

Dores & Essich Community Council

Minutes of Meeting held on Monday 9th March 2026 at 7.00pm

Present: Colin McPherson (CM), Steve Feltham (SF), Claire Crosbie (CCr)

Lavinia Turner, Joe Dunn, Andrew Bayne Wildland Ltd.

Cllr David Fraser

Members of the public

No quorum was present, so the meeting proceeded on an 'information only' basis for review at the next quorate meeting.

A presentation of latest proposals for The Dores Inn was given by Wildland Ltd, including Pre-Application Consultation feedback, and a summary of proposed phasing. Cllr David Fraser advised that a special meeting of the CC should be arranged to gather comments shortly after the Planning Application has been submitted. Joe Dunn of Wildland will provide ongoing liaison with the CC.

1. CM (as Vice Chair) opened the meeting. Apologies for absence were noted from John Martin (JM), John Mackenzie (JMac), Mike Stone (MS), Ella Macrae(EM), Mel McGregor (MM), Cllr Chris Ballance
2. CM read a prepared statement as follows:
Following the CC meeting on 5th January 2026 a letter of complaint was received on 9th January from a number of community members in attendance regarding the conduct of that meeting. In consideration of the complaint the Chair elected to resign the post but will remain as a Community Councillor. The complainants were notified of this on 16th January 2026 and the CC stated that the matter was now considered closed. Steps are being taken to elect a new Chair for the remainder of the current term of the CC(until the next AGM, when all posts will be open for re-election).
3. CCr has volunteered to take the role of Chair and will stand for co-option at the next CC meeting.
4. The minutes of the previous meeting of 5th January were approved by SF and seconded by CCr.
5. Matters Arising from the Previous Meeting

5.1 Role of Secretary remains vacant.: this is an important role for the CC and expressions of interest are sought.

5.2 Statkraft PSH Update: CM reported useful dialogue with Statkraft recently. Processes for drawing on Community Benefit have been discussed and are being further discussed with the Development Trust. Statkraft have advised they are still reviewing traffic and transport/park and ride arrangements using the B862/ Clune Farm and will report further. Their ongoing programme is dependent on Ofgem approval of 'cap and floor' arrangements (due imminently)

CM noted that the proposed presentation re. geological risk and issues was still open and will refer to JM.

5.3 Cemetery Extension: Cllr Fraser advised that some preparatory work has been done on site. The project is out to tender and a contract should be awarded in April for a site start in May. Completion of an initial release of lairs can be expected during this year.

5.4 Affordable Housing: Planning approval has been granted for the revised scheme. Cllr Fraser suggested inviting a member of the Housing Team, Highland Council (Helen Cameron tbc) to attend the next CC meeting for discussion of the scheme, its timetable and letting strategy (having regard to local housing need).

5.5 SSEN Beauly to Blackhillock HV Scheme update: CM confirmed that the CC had objected to the proposals and understood the application was now with the Energy Consents Unit who had referred on to the Planning Inspectorate. Noted that there is no longer an automatic right to a public inquiry if the Council objects. Cllr Fraser advised that the Highland Council has lodged a holding objection and will be meeting again to consider its position. Ongoing.

5.6 Fish Farm Positioning: As agreed at the last meeting this is now a matter of record and will be monitored. Noted that Fish Farm Management are keen to engage with the CC and to attend a future meeting. Noted also that Mowi are collaborating on community benefit by contribution to South Loch Ness Trail works.

5.7 Speed Signs: CM has sought response from Highland Council on this long-standing matter. Cllr Fraser agreed to follow up with Neil Fraser of Highland Council.

5.8 CC Boundary Changes: Discussion took place regarding the process for notifying affected residents of the boundary change. CM had pointed out that this was not for the CC to do. Cllr Fraser stated there had been a lengthy public consultation but agreed that it was reasonable that people should know where they are affected. Further enquiries to be made.

5.9 Police Report: Noted that we are entitled to one police visit to a CC meeting each year: request to be made. Cllr Fraser agreed to enquire who is our current Community Beats officer (Jonjo Gibb tbc).

5.10 Website and Mailing List: Mel is currently looking after the website and mailing list but volunteer help is needed with updating database.

5.11 Community Resilience Plan: It was agreed to form a sub group to get names and contact numbers of people living in the area and maybe paying someone to help with this. Resilience Plan to have regard to advice from Highland Council

6. Planning:

CM confirmed no new planning applications had been made since the last meeting.

6.1 BESS at Knocknagael Substation: Highland Council has raised no objection and scheme is with ECU for determination. Further information has been sought from the developer re. allocation of community benefit.

6.2 Extension of Knocknagael Substation: CC raised an objection re. Transport Plan. A new plan has been submitted. Objection stands and Highland Council to determine on its merits.

6.3 Access from Ness Castle: Consultations ongoing between developer and Highland Council.

6.4 Ness Weir: This is a PAN (prior application notice). Status now uncertain. Cllr Fraser subsequently clarified that a planning application was believed imminent. Views were expressed that this may depend on the progress of the Loch Kemp PSH (for which a planning appeal is pending).

7. Treasurer's Report: JMac had sent a report prior to the meeting which confirms that, as of 8th March, free funds of £8,496.87 were banked with all bills paid to date.
8. Correspondence:
 - 8.1 Community Council Forum Meeting on 17th March: Invitation has been sent to all CC members (for attendance in person or online). Volunteer sought.
 - 8.2 Highland Council Engagement Strategy: Consultation closes Monday 16th March. CM has circulated some draft comments to CC members and will respond on behalf of the CC by the due date.
9. Any Other Business
 - 9.1. Dores Beach Telescope: SF had previously queried whether refurb / renewal of the existing telescope might be funded out of HC grant (now expired). Wildland have since shown some interest and SF agreed to make further enquiries and bring forward a proposal.
 - 9.2 Community benefit: CM advised that (based on Stakraft's current programme) the first tranches of funding could be available later this year. For that reason, a meeting had taken place among the CC, Hall Committee and Development Trust to shortlist potential projects for further examination. These are: play equipment (in the village or at the school), improvements to community transport and refurb/ replacement of the village hall. Discussion confirmed that whilst there is a need for new equipment at the school there is a bigger issue of the school roll being negatively affected by reduced availability of family housing in the catchment area. Teams have been tasked for each of the potential projects.
 - 9.3 Litter pick weekend: Fiona Cairns will be arranging a litter pick in the area (now scheduled for 28th/ 29th March) for which volunteers will be sought in the usual manner. Request for safety vests and signage noted.
 - 9.4 A suggestion has been from within the community to run a food larder, possibly funded from National Lottery. Noted.
10. Next meeting: 11th May 2026 at 7.00pm
Future meeting dates 13th July (inc. AGM), 14th September, 9th November.

The meeting closed at 9pm.