

Upper Liddesdale & Hermitage Community Council

Ordinary Meeting 4th November 2021

Draft Minutes

Meeting was held at Hermitage Hall.

Those attending:

Community Councillors - Geoffrey Kolbe (GK) Chairman, John Scott (JS) Treasurer, Lawrence Scott (LS).

Ward Councillors - Watson McAteer

Muirhall Energy Ltd - Jamie Leslie, Carol Douglas.

Members of the public - five

Meeting started at 19:00hrs

1. Apologies for absence

Ward Councillor George Turnbull, Community Councillor Andrew Warburton.

2. Presentation by Jamie Leslie of Muirhall Energy Ltd. on the proposed Teviot Wind Farm

Jamie Leslie described the proposed development, which would consist of 69 wind turbines and a solar farm with rated output of 40MW.

He addressed the concerns raised in this CC's response to the Scoping report, showing a viewpoint from the road near Hermitage castle in which turbine tips could be seen above the surrounding hills.

He noted that any disturbance of water drainage due to the development would not affect the UL&H CC area. In view of the recent floods in Hawick and the possible contribution that increased runoff into the Slitrig due to the development might cause, he promised that mitigation schemes would be worked up. SEPA and Nature Scot would need to sign off on the drainage issues caused by the development.

The community benefit was promised to be £7000 per MW of rated output, translating to £3.6M annually to the 12 affected Community Councils (host Community Councils would be Hobkirk and Upper Teviot & Borthwick Water). There would be a £0.5M initial investment fund to offset the disruption due to construction, such as increased traffic in our area due to road closures on the A7.

Construction would take three years after planning was approved, so that energisation would occur sometime in 2027 to 2029.

There would be no hydrogen production, as described in the Scoping Report, as "the technology was not there yet".

The proposed route for the large infrastructure units such as blades and nacelles was from the M74 to Eskdalemuir via Boreland, then to Teviot via the forestry road network. It was admitted that bringing in such items via the A7 through either Langholm or Hawick was not viable.

The cost of the whole development was slated to be about £600M. When questioned about this, Jamie Leslie said it was much cheaper to build wind farms on land than at sea.

2. Approval of the Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting 6th September 2021

A proposal that this meeting accept these draft minutes as a true record of that meeting was proposed by JS, seconded by LS. The motion was carried

3. Matters arising

GK read out a letter from Cameron Knox, area representative on the Community Councils Scheme Review group. He stated that work was continuing and a communication would be sent out to Community Councils for review “shortly”

GK reported that the application for a defibrillator for the B6357 under the BBBB fund would go to the Area Partnership meeting on the 16th of November. GK asked that the Community Council agree to accept responsibility for ongoing maintenance costs for the defibrillator, and this was agreed. It was also agreed that the Newcastleton First Responders would be approached with a view to put on a training day for residents local to the defibrillator.

GK noted that the latest Police Report was on the website.

5. Treasurer’s report

JS noted that there was no change from that reported at the September CC meeting

6. The Community Fund

GK reported that the trial for the process by which the Teviot & Liddesdale area spends its share of the 1% of the Scottish Borders Council budget which has to be spent in ways determined by the community, had started. There was a Pot A for applications for small grants, which would be assessed by a local panel from local CC areas. For our area, the local panel was now in place consisting of Andrew Warburton as a representative of the CC who would be the Chairman; Don Herbert would be a representative of the only other constituted body in the area, Hermitage Hall; and the other two members would be Jane Law of Mountainview and Del Dobson of Singdean.

A representative of the area was needed for the area panel to assess Pot B applications, and it was proposed that Andrew Warburton be asked if he would be our representative.

7. Improvement of the footpath to Nine Stanes Rig

AW was not present to speak to this item, but GK noted that AW had had a meeting with the Council paths department and work was ongoing to apply for funding to upgrade the path.

8. Report on the SBCCN meeting on 27th October

GK reported that there had been a talk by Martin Brims of SBC on training Community Councillors. The objectives of the scheme included council structure awareness and responding to formal consultations such as planning applications. The “National Standards for Community Engagement” developed by the Scottish Community Development Centre were also referred to. It seemed that a set scheme which could be reviewed was not to be expected, more an ongoing project with continuous improvement.

Watson McAteer thought that any requirement to undergo training would act as a deterrent to people volunteering their time to become a Community Councillor. He thought that the strength of Community Councillors was that they were “untrained” and so could bring their own view and that of the community to the table. Watson thought that common sense was really all a Community Councillor needed.

The SBCCN has been asked for a response to the new “Place-Plan” methodology to allocating Council resources and money, which had been outlined by Gillian Jardine at the last Area Partnership meeting. The

main reactions were that the consultation period had been too short, and that nobody really understood what was being proposed.

GK commented that the Community Council only has one statutory power, and that is to be a consultee to planning applications. He thought that what the Place-Plan effectively did was to broaden the whole definition of "planning" and that this would mean a lot more work for Community Councils. Some training in how to navigate this process was probably not a bad idea.

9. Report on the Area Partnerships Locality meeting on 2nd November

This meeting will actually take place on the 16th of November...

10. Scottish Borders National Park

Jane Bower, Chairman of the Campaign for a Scottish Borders National Park, reported on the excavations that were about to take place at Bedrule Castle under the auspices of Archaeology Scotland, as part of the 12 Towers Project which the Campaign was undertaking to demonstrate how a National Park could be of benefit to the community. She noted that the high schools of all the towns in the area had booked school parties to partake in the excavation workshops - except Hawick. Watson McAteer promised he would contact Hawick high school and ask the question why they were not participating.

Jane also talked about the (re)establishment of a walking/bridle route along the Wheel Causeway, part of which runs from Deadwater farm at the border with England, up to Bonchester Bridge, primarily through forestry managed by Tilhill and Forestry Land Scotland. There is an existing 'ride' along the ancient road, which may date back to Roman times or even earlier, but this is currently overgrown and it impassable in places. The route is in UL&H CC territory to the South and in Southdean CC area to the North. Scottish Borders Council are also interested in making this a practical walking route and establishing signs. A preliminary Zoom meeting was held between these interested parties and there was enthusiasm for pushing ahead with this project.

11. Accident Black spot on the B6357 road to Bonchester Bridge

GK reported that the bend on the road just south of Singdean by Fanna hill, had had numerous accidents in the last few years, including seven accidents in one day in late June. One accident in late September had resulted in a death and this had spurred an action to try and mitigate the danger of this corner as quickly as possible. GK thanked Tony Hackney of BSW Timber Ltd. for making the work of filling in the dangerous ditch at that site a priority, and Andrew Dunsmuir of Tilhill for organising the work. The ditch has now been filled in and the area landscaped so that motorcyclists caught unawares have a safe run-off area.

GK also thanked Waton McAteer for organising an onsite visit by the police (including a police motorcyclist) and the Council Roads Department. The result of this was an agreement to put in improved signage to warn motorcyclists of the dangers of the sharp bend at that site, which is not apparent until you are right on it.

12. Any other business

GK noted that in a report of the Newcastleton & District CC meeting in the Newcastleton Clatter magazine, there was an item that the Windy Edge wind farm was going back to scoping as it had been decided to increase the turbine numbers from nine to twelve. GK said that on investigation, it seemed that the "property owner" had made this statement. There was no information on the planning website, or from EnergieKontor the developer on this matter.

Lynne Graham reported that the Council roads department were working on the drainage near Steele Road End cottage, but that the problems of too much water going into too small a pipe has not really been solved. A grill over the pipe entrance had been installed for safety. It had been proposed to lay more pipe up the

road so the water entered the pipe sooner, but Lynne thought that would only move the problem uphill. Lynne was asked to keep the Community Council informed.

JS noted that there had not been a meeting of the resilience coordinators for two years due to Covid, and that he had proposed that there should be a meeting soon so that experience on resilience issues could be shared.

13. Date of next meeting

January 10th 2022