Spean Bridge, Roy Bridge and Achnacarry Community Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the Community Council held at 7.00 pm on Tuesday 5th August 2025 in Kilmonivaig Church Hall.

Present: John Fotheringham (Chairman, Ian Langley (Vice Chairman), Melvyn Giles (Secretary), Alison Munro (Treasurer) Sharon Donald, Jenny Hastings, Christine Clephan, Val Steele, Ian Matheson, Linda Taylor and Highland Councillor John Grafton and 5 members of the public.

A**pologies:** None

Associate Member Resignation: Joanna Kotula has resigned as an Associate Member citing family pressures. The Chairman has written to her to thank her for her service and commitment.

Conflict of Interest Declarations: None

Approval of Minutes: The Minutes having been circulated and there being no amendments were approved:

Tuesday 3rd June 2025	Proposer: Ian Langley	Seconder: Jenny Hastings
Tuesday 1st July 2025	Proposer: Ian Langley	Seconder: Ian Matheson

Intimation of Private Session on Communication and Privacy Policy on completion of tonight's Business Meeting – Agreed Unanimously.

Matters Arising:

a. **Community Police Officer –** Police Scotland have appointed Sgt Paige MacDonald to be our new Community Police Officer, but she is unavailable this evening. The Chairman has requested a meeting with the Inspector and Community Police Officer.
b. **Transport Scotland/BEAR Scotland** – The Chairman has been in correspondence with Kate Forbes MSP in relation to a number of trunk road issues including the circumstances surrounding the discharge of condition 17 of the Coire Glas Consent which Highland Council after discussion with Transport Scotland had used delegated powers to approve. Alison Irvine CEO of Transport Scotland has agreed to a virtual meeting on the subject but we want a wider discussion on both the A82 and A86 Trunk Roads and the Chairman will write again to our constituency MSP with our request.
c. **EARBA Community Alliance** – The Chair and Vice Chairman attended the update from Gilkes Energy about the Earba Pumped Storage Scheme on 8th July and a report has been circulated. The Chairman of Gilkes Energy tried to persuade us that his company were in the project for the long term and that Cap and Floor negotiations with the UK Government were proceeding well. He denied seeking to sell the consented project and was anxious we accept the £12.5 million Community Benefit half to be paid on commencement of construction and the remaining half over 20 years when electricity was generated.
   It would appear that Gilkes and all associated companies annual turnover is about 3% of the estimated construction costs of EARBA let alone FEARNA so the Alliance are not convinced

that they have the financial backing to pursue the scheme. We are also looking for considerably more that £12.5million over the lifetime of the project, and would prefer to wait until both the Scottish and UK Government give their decision on the rates of community benefit they would recommend.

Our colleagues on the Alliance have accepted our proposal on membership and operation of the Alliance going forward.

d. **Bunroy Road –** As Highland Council have not responded to our request to indicate what the permitted standard is to allow them to adopt the road the Chairman has written once again to try and secure the information required on behalf of the residents.
e. **Belford Hospital –** Ian Langley reported that the Consultants were back on the job and have moved from Phase 2 to 3 or Shovel Ready. The Stakeholder Group Meetings had recommenced.
f. **Government Consultations** – The Consultation of the Environmental Standards Scotland Draft Strategy for 2026 – 2031 closes on 29th August 2025 and it was agreed we would use our first hand experience as a complainant to submit a response.

Correspondence:

1. **UK Government Working Paper on Community Benefit and Shared Ownership for Low Carbon Energy Infrastructure** - submitted a response following the unanimous approval and shared it with our neighbouring Community Councils.
2. **Transport Scotland FOI Request** – Received Traffic Movement Statistics for A86 as requested.
3. **Linnhe Community Alliance** – The Alliance is looking for a Secretary for a calendar year. The July Meeting was postponed.
4. **Planning Aid Scotland** – Their Newsletter is available on Request.
5. **Achnacarry Village Hall** – The ABC Community SCIO is endeavouring to replace their village hall and is looking for the support of the wider community. In particular they are looking for a letter of support from the Community Council to the Scottish Land Fund and any available financial support. It was suggested that St Ciaran's Church might be suitable to serve as both church and community space as many other churches are being so utilised but it was agreed to send the requested letter to the Scottish Land Fund.
6. **Spean River Hutting and Camping Association** – After consultation with Community Council Support in Highland Council following receipt of unwelcome correspondence alleging impropriety on a Website and Facebook Page by the Community council it was decided that as we possess neither we should block any further communication. Highland Council Legal Services I believe have written to them saying that we have no case to answer.

   A member of the Public identifying himself as Derek Jackson, Chair of the Association stood up and attempted to address the Community Council in clear breach of Standing Order Para 5.1. He continued to allege that the Community Council were required to engage with him and his organisation and that we had failed to answer his complaints and were breaking the law.

   As none of his members were permanent residents the Chairman explained that we did not intend to engage and that as he had escalated his complaint to Highland Council and they had found it to be unfounded the matter was closed. He denied that and tried to serve a crumpled white envelope which was NOT accepted. The Chairman requested he sit down and refrain from any other comment and he complied.
7. **The Convention of Highland Community Councils** – The Chairman had circulated a report on his online attendance at the first Convention of Highland Community Councils in Beauly on 14th June. It was truly a humbling experience to hear about the perception by many of the

industrialization of the Highlands to provide energy for the masses, and the impact wind farms and associated connections to the National Grid had on rural communities with often little community benefit. Following the success of that meeting a second meeting will be held in Kingswells Hotel, Inverness at 1.30pm on Tuesday 12th August in which MPs and MSPs will be in attendance and the Chairman will be in attendance to ensure Pumped Storage is not forgotten.

8. **Janis Strachan of An Gearasdan Integrated Transport Forum** – intimated the Agenda for the Meeting of 5th August. Ian Langley reported on the business conducted.
9. **Information Commissioner** – Receipt of Data Protection Registration Certificate on payment of £52.
10. **Gavin Steel of Scottish Water** – Giving an update on the Water Infrastructure at Achnabobane which had been circulated and is available on request. It is not envisaged that there are any problems with those served by the public mains but those on the private main is showing significantly lower pressure. Such properties have installed water tanks to maintain supply. It was agreed we would ask about how the supply to Achnabobane could be improved for all consumers.
11. **Lochaber Housing Association** – Notice of their 37th AGM in Caol Community Centre on 21st August at 4pm.
12. **Jonathan Hart of Jahama Highland Estates** – requesting that the Community Council review a project to naturally regenerate native woodlands in the Mamore and Killiechonate Estates. The Report is available for circulation on request.
13. **Scottish Forestry** – Notification of Felling Permission Request FPA12540 in Glen Garry – Noted.
14. **Iain Boyd of the Social Enterprise Academy** – regarding a fully funded Active and Sustainable Travel in Rural Communities residential programme on 5th – 6th November at Dundreggan Rewilding Centre in Glenmoriston.
15. **Environmental Standards Scotland Case Reference IESS.24.074 –** A less than satisfactory response given the delay has been circulated. We will continue our dialogue with them and use our experience to inform their future strategy.
16. **Highland Camping and Caravans Association –** A report on Unlicensed Camping and its effect on Communities and Licensed Campsites. Noted**.**

Treasurer's Report

Income this month was Highland Council £605.09. Expenditure this month was Information Commissioner's Registration Certificate £52, Keegan and Pennykid Insurance £98.36, Travel £246.90 and Chairman's Expenses £136.73 leaving a Balance of £11,161.13.

Stronelairg Wind Farm Community Fund Micro Grant

The following applications were considered:

1. Andy Llewellyn - FW Parkrun - £271.51, PA System & Accsessories...Rejected. Out with CC Area.
2. Alison Berardelli - Braes Lochaber Music Group -£500, Refurbishing musical instruments. Approved.
3. Janis Matheson - Roy bridge Children's Christmas Party -£200, entertainment and gifts. Approved.
4. It was agreed that a £400 award to the Roy Bridge Garden's Project had been approved in April and the Treasurer would contact the successful applicant regarding payment.

Planning:

Planning Appeals ENA-270-2055 - 2084 against Enforcement Order 25/00038/ENF to DPEA relating to unauthorised Change of Use within SSSI at land 120m N of Fern Cottage, Spean Bridge – All

Appeals were rejected. The Reporter in his decision made any interesting observation which might relate to other similar sites. He ruled that the planning unit was the site as a whole not individual plots.

Planning Application 25/02488/FUL – Demolition of Existing Barn and Erection of House on Land East of Taigh Breagh, Achnabobane, Spean Bridge. – The Planning Sub Committee had recommended objection as the previous application has lapsed and they could find no relief in NPF4 Policy 17 that would permit this application. The written objection had been circulated and approved unanimously.

Planning Application 25/02556/FUL – Continued Siting of Temporary (5year Period) Staff Sleeping Accommodation Units, Refectory, and Office Building, Staff Car Park at Land 150m NE of Mossgiel, Spean Bridge – Approved.

Planning Application 25/02655/FUL – Change of Use of Land, siting of Cabin, Shed, Formation of Hard Standing. Erection of Fence (in retrospect) at land 190 m SW of Darroch Cottage, Spean Bridge. As received this morning the Planning Sub Committee will review it and if appropriate will make a submission for Councillors to approve or disapprove online.

Any Other Business:
We noted that Kate Forbes MSP that decided not to seek re-election at the next Scottish Parliamentary Elections. It was agreed that the Chairman would write to her thanking her for her diligence and commitment in pursuing a number of issues on our behalf.

It was also noted that Councillor Andrew Baldrey had resigned from Highland Council.

Derek Jackson once again ignoring the constitution and standing orders decided to try and address those present with his version of the events. He failed to recognize despite being repeatedly told by Highland Council that we have no access to social media. Contrary to his belief as an independent Community Council we are not obliged to meet with him or his members and he has no complaint either against us or with the Information Commissioner. He continued to bluster and threated dire consequences for the Council until he was asked to leave the hall by the keyholder.

The envelope he had left on the table was put in the waste bin by a member of the public that attended the meeting.

Another member of the organisation who was present sought clarification on points raised at the June Meeting with Scottish Water but the Chairman ruled that she should contact Scottish Water directly for clarification not us. She denied having seen the correspondence written on behalf of the organisation by Mr Jackson.

The hall was cleared of members of the public.

Private Session on Communication and Privacy Policy
In consultation with Highland Council's Community Council Support Team it was recommended that we minute a time line for our communications with the Spean River Hutting and Camping Association.
June 10th A Phone Call from Derek Jackson lasting 28 minutes introduced himself as Chairperson of the Association and wanted to introduce himself with an informal meeting in Bridge Café. Agreed
June 10th Spoke to Melvyn Giles and alerted by him to critical correspondence from a camper at the campsite.

June 10th Further Phone call with Mr Jackson withdrawing offer of meeting.
June 14th Email from Mr Jackson of 4 pages with a number of incorrect, and untrue observations involving a Website and Facebook Page we do not possess and we don't use social media. He included Dot Ferguson in the circulation list.
June 14th Acknowledged by Secretary within 6 hours.
June 15th Another email from Mr Jackson more insistent than his previous effort and highlighting alleged defamatory material linked or hosted by the Community Council containing inaccurate and offensive material and demanding action. Once again he has not realized that we do not possess a website or facebook page and the remarks by a member of the public were reported accurately.
June 16th Telephone Discussion with Willie MacKinnon of Highland Council who recommended we block any further telephone or email contact which we did.
June 30th Phone call from Willie Mackinnon of Highland Council who had been in correspondence with Derek Jackson and had explained that we had neither Website or Facebook Page and did not use Social Media, neither were we obliged to engage with his organisation, but he appeared to be unwilling to accept the situation.
July 10th The Chairman's wife received a Recorded Delivery and Signed for Letter from Mr Jackson relating to a complaint we did not receive, a cease and desist notice, a data subject access request, and further offensive material. He is still pursuing the erroneous idea that we were involved with a website or facebook page which we are not. His complaint to the Information Commissioner will be thrown out as they will only accept a complaint about personal material and until 10thJune we had never heard of him. As a Community Council we are perfectly entitled to make representations on behalf of our community to public agencies.
July 11th Spoke to David Haas of Highland Council who told us to ignore the letter. The author was attempting to bully us there was no legal basis for his actions, and we neither are required to communicate or meet with them. We are not subject to the Freedom of Information Act.
July 15th Met with Dot Ferguson and Willie MacKinnon who informed us that Derek Jackson had been told that there was no complaint to answer in relation to the Community Council. We did not have a website, or facebook page and had made no defamatory remarks. The Shanty Village Remark was from a member of the public. He refused to accept the response so Legal Services were writing to him spelling out that there was no complaint. We were instructed to continue to refuse any further contact.
August 5th Mr Jackson breached our Standing Orders and Constitution twice by making inappropriate and inaccurate threats against the Council and Councillors.

This is an accurate summary of our dealings with this organisation and as far as we are concerned the matter is closed.
Accepted unanimously by the Community Council.

Following a discussion, it was agreed to adopt a Communication Policy similar to that of Fort William and Torlundy, and Birnam and Dunkeld Community Councils. The Chairman and Secretary will draft a proposal and circulate for approval.

Meeting Closed at 21:00