Strathdearn Community Council

Minutes of the SCC Meeting

Held in The Strathdearn, Tomatin, on 13th October 2026

Councillors Present:	Susan Falconer (SF) - Chair Margaret Menzies (MM) - Treasurer Duncan Bryden (DB)- Member	Hannah Yarr (HY) – Secretary Katy Ford (KF) – Member
Also Attended by:	14 members of the public (including 3 online) Ken Gowans (KG)- Highland Councillor 2 representatives from Balfour Beatty (BB) 2 representatives from Traffic Scotland (TS)	

Item Ref	Details	Action By
1	**Apologies** • George McLeod (GM) – Member • Kevin McKnight (KMcK) – Member • Duncan MacPherson (DMacP) – Highland Councillor	
2	**Declarations of Interest** • 3 members of the Community Council declared an interest in the 3 trust applications on the agenda. They could benefit from the applications, should they be approved (circa £150). To ensure a fair process, commentary was reserved on the applications by all 3 members. • DB noted that he is a member of SCD, along with many other residents.	
3	**Balfour Beatty presentation** The meeting provided a progress update on the A9 dualling project, with the BB team confirming that the project is now approximately halfway complete and progressing well. Significant achievements included the successful installation of bridge beams at Dalmagarry, and preparations for major traffic management changes. The key upcoming milestone is the transfer of both northbound and southbound traffic onto the new northbound carriageway north of Lynbeg (weather dependent from 23 October). This change is required to allow completion of culverts and construction of the new southbound carriageway. Temporary overnight traffic management will be required during the switch. Overall project completion remains targeted for Spring 2028. Questions raised within the session by the CC and members of the public: **Q: Will the pedestrian crossing arrangement change when traffic moves?** A: The crossing already exists and will remain. The location of moving traffic changes slightly as the carriageway shifts. **Q: Why are cyclists using the A9 rather than the cycle path?** Feedback received: • Poor signage. • Mud and standing water. • Fallen barriers. • Surface deterioration. • Route difficult for unfamiliar users. • General maintenance concerns.	

	A: Balfour Beatty acknowledged concerns. Agreed to review maintenance and feed concerns back to the project team. **Q: Who is liable if a cyclist is injured on the temporary cycle route?** A: No definitive answer was provided during the meeting. The question was noted for follow-up. **Q: What is the winter maintenance plan for the cycle route?** A: Concerns acknowledged. Balfour Beatty agreed to review maintenance requirements and take comments back to the team. **Q: Can lighting and signage at the temporary Tomatin junction be improved?** Drivers struggle identifying the entrance in darkness. Google Maps and Apple Maps still direct drivers to old routes. Poor visibility creates safety concerns. A: Concerns acknowledged. Signage and lighting to be reviewed. **Q: Have road safety concerns previously raised been properly addressed?** Some residents felt previous concerns highlighted to road safety auditors were not acted upon. A: Balfour Beatty noted that independent road safety audits consider both standards compliance and driver experience. Agreed to revisit concerns and KG will also speak with the Highland Council Audit team to see if they can support. **Q: Will soil embankments adjacent to the new carriageway wash onto the road?** A: Project team advised drainage measures are included. Further technical clarification to be provided. **Q: Will the new windfarm/access junction near Strathdearn be operational when the new carriageway opens?** A: No. The junction is not expected to be operational immediately and traffic management remains. **Q: Can site traffic avoid travelling slowly during peak commuting periods?** A: Concern acknowledged. Request to be reiterated to site teams, especially regarding the road sweeper. **Q: When will the public artwork be installed?** A: Installation is currently expected during late 2027 and towards project completion. Can bring an update in Dec if appropriate. **<u>Transport Scotland</u>** Transport Scotland will attend November's Community Council meeting. The presentation will focus on the wider A9 Dualling Programme rather than the local project alone. Updates will cover: • Progress across the overall A9 programme. • Future procurement activity. • Programme sequencing and how future works may impact traffic management across multiple sections of the A9. • Forward planning and project delivery strategy.	**BB** **BB** **BB** **BB** **BB/KG** **BB** **BB**
4	**<u>Minutes of the last SCC meeting</u>** • Under point 10, the surname of the SCD General Manager has a typo, and therefore will be corrected	
5	**<u>Financial Report</u>** • The Community Council agreed that future financial reports will include not only the current account balance, but also details of any income and expenditure since the previous meeting. • The current account balance stands at £1,620.74. • Income received during the month totalled £850.36, comprising: o £830.36 from the Highland Council grant. o £20 from a Newsletter advertisement.	

	• Expenditure for the month was limited to a £4.25 service charge.	
6	**<u>Law and Order</u>** • The Facebook post about the post box vandalism was removed following mixed reactions from residents. A revised version is being prepared but has not yet been received. • A cat in the village was reportedly shot with an air gun, raising concerns about animal welfare and community safety. Members discussed reporting any future incidents to the police and exploring whether air gun licensing records could assist investigations.	**KMcK**
7	**<u>Road Safety</u>** • **Road Repairs & Maintenance:** Potholes, road defects and weeds were reported to the Council. Weed clearance was completed promptly, but no progress has been seen on pothole repairs. • **School Bus Concern:** No action has yet been taken regarding concerns about the school bus stopping near a blind bend. • **Littering:** Concerns around delays, holdups and litter were raised with Balfour Beatty and appear to have been addressed. • **Public Bin near Strathy Snacks:** Efforts are underway to have the public bin reinstated, with support from DMcD • **Snow Clearing & Winter Resilience** ○ Service Provision: No snow-clearing contractor is currently in place despite efforts to recruit through Facebook and direct approaches. ○ Snow clearing would focus on pavements, vulnerable residents requiring care access, and key village routes. ○ The community remains low on the Council's winter maintenance priority list, although grit bins have been replenished. ○ KG will support with discussions on possible solutions for paid Highland Council resource via the winter resilience support. • **Raigbeg Bridge:** A further section of timber has deteriorated on the bridge, creating a hole in the structure. It was recently inspected, and a longer-term report is expected. The issue will be raised as a priority with Highland Council. A photograph will be provided to support follow-up action.	**SF** **KG** **SF/KG**
8	**<u>Applications to the Strathdearn Community Charity Trust (SCCT)</u>** **Festive Lunch for Senior Citizens** • Lauren Ingram is coordinating the annual festive lunch for Strathdearn residents aged 65 and over. Around 115 residents are eligible; transport and meal deliveries will be provided for those unable to attend. • An application for £2,219.31 was submitted to cover catering and event costs, with any unused funds retained by the Trust. • Taste of Tomatin has been selected as the preferred caterer, subject to final confirmation. • The event continues to receive strong community backing, with Tracy Campbell assisting Lauren with planning and administration where required. • The Community Council supported the application, with some members declaring an interest as eligible attendees. This will be sent onto the Charitable Trust for final decision. **Sound Bath Programme Funding Application** • Request submitted by Sharon Cameron to continue monthly sound bath sessions for a further 12 months, until September 2027. The sessions aim to support mental health, wellbeing and social connection, with 15-20 attendees per session and a wider participant group of around 50 residents. • £2,700 requested to cover practitioner fees and room hire, with participants contributing £3 per session. The Community Council discussed whether the participant fee could be increased and whether non-residents should pay a higher rate. • Clarification provided that the fee covers session delivery, preparation time, travel and additional participant support. This individual resides outside of Strathdearn. • Community Council Members agreed the project aligns with the Trust's charitable objectives and supports local wellbeing. The application to be forwarded to the Charitable Trust with comments regarding a review of participant fees and contributions from attendees outside Strathdearn. **Senior Citizens Winter Voucher Scheme**	

	• Debbie Mackay and Liz Campbell submitted an application to continue the annual winter voucher scheme for senior residents. Eligible households (residents aged 65+) would receive: o A £75 voucher redeemable at the community shop or Tomatin Firewood. o A £25 Winter Warmer voucher redeemable at Taste of Tomatin Café or Strathy Snacks. • This would support older residents with food and heating costs, encourages social inclusion, and provides financial support to local businesses. • Approximately 92 households are eligible, with consistently high uptake, though participation remains voluntary. Application submitted for £8,800, with the final cost dependent on uptake. • The Community Council discussed household versus individual allocations. It was explained why this would not be possible, in line with Trust rules, based on previous years applications. • The application received strong support and will be progressed to the Charitable Trust for consideration. Next year, if the scheme goes ahead, other local business' may want to participate such as Glenan Lodge when they start offering food and experiences.	
9	**<u>Planning Matters</u>** **Tomatin Estate Felling Proposal** • Tomatin Estate has submitted plans to fell commercial forestry around the village between 2027 and 2028. Whilst this has not been released on the website or social media yet, Community Council members noted the felling will significantly change the village landscape and increase exposure to wind for some properties. • The estate intends to replant the area with a mix of commercial and native tree species. SF has already asked for details on timber storage, haulage routes, traffic management and impacts. • The public highlighted the need for a timber transport plan, road condition surveys and safeguards for school travel routes. It was noted the compounding impact on the village landscape between this, the A9 tree felling, and windfarm proposals. Some members of the public were supportive of the proposal, citing uninterrupted views and better forestry management for safety reasons. • Once more information is received, the proposal will be shared publicly, and residents will be encouraged to submit comments and questions. • Now a space may be opened up, suggestions included exploring recreational uses, such as mountain bike facilities, in cleared areas. The proposal will remain a standing agenda item, with further discussions planned with the estate and forestry representatives. **Windfarm and Community Benefit- SWIAG Update** • There are currently 10 live wind farm applications in or around Strathdearn, representing a substantial potential increase in generating capacity. • SWIAG continues to monitor applications and has submitted responses to several proposals, while maintaining contact with developers and planning authorities. • A new wind farm proposal at Loch Killin has been identified, adding to the growing number of developments surrounding the area. • Carn Na Saobhaidh Proposal: Developers presented early plans for a wind farm on the Glen Mazeran Estate, including a revised construction access route through the upper glen. The revised proposal would require major infrastructure such as; • Construction of a new bridge over the railway cutting near the Slochd. • A new access road across open ground on Clune Estate then into Dalmigavie Estate above Lodge before descending to the river. • A further new bridge across the River Findhorn/Glen Mazeran Burn area. • Upgrading sections of existing estate tracks to accommodate heavy wind farm traffic. • Upgrade of short section of public Glen Road from new bridge to Laggan cottage entrance. The access route would introduce substantial construction activity into the upper glen, with large vehicles transporting turbine components and transformers. The public raised concerns regarding the potential visual impact on one of the most scenic parts of Strathdearn. • Aberarder Wind Farm: Discussions continue with developers regarding community benefit arrangements, with concerns remaining over changes to previous proposals and the terms of the draft agreement. • A community survey on future wind farm community benefit priorities will be deferred until the new year to avoid survey fatigue as the Charitable Trust survey is now live.	

10	**Update from Strathdearn Community Developments (SCD)** • **Community Homes:** The affordable housing project received national recognition, reaching the finals of the Scottish Land & Estates Awards and being shortlisted for the Social Enterprise Scotland Social Investment Deal of the Year Award. • **Media Coverage:** BBC Scotland's *Landward* programme visited the community homes project and interviewed residents; the feature is expected to air later this month. • **Ember Bus Park & Ride:** Discussions with Balfour Beatty and Transport Scotland are ongoing. Funding has been secured for cycle storage, bike lockers and potential solar lighting. • **Moy Footpaths Project:** Improvement works are nearly complete, with a final inspection scheduled. The upgraded paths are already being used by local families and cyclists. • **Loch Moy Ranger Service:** No significant incidents were reported over the summer season. • **Hazelbank Woods:** A community orchard has been established with various apple trees planted. Future plans include community events linked to the orchard. • **Wildfire Preparedness:** A wildfire awareness session was delivered, and a local volunteer response network is being explored. Four fire beaters have been purchased with external funding. • **Youth Activities:** The Kids Club has expanded to three days per week, offering additional activities and support for local families. A request from a member of the public requests for more activities for pre-school children to be considered. SF confirmed this would be included as part of the revised Community Plan. • **Community Hub:** The Snug continues to operate as a community drop-in space for all ages, with soup lunches, refreshments and social activities available. • **Community Events:** Support was provided to the Parent Council's fundraising efforts through the local flower show.	
11	**Correspondence** • There have been a number of consultation requests. Responses have been submitted to the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, local planning, Highland Council Biodiversity Strategy, and work continues on the Dark Skies consultation response. • The Highland Council 300 bus passenger numbers remain low. KG shared that the Highland Council has indicated the service is difficult to justify based on current usage data. The public raised concerns about the accuracy of usage figures, particularly whether concessionary bus pass users are being counted. The Community Council also noted the service duplicates some existing Stagecoach routes and lacks wheelchair and pushchair accessibility, and that future transport initiatives, such as the proposed Park & Ride, could increase demand for public transport. KG agreed to discussion with transport officers and seek clarification on future review arrangements.	**KG**
12	**AOCB** **Visitor Levy** • Residents were encouraged by KG to participate in the ongoing Visitor Levy consultation before the closing date. • Online webinars are being held to explain the proposals and answer questions. The public were advised to review the frequently asked questions (FAQs) to avoid misinformation. • An internal economic impact assessment is being undertaken as part of the consultation process (versus by a third party as previously completed). **Community Trust Survey** • A community survey on the Strathdearn Community Charitable Trust is currently open. • The survey aims to gather community views on the Trust and inform future development. • Independent interviews will also be carried out with a range of community members to support an objective review. **Newsletter & Community Communications** • Contributions for the next community newsletter are due by 28 October. • Discussion took place regarding community Facebook groups and promoting local interest groups, including the Strathdearn Stargazing Group. Meeting closed 9.29pm	
13	**Date of Next Meeting** The next meeting will be held on 10th November at 7pm	