

Meeting of the Kirkhill & Bunchrew Community Council

Minute of Meeting, 7:30pm, Tuesday 20th August 2024

Community Councillors present:

Cameron Kemp, Éamon Doorley, Inglis Lyon, Jayne MacMillan, Judith Rumbold, Lindsey Stout.

In attendance:

Councillor Emma Knox. George Hogg (Aird Community Trust). Emma Devlin and Anthony Palmer from The Field, Beauly.

The meeting was held in person at Kirkhill Community Centre.

<p>1. Apologies</p> <p>An email of resignation was received from Dr Eleanor Kennedy, Community Councillor, who moved out of the area. Cameron Kemp is to email to thank Dr Kennedy for all her effort and time. Apologies were also received from Highland Councillors David Fraser and Chris Ballance.</p>	
<p>2. Minutes of Last Meeting; Minute of Meeting of 18th June 2024</p> <p>The minutes of the last meeting were circulated online and at the meeting. Lindsey Stout asked Inglis Lyon to improve on her minute of Item 4, so the previous minutes were not agreed at this meeting.</p>	I.L.
<p>3. Matters Arising</p> <p>Minutes of Meeting of 18th June 2024:</p> <p>Cyclist Safety on the A862</p> <p>Inglis Lyon and Lindsey Stout said that Hi Trans and Sustrans had replied that signage was the Council's sphere of responsibility. Improved signage could raise awareness of the possibility of drivers encountering cyclists on the A862, a busy route. If road cyclists felt safe to commute along the A862, more and more people would feel comfortable commuting by bike and this would help to meet targets of reduced emissions. George Hogg (Aird Community Trust) said that the use of too much signage might reduce driver awareness and it should be kept for the spots where it is needed, such as where cyclists cross from one point to another, such as at Dunballoch.</p> <p>George Hogg reiterated that the multi-use paths were not intended to take cyclists off the main road completely. 15mph is a safe limit for a multi-use path and most cyclists like to travel faster on road itself, unless cycling for recreation.</p> <p>The proposal is an active travel route from Beauly to Inverness. There is an Active Travel Strategy which is part of the Inner Moray Firth Development Plan. A stretch has just been completed which finishes at Kiltarlity junction. Highland Council plan to complete to the Cabrich road end. A bid for funding has gone to the Scottish Government.</p>	

<p>The proximity of the railway, road and sea wall limit the availability of the route of the multi-use path at Englishton Muir to Inverness. George Hogg asked that the Community Council support the development of that route in the future.</p> <p>Bank Change of Signatories</p> <p>Inglis Lyon explained that the third set of forms for the change of signatories had been sent off and the third and fourth set of paperwork had been received. He now has a reference number and will continue to follow up this unexplained delay and lack of access to our bank account.</p> <p>Local Place Plan Consultation</p> <p>Jayne Macmillan said that she will design a consultation board for our stall in the Hall on Gala Day on 31st August with the following headings and subheadings. There will be an electronic version put on Facebook. The stall will run from 11.30 to 3.30, with Community Councillors chatting to people and encouraging them to take part in the consultation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transport: road speeds, cycle routes, bus services. • Housing. • Local Amenities/Shop. • Environment. • Energy/Infrastructure. • Connectivity/Wifi. • School/Education. • Other. 	<p>All</p>
<p>4. SSEN/Community Interaction</p> <p>Inglis Lyon said that mega pylons and battery storage projects are just part of a nationwide map of planned infrastructure. Each area is unaware of projects outside of their area and the impact on the environment across the nation. Cameron Kemp agreed that, to create the least impact on our community, we want a more considered approach.</p> <p>Councillor Knox said that there is an upcoming meeting with Raymond Bremner, Council Leader, about mapping exercises. Highland Councillors plan to write to the Scottish Government and ask them to change planning law. There should also be a significant fee charged to major developments to help fund community councils. Training for Community Councillors on planning law was also discussed. Councillor Helen Crawford and Councillor Knox are working with several community councils on these issues.</p> <p>Councillor Knox reiterated that Highland Councillors cannot comment on any live planning matter. Inglis Lyon said that Highland Council should engage with developers and this should be a joint view with Community Councils, who are supported by the Highland Council.</p>	

Éamon Doorley said that the recent Highland Council document, the Social Charter, mentions fast tracking planning applications. He said that it feels as if Highland Council is not supporting locals in trying to push things through without due process. Cameron Kemp said that a better understanding needs to be reached between the Highland Council’s Planning Department and communities. Inglis Lyon said that we don’t have time to get overt support from Highland Council and we should take the matter in person to our MPs and MSPS.

Éamon Doorley mentioned two recent planning applications for two separate properties, LLC 24/02209/PIP and 24/02211/PIP. There is precedence for using brownfield sites on the ruins of old farms. SSEN submitted an objection in the pre-planning stage because these properties are on the mega pylon route. There is a possibility that the provision of housing may be decided upon by SSEN’s influence and is this fair in the planning process and fair to communities? Councillor Knox said that this might go to Scottish Ministers. Éamon also said that the SSEN objection was received after the window of consultation was closed. In our case, in that of a Community Council or a resident, this would mean that we could not lodge an objection. This means that SSEN wields an undue influence over the planning process that is not open to Community Councils or residents.

Cameron Kemp said that the Community Council members of the Beaully Community Liaison Group (CLG) had received an email from Sally Cooper of SSEN regarding re-starting the CLG with SSEN. Four Community Councils will meet shortly to discuss how to respond.

5. The Field, Beaully

Lindsey Stout invited representatives of The Field, Beaully to attend a meeting. Emma Devlin and Anthony Palmer came to represent The Field. This planning application for a battery storage facility for the National Grid will be located in a field in Beaully but is right on the boundary with our Community Council, so we may comment.

Emma Devlin said that “The Field” is an owner/operator battery storage system which has been in operation since 2021. There are two in operation in England, in Oldham and Gerard’s Cross and three under construction, including Fort Augustus, which will be live in two months.

“The Field, Beaully” will be a 100 megawatt battery storage site at Dunballoch Farm, next to Dunballoch Farm Steading and near the River Beaully. There was a local consultation event in Beaully in May and there will be another one in August. Environmental assessments and consultations are in progress, with the planning application to be lodged towards the end of the year. Emma said that she was keen to get feedback and to hear our questions.

Inglis Lyon asked what the demand for energy is. Emma Devlin replied that, at present, wind farms are paid to turn off during high winds and that this is a waste of energy. Storing this energy in a battery storage facility helps achieve net zero and improves the efficiency of the National Grid. The Field will sell it back to the National Grid when demand for energy is high.



The reason for location is proximity to a substation with capacity. The site is flat and approximately two to three kilometres from the substation. The Field would feed into the existing substation at Beauly, rather than Fanellan.

Cameron Kemp asked, why site it here when demand is further south? Emma Devlin replied that there is a lot of wind energy up here and a lot of constraint on power lines. The battery storage would store the energy and allow it to be transported later.

Inglis Lyon commented that the site is convenient, because that is where the energy is. Battery storage facilities are being built at scale across the country. The Highland population has been in decline for thirty five to forty years; therefore building for increased demand in the Highlands is not a rational position to hold. This enormous infrastructure will form part of the net zero drive. We will see many instances of large companies not listening to local communities. It is important that the consultation process is seen as an opportunity for Community Councils and others to influence outcomes.

Emma Devlin said that there is existing capacity for the battery farm and that The Field has already had agreement from SSE. Cameron Kemp asked how long the facility could supply 100 megawatts and Emma replied, up to two hours of demand, or 200 mega hours (100 megawatts for two hours). Pricing is largely demand driven. High demand periods are when the energy will be sold at a higher price. The consumer benefit is that constraint payments are taken away from wind farms. Every battery storage facility that comes online makes the National Grid more efficient for consumers.

Éamon Doorley asked that, if there's an excess to requirements during this high demand period, can the energy be stored again. Emma Devlin said yes, it can.

Councillor Emma Knox asked if we agreed with the battery storage site in principle. Inglis Lyon replied that it is important that Highland Council scrutinise these opportunities and have the opportunity to do so and that the Community Council cannot agree in principle for these reasons.

Éamon Doorley said that there have been recent instances of fires and chemical pollution spills over large areas in Australia. Emma Devlin replied that it's a very different climate from the Highlands. The best practice in case of a fire would be to let it burn and that the fire service should not enter the site. The testing that's been done on battery storage facilities has shown that the fire has been reduced to an individual unit. Each unit would hold a maximum of 2.5 megawatts and each unit would be appropriately spaced, with fire suppressant systems in place. There has been large scale fire testing and regulations are in place. Further questioning by Community Councillors showed that the fire regulations were in fact U.S. regulations, as none exist yet in this country for large battery storage facilities. Similarly, the local fire service have not been approached about the pending planning application nor asked for their involvement or views in how to contain a large scale fire. Cameron Kemp asked if any water would be used on the site and about the possibility of toxic fumes. Emma Devlin reiterated that the fire service would be advised not to enter the site, to allow it to burn and, in any case, would not use water on an electrical fire. Éamon Doorley asked, what is the worst case scenario? Emma Devlin said that there are



three or four different safety mechanisms. Fumes and a smoke plume are dissipated to within 10m of each unit. Nothing would extend beyond the site. In the worst case scenario, the fire service could use boundary cooling methods involving water. Éamon Doorley asked, what about the proximity to the woods? The Highlands may have a different climate to Australia but our wildfires can cover large areas. Emma Devlin replied that the offset distance for fire safety is 25m. Éamon Doorley commented that the fire gap in spruce plantations is 50m and that foresters' opinion is that 50m is inadequate.

Judith Rumbold asked about the proximity to animals and crops. Emma Devlin said that it is fine to farm around the fenced boundary of the facility. Éamon Doorley asked if there were test results on the electromagnetic fields. Emma Devlin replied that, within 5m of the containers, the electromagnetic field is undetectable.

Cameron Kemp asked what benefit The Field, Beaully battery storage facility would be to the community. Emma Devlin said that they were hosting a high school programme around careers in the industry sector and that they are open to any ideas from the community.

Éamon Doorley asked if SSE or a sister company are shareholders and Emma Devlin replied that there was no connection.

Councillor Knox asked about landscaping. Emma Devlin replied that the site is visually hidden to the road. It could be viewed from the footpath on the opposite side and she agreed with Community Councillors that it would be visible from the river. The units are 2.5m high (3m including foundations) with a 3m fence. Some substation elements are 4m high.

Éamon Doorley asked if Scottish planning law is catching up with technology. Emma Devlin replied that they are following U.S. regulations, which are the best in the world, as there are no U.K. regulations yet. Éamon Doorley said that it is concerning that Scottish and U.K. planning laws are lagging behind the industry.

Cameron Kemp said that we need some independent advice on this and need a clear view of the bigger picture. We are not against it as a proposal but we only have one chance to get it right. Inglis Lyon agreed that yes, it is a once in a generation change in infrastructure and there is only one chance to get it right for the local community.

Councillor Knox said that the 25m fire break distance needs to be queried and also the lack of any material community benefit. Inglis Lyon said that community benefits should last the life of the infrastructure.

6. Police Report

No issues were raised by the public. A police report was not due.

https://www.scotland.police.uk/about-us	
<p>7. Planning Issues</p> <p>Cameron Kemp asked for a volunteer to take Dr Kennedy's role in scanning the planning applications. Jayne Macmillan volunteered to take on this role.</p>	
<p>8. Any Other Business</p> <p>Lindsey Stout is on the Crannog newsletter team and will write a piece for the Crannog about the Community Council, using the photo George Hogg took at the last meeting, to encourage people to volunteer as Community Councillors. We now have two positions to fill. The Crannog will go live at the Village Market on Friday 27th September.</p>	<p>L.S.</p>
<p>Further 2024 meetings: Tuesdays at 7.30pm to 9pm, The Williamson Room:</p> <p>12th November 17th December</p> <p style="text-align: center;">If you would like to attend a meeting by telephone or Zoom if you cannot attend in person, please contact us on kandbcommunitycouncil@gmail.com</p>	