



# Minutes of the Planning Committee meeting

**Held at Albert Halls, Ballater**

**In person**

**27 June 2025 at 01.15pm**

## **Present in person**

Russell Jones (Convener)

Jackie Brierton

Hannah Grist

Bill Lobban

Eleanor Mackintosh

Steve Micklewright

Ann Ross

Michael Williamson

Sandy Bremner

Peter Cosgrove

John Kirk

Lauren MacCallum

Fiona McLean

Duncan Miller

Derek Ross

## **In attendance**

Gavin Miles, Director of Planning and Place

David Berry, Head of Planning and Chief Planning Officer

Colin Bryans, Senior Planning Officer, Development Management

Katherine Donnachie, Planning Officer, Development Management

Peter Ferguson, Harper MacLeod LLP

Scott Shanks, Ecology Adviser

Dee Straw, Planning Administrator and Systems Officer

Mariaan Pita, Executive Manager

Karen Johnstone, Clerk to the Board

## **Apologies**

Geva Blackett

Kenny Deans

Paul Gibb (Deputy Convener)



## Agenda Item 1

### Welcome and apologies

1. The Planning Convener welcomed all present including members of the public and apologies were noted.

## Agenda Item 2

### Matters arising not covered elsewhere

2. There were no matters arising.

## Agenda Item 3

### Declarations of interest

3. Peter Cosgrove declared an interest in item 4 as he and his company (Alba Ecology) have undertaken ecological surveys and provided ecological advice in relation to this application and so would leave the room for this item.
4. Sandy Bremner declared a non-financial interest in item 5 as he is Chair of the River Dee Trust conservation charity and has previously made assorted public declarations of support and so would leave the room for this item.

*Peter Cosgrove left the room at 1.19pm*

## Agenda Item 4

### Application for Detailed Planning Permission 2025/0034/DET (25/00404/FUL)

Residential development of 35no. units, formation of access road and SUDS

At Land 160M South of Lynstock Park, Nethy Bridge

5. Katherine Donnachie, Planning Officer, Development Management presented the paper to the committee.
6. The Committee were invited to ask for clarity, and the following points were raised:
  - a) With reference to developer contributions and Highlife Highland proposing to extend the leisure facility at the Badenoch centre in Kingussie, could it be explained why they were not proposing to spend the contributions more



locally. Planning Officer confirmed that Highlife Highland had also agreed to contributions being used to support local community facilities and provided reassurance that the developer contributions would be directed to local facilities serving Nethy Bridge.

- b) A member queried the cut and fill in the vicinity of the Knoll, could it be explained how they were going to address existing field drains? Planning Officer advised that the cut would be 10m back from the Knoll area and the Applicant may be able to expand on that later in the meeting. A local member confirmed that there were no field drains in that area.
- c) A member queried the meaning of one of the conditions, requiring that before any development commences planting would need to be “established”. What did established mean in this context? Planning Officer clarified that the first planting season after starting development, they should plant the area beside the Knoll, hedging and riparian planting beside river Nethy. Would not expect the wider landscaping to all to be done by that stage.
- d) A member referred to a suggestion made at the site visit that the land the development sits on should be grazed from time to time instead of mowed and asked if that would be taken forward as a condition. Scott Shanks, Ecology Adviser described the cut and collect method that would be used, where they cut in September and collect on site to allow wildflowers to come through and this replicates a grazing regime.

7. The Agent, Andrew Lilley and Applicant, Ron Laing were invited to address the Committee. The Convener thanked the speakers.

8. The Committee were invited to ask the speakers for clarity, and the following points were raised:

- a) Given the pressure for affordable housing and housing for workers in the National Park, would the applicant consider marketing the development for a time limited period to local people rather than putting it on the open market straight away? Mr Laing advised that they would be happy to consider it and added that the houses would be built in phases.
- b) Are there any current proposals from Highland Council to purchase any of these developments? Mr Laing advised that the Highland Council housing officer stated that she recognised the benefit of providing the necessary affordable housing at the Nethy station site.



9. The Objectors Mrs Tessa Jones and Mr Pete Crane were invited to address the Committee. The Convener thanked the speakers.
10. The Committee were invited to ask the speakers for clarity, and the following points were raised:
  - a) What width of woodland corridor would you recommend? Mr Crane advised that he believed the width should be 30m and reiterated it would need to be wider than 5m to work as a native woodland corridor.
  - b) Reference was made to the number of dogs people could have, could it be explained how was that calculated? Mrs Jones advised that it had been taken from the planning documents and was based on an average for the United Kingdom.
11. Katherine Donnachie, Planning Officer was invited to come back on issues raised by all the speakers. She made the following points:
  - a) National Planning Framework 4 policy 16 states developments of more than 50 houses should be accompanied by a statement of community benefit. While this was not sought as this is a smaller scale development, we do not see any conflicts with community wealth building policy.
  - b) Traffic calming measures - Transport team at the Highland Council asked for existing kerb build outs to be removed but they have also asked for traffic calming measures to be installed at the Lynstock Crescent end of Lettoch road.
  - c) Nature corridors proposed within the site are 18m wide and felt to be sufficient for the site, and seeking to increase the width of the corridor beside Lynstock Park would likely result in the applicant needing to reduce the width of the other corridors.
  - d) The dog walking area is an area of open space available for anyone within the development, there are no proposals to manage it by changing the landscape on it or to plant on it etc.
12. The Committee were invited to discuss the report. The following points were raised:
  - a) Comment made that the development site being an open field with reasonable connectivity to the village is an obvious site for expanding Nethy Bridge, and together with Nethy Station development would offer enhanced



affordable housing benefits. The majority of the houses would not become short term lets as they are in a short term let control area. The proposal is good for Nethy Bridge and good for the local community.

- b) Support for proposing to stage the house building over 10 years, and praise for the inclusion of nature corridors.
- c) Support for the application, and the intention for marketing to be done organically.
- d) Commend applicant responsiveness to Officers and to third party representations. Despite areas of disagreement, the proposal is a good application for much needed housing.
- e) Clarity sought around the impacts of potentially widening of the 5m wildlife corridor and whether this would mean the other 18m corridors would have to be narrowed? Planning Officer confirmed this understanding was correct.

13. The Committee approved the application subject to the conditions stated in the report.

14. Action Points arising:                      None.

*There was a 10 minute comfort break at 2.38pm*

*Peter Cosgrove returned, and the meeting recommenced at 2.49pm*

*Sandy Bremner left the meeting at 2.49pm*

## **Agenda Item 5**

### **Application for Detailed Planning Permission 2025/0010/DET (APP/2024/1967)**

Upper Dee River and Floodplain Restoration

At Site at The River Dee from No 1446 9203 up to the confluence with the Quoich water at No 1226 9068, Aberdeenshire.

15. Colin Bryans, Senior Planning Officer, Development Management presented the paper to the committee.

16. The Committee were invited to ask for clarity, and the following points were raised:

- a) Could reassurance be provided that applicant will have to provide protected species surveys for all protected species on the site. Senior Planning Officer provided assurance that initial surveys have been undertaken and further



advised that all surveys will need to be valid at the time of construction, and that this will be detailed through the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP).

- b) Member commented that this development would not be much benefit to flood height. Senior Planning Officer agreed that was what the model showed, however he explained that the driving force for this application is for wildlife connectivity rather than flood alleviation. A member added that it would benefit a range of species such as breeding salmon and habitats for wader chicks.

17. The Committee approved the application as per the conditions stated in the report.

18. Action Points arising:                      None.

*Sandy Bremner returned to the meeting at 3.05pm*

## **Agenda Item 6**

### **AOCB**

19. None.

### **Date of next meeting**

20. The public business of the meeting concluded at 3.06pm.

21. Date of the next meeting is 29 August 2025.