

Ardross Community Council

Minutes of Management Meeting

8th May 2023

8.00 pm

Ardross Community Hall

Present: Peter Allen (Chair), John Edmondson (Secretary), Alison Gordon (Treasurer), Willie Beattie, James McTaggart and George Mackay

Sandra Cunliffe, James McDougall and Emma Chisholm.

Meeting started at 8 pm.

1. There were apologies from Clare Bale
2. Both the March Minutes and Notes from April were approved as Minutes.
3. We were still awaiting any news on the top dressing and crash barriers at Stittenham bends; others than this there were no other matters arising.
4. Cllr Pauline Munro had sent a final update on the situation at Alness Swimming Pool. The Highland Council had agreed to take over the swimming lessons at the Alness Academy and fund HighLife Highland to do this during school time. It was agreed that this was the best longterm solution for the young people attending the school. There was gratitude towards Cllr Pauline Munro for bringing this to a sensible resolution and vindication for the Ardross Community Council's position in doing due diligence when examining enquiries to the Windfarm Community Benefit applications.

The Secretary reported that the new consultation web based portal was being denied the Ardross Community Council because of the domain name we were using. This has had a long history. Although encouraged by the Highland Council to use generic email addresses, the portal would not accept domain names that are more than 3 characters long. The Secretary had told the Highland Council technicians that we were not going to change our official email address to accommodate their poor software. There is no technical reason why domain names longer than 3 characters can't be used. In the end the Highland Council agreed to update their software, but this could take several months. There were many domain names longer than 3 characters such as: .lawyer, .accountant, .agency etc etc.

Kiltearn CC and wanted to meet with SSEN together, but it was not clear what they were trying to achieve. The Secretary thought that a meeting would be a good idea after the Ardross Community Council had had a chance to settle what they wanted to achieve.

The Secretary then went on to discuss two consultations that were open at the moment. The Draft Energy Strategy and Community Benefit for Overhead Power Lines [OHL], details had been circulated previously. Other matters arising were dealt with below. It was important that the multiple views of the Community Council were reflected when responding to these consultations. But practically it was difficult to do. These consultations were web based questionnaires; we needed as a Community Council to come up with a way of answering these. Of course the first thing that needs to happen is that Community Councillors need to read the background information. There wasn't time to go through these documents at the meetings. But it was essential that we responded on behalf of the community.

The Draft Energy Strategy Consultation was too late to do anything about, and a quick response would have to be made. However for the Community Benefit Consultation the Secretary would try and share a document for notes to be made. A brief discussion was had about calling meetings about these documents; but this wasn't a practical idea and it was felt that coming to a meeting to discuss the Draft Energy Strategy for Scotland would not pull in the crowds and in any case these items were posted on the Agenda so if people were interested they could come along.

There had been various correspondence from the various groups regarding the OHL from Spittal - Beaully. One of the meetings SSEN had stated that it was likely that more 400kV lines would be required after 2030. If this was the case surely a joined up solution was required. SSEN were also exploring burying one of the existing lines going north and following the existing route with the 400kV line. However neither SSEN or OfGEM had demonstrated the need for the new OHL. Local MSP's were blaming Westminster, but OfGEM (not Westminster) were only responding to a possible need as a result of Scottish Policy and Planning regime.

Other email correspondence had been forwarded for information only to Community Councillors.

5. The Chair gave a brief explanation about how in recent months we had struggled to be quorate and there was a need to co-opt a new Community Councillor. It had been frustrating not being able to make decisions because the meetings weren't quorate. It had been agreed in April to co-opt a new member, and this had been duly published on the Agenda. The voting in of a co-opted member could only be done by those Community Councillors who had been elected. Any person who wanted to be co-opted had to have a proposer and a seconder. The successful member would have to secure 2/3rds of the vote. Peter Allen proposed Emma Chisholm to be a co-opted member and this was seconded by Alison Gordon. With all other Community Councillors present voting for Emma Chisholm.
6. The Treasurer circulated the latest accounts for the Ardross Community Council. The Ardross Community Council had distributed a total of £685 to community projects in the financial year starting 1st April 2023. The expenditure on running costs had been £783.99 including the distribution costs for a Public meeting on the OHL. The Ardross Community Council held healthy funds. It was important that this money was spent and anyone who had an idea for a project should come forward.
7. It was noted that 2023 was a Community Council election year, there would be more details closer to the time.

The Secretary also explained that he had a lot of planning records etc that were gathering dust from 2000 on. He wanted to get rid of all of this, unless there were

strong objections. He intended to keep the minutes. It was agreed that anything older than 7 years could be disposed of.

A conversation ensued about how long community councils had been going and how the Newsletter had started when the community was planning on building a new hall. It was suggested that there should be a section in the current Newsletter with an excerpt from the old Newsletter from 20 or 25 years ago. **Alison Gordon** to try and incorporate.

8. SSEN's plans to build pylons through Ardross was still a source of anger and uncertainty. As had been discussed earlier SSEN had so far failed to demonstrate need. The route to the west was being precluded because of plans for another windfarm and was not to do with Wild Land or SSSI's. The most important thing was to remain united. It was no good the residents of Strathrusdale pushing the route on to other areas of Ardross and vice versa. There was also an opportunity at this time to stop the project all together and ask of a full review of the distribution network strategy. There was a need for the Community Council to come up with a strategy as how to deal with this.

John Edmondson also reported that people with private water supply [PWS] had suffered because of the Beaully-Denny line and were still having to use bottled water. He was sensitive to this as SSE had cut across PWS' when constructing the supply line for the Coire Na Cloiche wind farm and supplies had never been the same since.

SSEN when consulting had ignored their own rules [RAG] for assessing the OHL routes and omitted to assess the effect on the People on the route. They didn't even display this information.

The Secretary went on to explain that the mobile mast had been approved by Committee. This was never about objecting to a mast, but about them sharing existing infrastructure which is Government and Council Policy. It is a bad day when neither the Council or Committee want to uphold their own Policy and in fact the Officer ignored this Policy and just quoted Scottish Government Policy to encourage Mobile Telephony infrastructure, but ignore the same Policy which states that infrastructure should be shared. The coverage of the old mast could never be compared with this one just approved because a coverage map was never produced for the older mast. But the Council know that this abuse of process will never be challenged and so these practices will continue. Hopefully the Appeal to the UN Aarhus Convention Committee to challenge the Scottish Government's implementation of this important environmental policy will be successful in making it easier and less expensive for 3rd Parties to challenge such poorly made decisions contrary to Policy in the future.

There being no other business the Chair closed the meeting.

Next Management Meeting **12th June 2023** at the Ardross Community Hall

