



Strathdearn Community Council

Minutes from meeting held in The Strathdearn, Tomatin, Tuesday 10th March 2026

Councillors Present:	Susan Falconer (SF) Hannah Yarr (HY) Margaret Menzies (MM) George Mcleod (GM) Kevin McKnight (KMck)	Chairperson Secretary Treasurer Member Member
Also Attended by:	Duncan McDonald (DMcD) Duncan MacPherson (DMacp) Ken Gowans (KG) 4 representatives of Balfour Beatty (BB) 2 representatives of Transport Scotland (TS) 16 members of the public	Councillor - Highland Council Councillor - Highland Council Councillor - Highland Council

Item Ref	Details	Action By
1	<u>Apologies</u> No apologies submitted	
2	<u>Declarations of Interest</u> None declared	
3	<u>Presentation by Balfour Beatty (BB)</u> Detailed discussion regarding the new A9 temporary junction, including input from Highland Councillors. Concerns included: • Poor visibility when turning due to large vehicles obscuring sight lines • Signage issues, particularly temporary yellow/black signs confusing tourists • Requests for reduced speed limits approaching the junction • Unclear tourist signage leading to vehicles mistakenly entering dead-end roads • Lack of lighting raising safety concerns • Further issues with curvature of access lanes and tourists missing Tomatin entrance The community request again to see the updated daytime and nighttime safety audits (requested during February meeting). BB/TS committed to reviewing all concerns, relocating signage, adding additional signs, and providing updated audits. GM will follow up with a summary of all concerns submitted during the meeting, and via social media/email prior to the meeting. Park and Ride and bike shelter ideas progressing with BB and GM with future update expected. Robin who is the appointed Artist in residence also attended the meeting to share an update. She has been working with the community for months, including 68–70 people in workshops and over 100 engagement postcards, gathering ideas, stories, symbols, and local knowledge directly from residents. Final designs are not yet revealed — by choice. Instead, Robin showcased early concepts and invited everyone to a community showcase event on Saturday 14th March to see and comment on near-final proposals. Design ideas discussed: • Wraparound steel panels for the new viewing platform, inspired by historic images of the Findhorn Viaduct and shaped using drawings produced in local workshops.	GM

	• A major 60-metre Corten steel wall near the distillery, designed to be visually striking yet safe for road users at speed. • Designs incorporate local themes such as bridges, contour lines, Ordnance Survey markings, old lime kilns and sheep folds, and patterns created by local schoolchildren. • Three sensory sculptures will be installed at an extended lay-by — tactile, accessible pieces for people of all ages, allowing visitors to touch, explore, and view the landscape in new ways. • Sculptures include designs inspired by migrating salmon and swallows, and a 3D map of the Strathdearn catchment, helping visitors visualise the full area. Questions raised by the Community • Why a rowan leaf? Because every symbol comes directly from community-submitted workshop material — nothing is added unless contributed by locals. • Will the lay-by include toilets? This lies outside the artist’s remit, but the question has been passed on. • What about wind turbines in the background? The artwork frames views of the landscape, but cannot control future developments. • How long is the sensory path? Full measurements and site maps will be available at the Saturday showcase. Following February’s meeting, BB had the following actions that were not covered during March, therefore will be carried forward to the next meeting: • Dalmagarry Burn incident • The right of way from Lynbeg to Inverness (behind the peatland storage area) restoration	BB
4	<u>Minutes of the Meeting of the 10th February 2025</u> February minutes proposed by SF and seconded by GM with one amendment: Section 12 wording changed from “submit” to “get registered” for September LPP deadline.	HY
5	<u>Matters arising from minutes (but not covered elsewhere within the agenda)</u> • Concerns were raised about timber lorries operating from Glenkirk during November, despite winter restrictions intended to protect fragile road surfaces. • The Council issued a stop notice to the forestry haulage company after finding they had breached operating conditions, halting extraction until compliance was restored. • SCC representatives met with forestry firm RTS to negotiate improved operating practices for the upcoming season. Following this, RTS produced a redrafted Timber Management Plan, which includes: restricted operating hours (9:00–15:30 / 08:00–19:30), avoiding school-run periods, and a limit of six lorry movements per day. • Before extraction resumes, Highland Council will carry out a full road condition audit on the Balvraid/Raigbeg Road due to visible collapse in several places; SCC provided photographs to assist this assessment. • SCC emphasised the need to ensure strict adherence to the new plan and requested that RTS consult both the Council and SCC before any deviation from the agreed conditions. • New tree felling is also expected at Garbole, with the landowner already contacted and supplied with SCC’s expectations for responsible operations prior to works starting. • Early notice has also been received of planned felling on Tomatin Estates, with details still awaited; concerns were raised about the cumulative impact of simultaneous forestry operations in the area. • It was noted that Tomatin Estates operations may use Station Road as the exit route, meaning additional transport plans will be required to manage increased HGV traffic safely.	

	- Residents highlighted the impact of tree removal on local landscape character, noise levels, and views—particularly around Sand Side and the new junction—acknowledging that while the community does not control the land, these changes significantly affect village feel and amenity. - Bus services – Ember service performing strongly with 11 stops each direction, timetable summary to be circulated.	
6	<u>Financial Report</u> - Balance £1,476.03 as of 9 March 2026. Online banking and the app now active for SCC accounts - KG raised the Highland Council recently announced that the amount of money Community Council's now receive will be increased - A question was raised by the member of the public; "From the recent council tax increase of 7%, how much is split between local services and central parliament?". A discussion took place, however no firm number was given. - Newsletter invoicing process being redesigned to support online payments going forward.	
7	<u>Law and Order</u> - Community Beats newsletter posted on Facebook - Fuel theft at affordable housing site reported; suspects attempted to breach storage padlocks; police investigating. Members of the community asked to come forward with any information, and to stay vigilant.	
8	<u>Road Safety.</u> - Potholes on Old Mill Road adoption dispute continues; councillors pushing Highland Council for confirmation. SF asked member of the public to share any documentation from the Highland Council with her, in regards to the Hazel Bank Wood road adoption discussion recently. - Road sign opposite Mill View still requiring repair; Highland Council roads team assessing following DMcD raising at a session the day before. - Cycle path connectivity to A9 rest points raised by DMcD as you now have to cross the A9, which may conflict with the plans Robin set out. Further discussion required.	SF DMcD
9	<u>Applications to the Trust</u> - None received. - Nicola and Rebecca attended to say thank you to the community for supporting Rebecca's recent Ice Hockey trip to Canada. - Anticipation of hardship applications due to rising fuel costs; suggestion was made to promote hardship fund via Facebook and newsletter.	SF/SC
10	<u>Planning Matters</u> None	
11	<u>Local Place Plans (LPP) and Community Action Plan (CAP)</u> - Local Place Plan (LPP) – Survey extended by two weeks; 27 community, 7 business, 4 landowner submissions so far. School pupils contributed through facilitated workshop. Duncan Bryden is helping support Business and landowner focus groups, which are scheduled. Statutory consultation set for May; plan to be submitted to Highland Council in June. - Request for regular update from Highland Council email to be posted on the website. Helen to share the most recent updates.	SF/SC/ HB

12	<u>Windfarms – Progress from SWIAG</u> • Farr windfarm which has been going for 20 years which was owned by WE which become Ventient Energy, who then joined forces with Renantis Energy to form Nadara Energy who now owns the site. They have requested a meeting to run through future plans. • Vattenfall who operate Glenmarkie have confirmed they will be using lighting to warn aircraft, however, to reduce the impact on dark skies, will only light up when aircraft is present and shine upwards. • Glenmarkie and Lynmore have both requested meetings with SWIAG to keep us up to date. • Discussion on community benefit options continue which could be shared ownership and/or local energy discount schemes etc. Note that Scottish Government proposing increase of voluntary community benefit rate from £5,000 to £6,000 per MW. SWIAG will be looking to build this into their terms of reference, and look for another individual to support this process. • No responses have been received from the Energy Consents Unit to any of the community's submissions across 8 wind farm applications, leaving uncertainty about how feedback is being considered. • A growing national movement is challenging wind farm and grid infrastructure proposals, with widespread objections emerging from areas including the Borders, Fife, Aberdeenshire, Caithness, and Angus. • A recent round-table meeting at Holyrood with Energy Minister Gillian Martin was poorly received, with attendees reporting she stayed only briefly and did not meaningfully engage with communities' concerns. • The community is seeking a joined-up national energy strategy, noting that current decision-making appears fragmented and inconsistent across multiple projects. • An example was discussed where Aberarder wind farm turbines are on site but cannot operate because a grid connection is still not secured—highlighting systemic planning disconnects. • DMCD highlighted a recent court ruling determined that wind turbines and their grid connection must be considered together, not as separate applications, which could significantly impact future wind farm approvals. Currently, developers typically submit Section 36 (wind farm) and Section 37 (grid connection) applications separately, causing confusion and weakening community influence.	GM/SF
13	<u>Update from SCD</u> The SCD Board held its AGM on 9 March, with Kevin providing the first update in his new role. • The Hazelbank “Food from the Woods” project has begun, supported by volunteers and local contractors. • Applications for the new affordable homes are now closed, with 41 applications received, around one-third from IV13 residents. The Community Housing Trust (CHT) is reviewing all applications in line with allocation policy and expects to complete this stage within two weeks. The handover date for the new homes is still aiming for the end of the week, though this remains under review. ○ Discussion highlighted that 41 applicants for six homes demonstrates a strong case for future housing phases in Tomatin. ○ Funding for additional housing may be explored, including the possibility of advancing future windfarm community benefit funds. ○ Wider Highland context was noted: high demand for housing, long waiting lists, and need for thousands more homes across the region • SCD continues to support the Local Place Plan (LPP) and Community Action Plan (CAP) work led by Helen, with submission to Highland Council due in June.	

	Adult social care An update was given on adult social care, with ongoing meetings between Highland Home Carers, NHS Highland, and local representatives. • Progress has been slower than hoped, largely due to NHS Highland's slow response times and the need for joint decision-making across agencies. • Despite delays, work is moving forward, with another multi-agency meeting scheduled to progress arrangements. • There is strong agreement that the community needs a workable care solution, especially for vulnerable residents. • Any future care model will require the involvement of an experienced provider such as Highland Home Carers, as the community cannot manage such services alone	
14	<u>Correspondence</u> The Community Council receives a large volume of correspondence, including surveys, consultations, and requests from Highland Council and other bodies. Items of wider community interest are shared on Facebook and the Council website so residents can contribute their views. To note this month: • The Participation & Engagement Strategy • Complementary Places for upcoming conferences • Community Partnership themes • Community Wealth Building • Community Benefits Guidance Wildfires • The Scottish Government has released a Strategic Action Plan on preventing and responding to wildfires, prompting the Community Council to review local readiness. • A local resilience plan already exists in draft form, developed with specialist input following earlier fires from SCD; the aim is to update, promote, and activate it more widely. • The Local Place Plan and Community Action Plan can help capture and formalise community views on preparedness, reducing duplication and ensuring alignment with existing work. • Members emphasised that while national guidance is important, local residents must take responsibility for understanding risks in a heavily forested area. • A need was identified for potential public awareness workshops, given that all local households border woodland. Postal service • Postal service reliability concerns raised; SCC to contact Royal Mail Inverness regarding irregular deliveries for Tomatin.	KMcN SF
15	<u>Any other business</u> Community member raised need for a designated off-lead dog area. Options discussed included fencing part of Hazelbank Woods or finding donated land; proposal to integrate idea into LPP survey as a community priority.	HB
16	Date of future meetings – 14th April 2026 Meeting closed 8.50pm	