

Upper Liddesdale & Hermitage Community Council

Ordinary Meeting 12th January 2023

Draft Minutes

Meeting was held at Hermitage Hall.

Those attending:

Community Councillors - Geoffrey Kolbe (GK) Chairman, Rosie Webster (RW) Vice Chairman, Ian Hunter (IH) Secretary, Del Tucker (DT).

Ward Councillors - Annette Smart

Members of the public - 10

Meeting started at 19:00hrs

1. Apologies for absence

Ward Councillors Waton McAteer and Jane Cox. Community Councillor Martin Steed. Andrew and Alena Warburton.

2. Approval of the Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting 7th September 2022

GK moved that the minutes be accepted as a true record of the meeting. IH seconded the motion. Motion was accepted

3. Matters arising

Penny Scott reported that CPR training was being organised for First Responders in Newcastleton by 'Trina'. We will be contacted when there are more details. John Scott stated that the B6357 defibrillator did not need training and gave CPR instructions if required. However, there is a video describing how to use this defibrillator, and the one at Hermitage Hall, which could be played as part of CPR training. British Heart Foundation have stated that no training is needed to use an automatic defibrillator of the sort stored at Hermitage and opposite Larriston on the B6357.

4. Approval of the Minutes of the Inaugural Meeting 5th December 2022

RW moved that the minutes be accepted as a true record of the meeting. IH seconded the motion. Motion was accepted

5. Treasurer's report (John Scott)

John Scott reported that the account was essentially unchanged since the report on 5th December. The balance stood at £3631.76. There is £2121.84 ringfenced for various projects leaving \$1509.92 unrestricted.

John Scott reported that he had agreed with Community Councillor Martin Steed that Martin Steed would take over the role of Treasurer at the financial year end (March 31st). GK asked the meeting if this was agreeable and there was common assent.

6. Meetings attended

GK noted that Andrew Warburton had attended an Area Partnership meeting, but was not able to come to this meeting and report on it.

6. Request for comments on planning application ECU00003426, Millmoor Rig wind farm

GK introduced this item by reading out a description of the development by the developer, ESB. He noted that as the capacity was above 50 MW this application was not being considered by the local authority, but by the Scottish Government under Section 36 of the Town & Country Planning (Scotland) Act. GK noted that a very detailed response will be submitted by the host Community Council, Southdean and it was not necessary for us to replicate the work they had done in setting out how the development would affect them by way of visual amenity, flooding issues, etc.

GK noted that the landowner in this instance was the Church Commissioners for the Church of England. The Developer was Irish, though now with majority shareholding by an English Company. The electricity would be transmitted to England to be used in England. GK noted the Scottish Government had published a draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan, which stated that everyone should benefit from a transition to Net Zero energy. In this instance, GK wondered in what way this community, or indeed this country, would benefit from this development?

GK continued that matters like tourism do matter to this community. In their response to the Scoping Report by ESB, Energy consents wrote that, "There is considerable anxiety in the area over the potential impact on our tourism based economy on which so many households depend". It was generally agreed that in Section 14 of the Application "Socio-Economics, Land Use and Tourism", the developer had done a very poor job to allay those anxieties.

GK noted that the Golden Eagle project had been running for some years now but the number of Golden Eagles had not increased, probably because the capacity of the habitat in this area for Golden Eagles was already stretched to the limit. What had been shown was that Golden Eagles avoid wind farms, so reducing the available habitat.

RW said that there were no visuals from Note o' the Gate and she thought the wind farm would be seen from walks along the hill tops in this area. IH said that he was against the development. DT noted that there had been a number of non-respondents on the list of consultees and wondered if they could be given a reminder to respond?

GK said that he would write a response stating that this Community Council objected to the Development on the grounds of negative effect on tourism, lack of a just transition for this community for this project, detrimental effect on the visual amenity for walkers who will see the wind farm and reduction of habitat for Golden Eagles. GK said he would circulate it amongst CC members for comment before submitting it.

8. Report on National Park. (Jane Bower)

Jane Bower reported that the Scottish Government were analysing the results of a stakeholder consultation. A leading concern had been the management of visitors and the Campaign had published a significant document on the management of visitors since the influx of visitors from the North of England after the ending of lockdown. She continued that one problem was that the Minister (Lorna Slater) wanted a great deal from the new National Parks, but that much of what she wanted would require primary legislation and there was not enough time for that if deadline of a new National Parks by the end of this Parliament in 2026 was to be realised. The Minister also wanted the new National Parks to be 'leaders' in climate change, net-zero, and a number of other areas. But this would not be possible unless considerable budgets were allocated to the National Parks. Once the Scottish Government had decided on the format for a new National Park, the Campaign would work up a proposal, consulting with Community Councils and other stake-holders in the area and submit a proposal for a Scottish Borders National Park.

9. Any other business

GK reported on the potholes on the C77 road from Hermitage to the A7 and that representation had been made to D&G Council Roads Department and to Langholm, Ewes and Westerkirk Community Council. Comments were made that roads inspectors had previously marked out potholes but nothing had been done!

GK also reported that Mary Howlett had raised the matter of land prices in this area being skewed to development for commercial forestry. She and a partner had tried to purchase a farm and had offered a reasonable price based on value as a hill farm, but had been trumped by a purchaser who would plant it with mono-culture commercial forestry. GK noted that this was a topic which the Community Council will want to address in the future.

Jane Bower questioned if 'place-making' was to be addressed? GK responded that while interpretations vary on what place-making means, he took it to mean a community action plan in which the community is consulted and a plan is created reflecting the particular infrastructure and environment needs of the community. This exercise informed the Council on how to direct resources for this community. This would be a matter to be initiated at the next meeting.

10. Date of next meeting

9th March. RW requested that a timetable for the year be produced for better planning of calendars. GK agreed and said he would circulate a timetable.