

St Fillans Community Council

Minutes of Meeting

Wednesday 29th January 2025
Sandison Hall, St Fillans

Welcome: Chair Donna Littler welcomed 23 villagers, James Rae – (Comms Officer to Pete Wishart MP), SSE Renewables (see point 2).

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies received from Councillor Stewart Donaldson, Councillor Noah Khogali, Baillie Rhona Brock, Police Scotland, Don and Trish Forrester, Russell and Liz Cunningham, David Gow, Isobel Howell, Barry Fisher, Johnston and Frances Brown, John Littler, Ruth Graham

2. SSE Renewables

Robert Bryce – Director of Hydro
Georgina Wardrop – Head of Hydro Stakeholder Engagement
David Cooney – Hydro Programmes Civil Delivery Manager
Edward Mclean – Hydro Environment Advisor
Jade Clark – Stakeholder Engagement Manager

SSE presented the background for building the screen cleaner at the weir and the proposed mitigation options available. SSE confirmed that Loch Lomond & Trossachs Planning are happy with the proposed plant selections for mitigation. The options for replacement fencing along the South Shore Road were discussed, with a green option rather than more galvanised steel preferred by the representative villagers in attendance.

Villager questions and SSE responses

- a. At any stage did you submit drawings to planning?

SSE advised that drawings of a similar structure were submitted to planning.

- b. Where was the “typical” site that was shown to planning?

SSE advised that they weren’t sure which site was provided but there is a similar structure at the dam in Pitlochry.

- c. Can you confirm the Planning Authority confirmed Permitted Development Rights and did SSE do an Environmental Impact Assessment?

SSE advised that they asked planning what was required, and planning confirmed the project fell under PDR, the site didn’t meet the requirements for an Environmental Impact Assessment. An EIA is only required if a planning application is required. There were discussions with SEPA regarding the design and it was agreed that the installation

would aid the migration of the eels. SSE have a sustainability team with marine biologists, and they advised on the environmental assessment.

The eels will be able to use the outlet designed for them, if there are no deceased eels arriving in Dalchonzie it means the new screen cleaning option has been successful.

- d. Why did consultation not take place earlier? Will debris be removed?

SSE advised they didn't realise the visual impact of the screen cleaner for the residents, SSE apologised for this, and it is hoped that we can work through a solution that will be acceptable.

Villagers expressed that if consultation had happened, the village would have been aware earlier, had opportunity to provide feedback and it may have taken some of the frustration out of the situation.

A villager suggested that if SSE had engaged with the stakeholders earlier, it would have given LLTNP planning the chance to consider putting an Article 4 in place.

- e. Good practice would have been to consult and was the ecologist not asked to do any surveys?

SSE advised that there are these structures all over Scotland, St Fillans is different because it has residential properties. SSE were sorry but the screen cleaner cannot be changed. It was down to LLTNP allowing PDR, so SSE progressed the project.

SSE director apologised on behalf of SSE. SSE take the villagers' comments and SSE's responsibilities very seriously. SSE admitted they made a mistake, they should have spoken to the village earlier, but as it was advised the project was under PDR, SSE carried straight on with the project. Unfortunately, it is not possible for SSE to go back in time.

A villager pointed out that the information letters made it sound like the works were routine maintenance, no details or plans were provided for villagers to understand the extent of the work.

- f. Mitigation, could it be painted or wrapped?

One villager said they felt very sorry for the residents opposite, the structure would make it more difficult to sell houses.

Discussion then took place regarding whether it could be painted, the green fence for the South Shore Road looked much better than galvanised steel. SSE suggested that the mitigation will hide it and over time the galvanised steel will dull down. Previous attempts to paint structures on other sites has only worked for certain times of the year. A villager suggested that the green fence that could be proposed for the South Shore Road looks a lot better than the bright steel. The suggestion of wrapping it was raised, SSE stated they would look at this but thinks it may be difficult to attach to the galvanised steel.

- g. Was there specialist knowledge sought for the mitigation planting?

SSE advised that they have modified some of the planting after taking advice and will engage with the community before decisions are finalised for mitigation. If there are any suggestions SSE would be happy to take these on board.

SSE advised that they had stopped maintaining the trees on the foreshore of the river and are looking to reduce the height of the trees opposite Weirside on the A85. The time of the year will be considered for any works, and Bear will be used for traffic management. No works to proceed until there is agreement with the residents.

- h. At the golf club meeting SSE were asked about an internal review, can SSE guarantee that this won't happen again?

SSE advised that there was no formal internal investigation, however SSE would think differently and more carefully about projects affecting residents moving forwards. This has been taken very seriously within SSE from Director to CEO level. A formal review is not the answer but moving forward SSE will think about how they would deal with similar projects in the future, and it is certainly on their agenda. Hydro have been involved in communities for many years and it not their intention to upset residents.

A villager requested a formal written agreement for maintenance for the mitigation and riverbank in the future and SSE stated they would check the ownership of the land to the east of the weir and check their responsibilities for the land.

- i. What about the upgrade of the power station in St Fillans, would that require planning?

SSE advised that there are no external works intended at the substation. This falls under SSE Transmission, rather than SSE Hydro, contact details were requested for that section.

- j. If something that is non-natural waste is transferred who will remove it?

SSE advised that the site will not be fully manned, there will be times when something non-natural may be dropped into the river. If residents have any concerns, it should be reported to SEPA.

- k. Is the screen cleaner working? There have been cranes on site and the system hasn't appeared to be running.

SSE advised they have been commissioning the system. It is now expected to be fully functional.

- l. Would financial compensation be available for villagers?

SSE advised that no financial compensation would be available as the project was progressed under PDR.

It was highlighted that the SSE Hydro Community Fund was available to apply to.

A method of distributing the mitigation proposals needs to be agreed.

- m. Would the passing place that has been increased for a turning circle for equipment be put back as it was?

SSE advised they would be happy to re-instate if it has been changed and it's checked that SSE own the land. They have said they could consider placing boulders if they own it to stop inappropriate parking.

- n. Community Council Chair agreed with SSE that they would send through the mitigation proposals for village consideration. Villagers would be asked to provide feedback with a

view to a preferred mitigation being determined, to be progressed within an agreement for other relevant works and maintenance to be agreed.

The CC Chair thanked SSE for attending the meeting. SSE representatives left ahead of the ordinary agenda being continued.

3. Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the meeting on 16th October 2024 were proposed as a true record by Stewart Gavigan and seconded by Richard Graham.

There is a correction to the AGM minutes from the 16th October 2024, under item 5 Elections:

Graham Price was co-opted onto the Community Council, not seconded.

4. Police Update

PC Peter Sinclair and his colleague were on early shift on 29th Jan 2025 and unable to attend the meeting, but they supplied the following report.

The St Fillan's area is now covered by Sgt Adam Denny and Insp William (Peter) Duncan.

Since the last meeting there has been 12 incidents in the St Fillan's area.

The breakdown of incidents is as follows.

1 report of Dangerous driving which resulted in no further police action.

7 miscellaneous calls: call of injured deer/abandoned car/fallen tree/torches on the hills/false alarm concern calls.

1 call Road traffic offence which resulted in a report being submitted to PF for various Road traffic offences.

3 vehicle breakdowns

1 concern call.

From these incidents, only one led to a crime being recorded which was detected.

5. Matters Arising

- a. SSE Renewables have formally submitted their planning application for the Glentaren windfarm, there are summary copies of the Section 36 Report available and a few memory sticks with the full information on them available to villagers to take away. The summaries will be available at the village shop and a copy full application can be viewed at the village shop on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays.
- b. The CC were able to arrange a meeting with Stuart Mearns and Bob Cook from Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Planning.

The CC ran through all the planning issues over the last few years and the frustrations of villagers especially regarding double glazing and solar panels.

LLTNP planning advised the process for re-assessing conservation status. This would require discussions with Historic Scotland.

Substantive delays for the approval of the Drummond Hotel planning permission, due to objections were discussed.

LLTNP planning are looking at information and training for CC members and villagers with links to planning guidance on material and non-material objections.

Dundurn Walk development still not approved as the Section 75 regarding affordable housing has not been completed. This is expected to be completed soon and the planning approval published.

Going forward LLTNP planning are looking at protocols with SSE for early consultation for PDR projects and changes in legislation regarding changing windows in conservation areas under PDR. A guidance document is being prepared which will be shared with the village when complete.

If villagers are looking to submit a planning application for property changes on properties in the conservation area, LLTNP planning suggest discussing with them before submission, and they can offer advice if required. LLTNP are looking to see if they can provide a guidance note on PDR for residential properties in conservation areas in future.

Caravan Park, Station Road, LLTNP planning visited the site in January, and planning have asked the owners to progress their planning application by the end of January.

The CC are pleased to have a communication channel open with LLTNP planning. The CC will request a meeting for the village, if this is not forthcoming, the CC will attempt to continue to meet with planning and report back at CC meetings.

- c. The 20mph limit for the village is currently proposed from just east of Station Road and finish around 100m west after Manse Lane. The CC have requested that it be extended to the Four Seasons Hotel. The 20mph will be in place for the main road (Transport Scotland) and Dundurn Walk (P & K Council).

Dates are still required for implementation and signage to be agreed.

A villager noted that there have been 46 speeding offences recorded in Lochearnhead and only 1 in St Fillans. There seems to be a difference between Stirling and P & K areas. As it is Police Scotland, boundaries should not be an issue.

6. Planning applications

2024/0325/DET

Proposal: Upgrading of existing track to create a 3m wide asphalt shared use active travel path and installation of associated infrastructure.

Location: Section of old Loch Earn Railway Path between Glentarken Bridge & Fortrenn, St Fillans

Applicant: Mr Geoff Hardman-Carter, St Fillans Community Trust

2024/0340/HAE

Proposal: Proposed new external stair and internal alterations to existing garage

Location: 10 Dundurn Walk, St Fillans, Crieff

Applicant: Mr and Mrs S Johnston, 10 Dundurn Walk, St Fillans

2024/0335/TRE

Proposal: Tree works in a conservation area - removal of 1 no. ash and pruning of 1 no. birch and 1 no. beech.

Location: Craigen House, St Fillans

Applicant: Mrs Anne Campbell, Craigen House, St Fillans, PH6 2ND

2024/0356/HAE

Proposal: Alterations to Front Porch.

Location: The Birran, St Fillans

Applicant: Mr Murray Henderson, The Birran, St Fillans, PH6 2NF

2024/0357/NOT

Proposal: Installation of replacement windows.

Location: The Birran, St Fillans

Applicant: Mr Murray Henderson, The Birran, St Fillans, PH6 2NF

7. Village Working Groups

a. Garden Group (Including Still)

Garden group – no report

Still Project.

The project was successful with the Perth & Kinross Community Investment Funding and the contractor is currently making the base. We don't have a date for installation yet, we are reliant on the contractor, the loch levels, plus any weather that might be thrown at us. We will keep chasing.

b. Paths Group

A funding application for the railway path has been submitted to SSE Transmission.

Please advise Geoff Hardman-Carter if there are any trees across the railway path and advise if anyone clears a tree from the path.

P & K Council are going to provide training for a power brush machine to clear the railway path. This will be held on 22nd and 23rd February 2025.

c. Festive Committee

The Festive Committee is still going but does require more volunteers. The Committee will be meeting soon and are looking to send out a survey to the village about the content of the Festive Weekend given that the Saturday afternoon children's event was not well attended.

The Committee has applied to the SSE Hydro Community Fund for £18,000 for a modular marquee with flooring and a new larger capacity generator. The Fund was oversubscribed, and the application has been moved to the July tranche of funding.

Decisions will be made in March regarding the festive weekend and timelines agreed. The idea of having the festive weekend every other year instead of every year has not been discussed yet.

d. Play Park Group

Thanks to the volunteers who were out this week continuing the brilliant work on the Willow Tunnel - if anyone would like the Willow cans that may be left over, we would be delighted to share them - and a small donation would be great for ongoing maintenance. Still need for a lot of work on repairs to some of the installations and hope to look at this soon, once the weather improves a bit more. Also looking for someone to take over as lead for the playpark group so if anyone is interested, please let Barry Fisher know.

e. Cultural Heritage Group

There was a good turnout for the meeting in December and the January meeting with Keep Scotland Beautiful. Currently prioritising who wants to do what and when.

There will be another meeting to discuss how to conserve and preserve the village archive.

Helen Stevenson and Jim Brierley are going to Edinburgh for a training day regarding the creation and archiving Community materials.

There are 10 members currently and the group are looking at what funding streams might be available.

f. Community Bus Group

The group have met twice and are seeking clarifications from P & K Council about running a vehicle and the legal requirements.

The results of the questionnaire have been analysed and a visit made to Muthill Community Bus organisers to discuss how they run their bus.

The group need a contact for Lochearnhead as they would like to work with them too, Geoff Hardman-Carter will supply details of a contact.

There is to be a Community engagement meeting held at the Achray Hotel on the 25th February (to be confirmed) the group would like all age groups to attend, the meeting will be from 4.30pm to 6.30pm.

g. Aquila Wildlife & Nature Community Interest Company

Aquila - CIC are continuing to organise events, which are free but rely on donations which support future events.

The next event is on the 9th February and is a bird box building afternoon. On February 28th there is a talk about Regenerative Farming and making Highland Boundary Botanical Spirits, followed by a tasting session.

The group have applied to the SSE Hydro Fund. The group would like to improve the land at the back of the memorial, clear bracken, plant trees and create a pond, so that outdoor activities can be run. No planting would take place where a new hall could be considered. The group will contact the Drummond Estates regarding obtaining their approval.

8. AOB

- a. Councillors Updates – no councillors available
- b. Friends of the Sandison Hall, the group has organised ten events and have successfully kick started the usage of the hall again after Covid. The group have now dissolved and there was a cash balance from events of £539.21 which has been donated to the hall.
- c. This was Lorna Kennelly's last CC meeting before moving to Australia and she wanted to say thank you to all the groups she has worked with over the years she has been in St Fillans.

The CC and villagers would like to thank Lorna for everything she has done to support the village in the past and wish her well for the future.

- d. The bus stops are still not finished, unfortunately the person dealing with this matter at P & K is currently out of office, so there is no update regarding the bus stops.
- e. Ash Dieback works – February 3rd to the 15th, letters have been delivered to all households in St Fillans to advise of the works and road closures.
- f. Testing of a high-speed marine model will begin on Loch Earn over ten days during February dependant on the weather, all testing should be complete before 15th March when the fishing season starts. There is no media publicity in connection with the testing, the activity is purely a private event, however support from the village is welcome. There will be a Netflix crew on site, they are there to record the testing for a future documentary.
- g. Hogmanay – thank you to everyone who supported the Hogmanay Ceilidh, those that came along and those that donated raffle prizes. A great evening was had by all and after expenses we have been able to make donations of £70 to the Sandison Hall, £355 to the Scottish Air Ambulance and £355 to the St Fillans Community Trust.

9. Date and time of the next Community Council meeting.

Wednesday 30th April 2025 at 7:30pm in the Sandison Hall, St Fillans