether the community would accept these plans as they stand, to avoid the delay and expense incurred by further proposed design work. Alarm was expressed that decisions may be being made based on the recent ill-attended stakeholder meeting, which was not open to the public. FM will forward the minutes of this meeting to Councillor Earl. **FM**

**9. Reports:Meetings Attended:** TG attended a meeting of Strathard Community Trust, which he found informative. **Business Hub:** Stirling Council's Economic Development Team are keen to support the project, and will be refurbishing the area which will house two meeting rooms, ten work stations and the wedding venue. No rent will be charged, a small fee to cover heating etc will be levied. **Broadband:** The trial works at the Glassert will be switched on next week. It was noted that Kinlochard is included in areas considered to receive funds from the Gainshare project, completion scheduled for 2018. A recent meeting of interested parties resulted in no decision being made as to how to proceed. Concern was expressed that new cabling may only extend to the village hall, and not to properties, which would give only 30% improvement. Councillor Earl recommended writing to gain clarity. CS will contact Douglas Baillie. It was noted that Wi-fi access in Aberfoyle is being looked at. There is some doubt over how many cabinets supply the village. **CS**

**10. AOCB: Senior Citizens Christmas Dinner.** Forest Hills have been approached re venue, and the Kinlochard Ceilidh Band confirmed. Distribution of tasks will be decided at next meeting. **Budget Roadshow:** Councillor Earl was asked if this event was scheduled, but was unable to confirm. **House Folk Festival:** This will be held over the 8<sup>th</sup> 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> November at three venues in Kinlochard. A warm invitation was extended. **Ben Vaan:** Information to follow. **Layby:** Assurance was given that at no time was access denied for parking in the layby at Ledard. **Post Office:** The Post Office in Kinlochard has closed, following sale of the premises. 5 months notice was given to Royal Mail, who took no action, and disappointment was expressed at the lack of consultation. It was noted that provision every six miles is required. Possible venues were discussed, including Kinlochard Village Hall for set periods. Other options available were considered, Thornhill operates a van, and Brig o'Turk has provision from a residential property. The question of whether there is a need for a PO was also raised. RD has approached Royal Mail for advice, and It was agreed to appraise the community of the situation, and request feedback. **Funding:** Councillor Earl brought attention to the Aviva Community Fund which can be accessed for community projects. **Slippage:** The lochside road between Culvona and Dun Darroch is showing signs of increased slippage. It was noted that resurfacing works carried out four years ago took only one year to show indications of this problem returning.

**11. Date of next meeting: Thursday November 2<sup>nd</sup> at Aberfoyle Village Hall.**