

# BEAULY COMMUNITY LIAISON GROUP (CLG) – POSITION STATEMENT 1

Issued on Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> March 2024 by:

Kilmorack Community Council  
Strathglass Community Council  
Kirkhill & Bunchrew Community Council  
Kiltarlity Community Council  
Beauly Community Council

The Beauly Community Liaison Group (CLG) was set up by Highland Council more than ten years ago to try to assist local communities get resolution of multiple issues arising from SSEN's commissioning of its Beauly-to-Denny pylon line. Despite this, communities continued to endure ten years of effort and upset trying to get SSEN to reduce the unacceptable and irritating noise emanating from its Balblair substation. It has now been reduced, but only to a level that still requires continuous monitoring. This notorious "Beauly Buzz" is only just within the maximum level permitted by law, and still continues to cause occasional distress.

The Beauly CLG is also supposed to be providing a forum to facilitate SSEN's statutory obligation to consult meaningfully with those affected by its development proposals. Several of these recent extensive and significant proposed network developments converge on the Beauly area. Unfortunately, increasingly frequent lack of transparency on the part of SSEN has led community attendees to completely lose confidence in the current CLG process. Examples of this include:

- SSEN's acknowledgement that its preferred options are "based on the outcome of environmental, engineering, and cost analysis, and **do not take consultation into account**"
- SSEN's assertion that the need for these developments is dictated by OFGEM. OFGEM has responded to us that it "does not dictate to network operators what they should or should not do"
- SSEN's assertion that the developments it proposes are as specified in the Holistic Network Design prepared by the Energy Supplies Office (ESO), in which there is no mention of a Spittal-to-Beauly overhead mega pylon line
- SSEN has frequently asserted that "***This is going to happen!***", with the implication that SSEN believes it doesn't really have to pay any attention to what those whom its proposals affect might say, think, or suggest
- SSEN's refusal to publish any factual or objective justification of its advocacy of highly obtrusive and unpopular overhead mega pylon lines, rather than underground and/or subsea alternatives where these options might be practicable and more acceptable
- SSEN's recent attempts to secure control over the CLG's proceedings by:
  - Seeking to make its proceedings confidential
  - Seeking to exert control over the number and acceptability of community representatives who can attend CLG meetings
  - Seeking to manipulate minutes to misrepresent proceedings in favour of SSEN's preferred narrative
  - Recording CLG proceedings whilst withholding access to these recordings from CLG attendees

The latest glaring example of SSEN's lack of transparency is its public announcement of the expansion of its proposed Fanellan substation site from the 55 acres proposed, to 868 acres in its planning application, without any advance warning of this, either to affected Community Councils, or to CLG attendees.

CLG attendees have made protracted attempts to seek genuine engagement from SSEN in discussion of its forthcoming development program. Although SSEN frequently states ***“Your feedback is important to us”***, and touts that it is a ***“Stakeholder-led organization”***, there is little evidence that SSEN attaches any value at all to the feedback it has been receiving from the communities its operations affect. SSEN now seems to be utilising CLG meetings and its staged “public consultation” events solely to test public opinion in order to then develop corporate strategies to minimize any influence this opinion might impose on its corporate intent. This is not meaningful consultation. It is merely notification and corporate manipulation, dressed up to suggest to The Establishment that SSEN is discharging its statutory obligation to meaningfully consult with those affected by its proposals.

SSEN has sister organisations within the corporate SSE conglomerate which are actively engaged in and pursuing further windfarm opportunities in the Highlands. SSEN’s actions unfortunately typify those of a corporate behemoth which sees fit to allow any consideration of places and people to be swept aside in its pursuit of its profit-driven objectives.

Unless and until SSEN is prepared to offer – and can guarantee – more meaningful engagement, community attendees see little point in continuing to be party to the current CLG process.

For further details please contact:

Steve Byford	07584 121332
Inglis Lyon	07711 950013