



Strathdearn Community Council

Minutes from meeting held in The Strathdearn, Tomatin, Tuesday 14th April 2026

Councillors Present:	Susan Falconer (SF) Hannah Yarr (HY) Margaret Menzies (MM) George Mcleod (GM)	Chairperson Secretary Treasurer Member
Also Attended by:	2 representatives from Fred. Olsen Renewables and 1 representative from their communications partner agency 12 members of the public	

Item Ref	Details	Action By
1	<u>Apologies</u> - Kevin McKnight (KMck) – Community Councillor - Duncan McDonald (DMcD)- Councillor - Highland Council - Duncan MacPherson (DMacp)- Councillor - Highland Council	
2	<u>Declarations of Interest</u> None declared	
3	<u>Presentation by Fred. Olsen Renewables</u> - Fred. Olsen Renewables presented updates on the Balenspick Wind Farm and introduced a new project team. - The planning application was submitted in February 2025; consultation ended March 2025, with Highland Council feedback still awaited (extension to June). Following feedback, the scheme has been materially revised: - Turbines reduced from 9 to 7, with height reduced from 200m to 180m. - Generating capacity reduced to 15.4 MW as a result. - Turbines have been repositioned downslope to reduce skyline visibility, especially from Lochindorb Castle. - Changes were driven mainly by community feedback, NatureScot, and Historic Environment Scotland, rather than MOD aviation concerns. - Additional peat surveys and micro-siting are ongoing to minimise peat impact and improve restoration ratios (from 1:9- targeting ~1:10 or better). - A Further Environmental Information (FEI) report based on the revised scheme will be submitted in June 2026. - The cumulative impact assessment has been updated to include nearby projects that have now entered planning. - Traffic routes remain the same, but overall traffic will reduce due to fewer turbines. - Community benefit expected at £5,000 per MW (£250k/year), though the Community Council raised concerns this rate is outdated. - Approx. £250,000 per year - Approx. £8.8 million over 35 years - A local energy discount scheme was identified as a particularly popular community benefit option.	

	- Public consultation events are scheduled for Monday 11 May, in Carrbridge, and could be included in the Strathdearn newsletter for advertising - The Community Council retains a full right to submit further representations, and welcomed evidence that their earlier feedback influenced revisions. The developers continue to have conversations with the distillery on power, however this will not form part of their application as no agreement has been reached. Fire concerns were raised about GM regarding battery storage. Whilst they ensure their plans are compliant, they are not reasonable for the response plans.	
4	<u>Minutes of the Meeting of the 10th March 2025</u> March minutes proposed by SF and seconded by GM Clarification was sought around the newsletter commentary from April's Section 6- Financial report. It was confirmed: "Redesign" was stated previously, but nothing fundamentally new was introduced—the system already supports online payments, which many people have been using this year - Cheque payments will still be accepted; online banking is simply being emphasised as an additional, more convenient option, and the banking details were already included on invoices.	
5	<u>Matters arising from minutes (but not covered elsewhere within the agenda)</u> None	
6	<u>Financial Report</u> - Balance as at 31 March is £1,518.78. - An AGM is scheduled for June, requiring a year-end financial statement. - End-of-year accounts (to March) are now being prepared. - An independent financial person has been arranged to agree and review the financial statement ahead of the AGM.	
7	<u>Law and Order</u> None	
8	<u>Road Safety.</u> - Old Mill Road adoption issue: Highland Council Roads Engineer (Alistair McLeod) is discussing with management the possible adoption of the road section near Council houses. - Millview road condition: The road outside Millview remains in poor condition and unresolved. - Cycle path connectivity: No new progress reported. Action: Keep the issue live and follow up with the responsible contact (Duncan MacDonald). - Timber haul route: Roads engineers and RTS completed a full surveyed inspection, including video records. Monthly inspections will take place, and an ask for the CC to continue to monitor going forward, should condition deteriorate. <u>Balfour Beatty</u> - Safety audit: - Community Council previously raised serious concerns with Balfour Beatty and Transport Scotland regarding safety at the new junction. - An official response and safety audit report has been received from Transport Scotland. - The audit relates to earlier works (pre-junction opening) and does not address current visibility and safety concerns when accessing the junction.	

	○ Key community concerns (poor visibility, confusing road markings, night-time safety) are not adequately covered in the report. ○ A log of safety issues has already been submitted, but the audit response is considered unsatisfactory and not fit for purpose. ○ It is understood a new safety audit should be carried out after the junction opened, including night-time assessment. ○ Additional Freedom of Information (FOI) request confirmed no further reports exist beyond what has already been supplied. ○ Temporary signage revisions were noted as planned after the junction opened, raising concerns about process. ● Other work: ○ A9 Dalmagarry realignment works due to take place over several nights (17–22 April), with temporary traffic lights and convoy system in place. ○ Information about traffic changes has been shared on Facebook, with minor updates pending. ○ Bear Scotland resurfacing works planned near Moy (rough road section near wind farm exit), coordinated to avoid overlap with junction works. ○ Chair has sought reassurance that multiple contractors are coordinating works to minimise disruption ● Email update provided by Balfour Beatty in advance: ○ The junction safety audit has been provided and considers the item closed; the Community Council does not agree that the matter is closed. ○ The A9 between Tomatin and Moy is operating under temporary average speed cameras at 40 mph; no reduction to 30 mph is planned, in line with national design standards. Transport Scotland states that monitoring will continue, and Community Council concerns have been noted. ▪ Visibility at the junction is confirmed by Transport Scotland as compliant with standards for a 40 mph speed limit. ▪ There is no evidence of average speed breaches recorded by the temporary cameras. ○ Additional junction signage has been installed: ▪ Advance warning signs at ½ mile and 300 yards before the junction. ▪ Proposed signage wording using place names (Inverness / Perth) instead of Northbound / Southbound is under consideration, but Transport Scotland prefers directional terminology. Raigbeg Bridge ● Separate drainage issue was noted under the A9 viaduct: ○ Water runoff from the bridge appears unmanaged. ○ Likely blocked culverts or drainage pipes, causing water and debris to flow onto a Highland Council road. ● The drainage problem has existed for some time and has only been partially addressed in the past. ● Recent road markings under the viaduct suggest possible investigation or future works. ● Responsibility is unclear as the issue involves a Bear Scotland bridge impacting a Highland Council road. ● It was suggested the issue be raised with Alistair McLeod to clarify responsibility and timelines for remediation. Station road ● A serious road condition issue on Station Road was raised after a resident's car was damaged by a pothole, highlighting ongoing safety and financial impacts on residents. ● Station Road is owned by Network Rail, and despite repeated temporary repairs, problems persist due to poor drainage and water runoff causing recurring potholes.	GM
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	- The Community Council agreed to formally raise the issue with Network Rail, using photographs and previous records, to push for a proper and lasting repair. - If Network Rail fails to act, the option of community-funded interim repairs using existing road planings (held in the station yard) may be reconsidered. - Potential future forestry extraction traffic in the area could further damage the road, strengthening the case for repair and restoration obligations.	SF
9	<u>Applications to the Trust</u> Lorraine - An application to the Trust was received from Lorraine McDonald, who previously received support last year. - Lorraine is returning to a summer camp in Yosemite, California supporting neurodivergent children and adults. - She requested £1,000, with costs covering flights and accommodation; other expenses have already been partly self-funded (£733 paid). - The experience was described as beneficial both to the camp participants and to Lorraine personally and professionally. - The Community Council supported the application, which will now be passed to the Trust for a final decision. Newsletter printing - An application was received from White River Trading to cover newsletter production costs for April 2025–March 2026, applied for in arrears. - The newsletter is recognised as a key communication tool keeping Strathearn residents informed and benefiting the whole community. - The requested amount is £3,223.76, and the Community Council expressed strong ongoing support for this long-standing and valued activity. After school provision - A grant application for expanded after-school provision was presented, following a community survey that showed strong demand and highlighted barriers to employment without childcare. - Currently, one day per week of after-school care is provided, funded by the Trust; this has around 9 children attending, with survey interest from 30+ families. - The proposal is to run a one-year pilot (Aug 2026–June 2027) offering after-school care five days per week (3–6pm). - Delivery would be through High Life Highland, using the school facilities, subject to final agreement. - Total annual cost is £36,000, with £6,000 already allocated, leaving a £30,000 additional funding request from the Trust. - The pilot aims to test actual demand, after which a parental contribution model would be introduced if the service continues. - Staffing is not expected to be an issue; High Life Highland is already advertising and anticipates sufficient qualified applicants. - The initiative is seen as supporting family wellbeing, local employment, village sustainability, and school roll growth, and will now be submitted to the Trust for consideration, with possible follow-up questions. - The Community Council supported the application, which will now be passed to the Trust for a final decision.	

	Hardship grant applications Information has been posted on Facebook to raise awareness.	
10	<u>Planning Matters</u> None	
11	<u>Local Place Plans (LPP) and Community Action Plan (CAP)</u> - Helen presented progress on the Local Place Plan (LPP) and Community Plan, following extensive community engagement and data collection across all age groups. - Stage 1 (data gathering) is complete, using surveys, drop-ins, focus groups, school sessions, and direct outreach, with 51 survey responses and multiple engagement events. - The LPP is important as it will influence future planning decisions and help set the community's priorities and direction. - Feedback highlighted strong appreciation for community spirit, local events, outdoor amenities (especially Hazelbank Woods), the Hub, and the natural environment. - Key aspirations identified include improved transport, childcare (especially after-school care), outdoor recreation, environmental protection, and better digital connectivity. - Other priorities raised include affordable and temporary housing, support for local businesses, and community benefit initiatives (e.g. renewables, energy discounts). - Important buildings and land of community significance have been identified, including the Hub, church, woods, burial grounds, and local landscapes. - Work is now progressing to analyse findings and develop community actions and land-use proposals. - A formal public consultation on the proposed plan will run for at least 28 days (5 May–5 June), with simple online and paper feedback options. - Helen will continue to gather feedback in person and via the newsletter before finalising and submitting the Local Place Plan.	
12	<u>Windfarms – Progress from SWIAG</u> Farr windfarm - The only recent engagement since the last meeting was with Farr Wind Farm, following a change in project partners (now jointly operating under a new entity name). - Farr is considering a planning application for an extension of around 8–10 new turbines, each up to 200m high, located north of the existing wind farm. - They are also exploring an engineering study to repower the existing turbines with larger, more efficient models. - A formal planning application and consultation are expected within the next couple of months. - The proposed extension would be largely or entirely within Strathdearn, increasing relevance for the community. - Farr Wind Farm currently provides around £94,000 per year to the community, index-linked from an original agreement. - Any repowering or extension could increase community income, as additional generation would attract further community benefit. - It is expected that new turbines and repowering would require a new community benefit agreement, rather than relying on the original one. - No battery storage was mentioned as part of the proposals at this stage. - Work is underway to clarify and communicate wind farm income streams and potential future benefits for Strathdearn, to improve transparency and understanding.	

13	<u>Update from SCD</u> • Wind farms update: No new issues reported under the general wind farms update. • SCD board meeting: Next SCD board meeting scheduled for 30 April. • Hazelbank Woods: Tree planting from the “food from the wood” project is complete; edible hedging to begin soon. • Affordable housing: Open house event held with positive feedback; homes on track for handover on 30 April and ready for tenants from week commencing 4 May. Housing allocations: 42 applications received; priority given under local policy, with 4 homes allocated to current local families and 2 to people with previous local ties. • Local Place Plan: SCD continues to support Helen Bailey’s work, with submission to Highland Council planned for June. • Paths and access: Work has started on the Moy path along the B9154, with works on the old A9 path expected soon. • Care in the Community: Progress remains difficult due to issues with NHS Highland funding and processes; efforts ongoing and updates will be shared when available. Alternative care options could be Highland Home Care and Highland Hospice are being explored in parallel to deliver local care provision. Ian McGhie is following up on this action. • Park and Ride: Agreement in principle reached for a park-and-ride facility at the new A9 bus stop, using land behind the stop. 20-30 spaces expected, with a barrier potentially in place to prevent user by large vehicles or mobile homes. Balfour Beatty is expected to deliver the facility as a community benefit, at no cost to the community with consideration of covered cycle and e-bike parking. The Community has pressed for delivery now, rather than at the end of the A9 project.	
14	<u>Correspondence</u> • It was raised that Community Councils are expected to hold insurance (previously provided by Highland Council) to cover liability risks such as legal action or judicial review, even though the Community Council itself holds no assets. An indicative insurance quote of around £500 per year was received (equal to the annual council grant); guidance has been requested from Community Council Support but no response has yet been received, so the matter will be carried forward to the next meeting. • Regular Council updates are now being posted on Facebook on a trial basis.	
15	<u>Any other business</u> Postal service reliability concerns: Ongoing delays, misdeliveries, and missed critical mail (including hospital appointments) were raised as serious issues, reflecting wider national problems linked to Royal Mail policy, particularly the deprioritisation of second-class mail; while Royal Mail requested detailed evidence that is difficult to gather, the Chair will escalate the matter by seeking a face-to-face discussion with management and emphasise the systemic nature of the problem rather than individual blame. Defibs and fire awareness are carried forward to the next meeting.	SF
16	Date of future meetings – 12th May 2026 Meeting closed 8.50pm	