

Upper Liddesdale & Hermitage Community Council

Ordinary Meeting 9th November 2023

Draft Minutes

Meeting was held at Hermitage Hall.

Those attending:

Councillor Annette Smart.

Community Councillors - Geoffrey Kolbe (GK) Chairman, Rosie Webster (RW) Vice Chairman, Ian Hunter (IH) Secretary, Martin Steed (MS) Treasurer.

Members of the public - 10

Meeting started at 19:05hrs

1. Apologies for absence

None

2. Approval of the Minutes of the Ordinary meeting on 14th September 2023

IH proposed that the minutes be approved as a true record of the meeting. MS seconded the motion. It was agreed that the minutes were a true record of the meeting of 14th September 2023.

3. Matters arising

GK reported that Kelvin Wilson of Buccleuch Estates said that Gareth (who has the stalking lease) had not been up since the previous communications, so that is why a meeting had not been arranged to discuss the concerns of residents regarding stalking activities.

RW reported on the defibrillator training, where eight people turned up to a training session in CPR and the use of the defibrillators given by Iain Riddell. IH asked if it was possible to misuse a defibrillator? MS said no, instructions were given every step of the way. You just needed the confidence to use it.

RW said that Jane Law had raised the question of how to get assistance to get the defibrillator while you were giving CPR? After some discussion, it was agreed that a Whatsapp group be set up so that a general call for assistance could be given out. **RW said she would write an email to be sent out to the residents by GK to enable this.**

IH raised the point that he did not know where a lot of properties were and would it be possible to create a map with all the property names on it? **GK said he would create such a map and put it on the website.**

4. Place Plan Survey Update

RW reported that she was trying to get ideas for pushing forward the place plan and people to come and join the Place Plan Team. At some point, Sarah Culverwell and Fiona Benton would be coming to help guide us in this process. RW had just put out a general flyer to all the properties in the CC area to publicise this. RW said that she would be looking for ideas at the Hermitage Hall CHAT mornings. On Thursday 7th December there would be a meeting of the Place Plan Team in Hermitage Hall.

John Scott asked if there were areas similar to ours which were going through the same process and with whom we could exchange ideas? RW replied that she was looking particularly at Southdean and

Newcastleton, and that SBC had a list of consultants who could help with place plans, but they were mainly geared to help in large towns and large projects and she did not think they were suitable for us.

5. Report: Pines Burn Traffic Management Plan

GK reported that EnergieKontor (EK) continued to issue revised updates on the proposed movements of blades to the site. So far, one blade had completed the journey and another was due to be moved today. Councillor Smart stated that the blade had made it as far as Selkirk and the rest of the movement was due to be completed tomorrow. GK said that repeated requests to SBC to get a meeting about the blade movements with the affected CCs had so far not been granted and Councillor Smart said that EK had been difficult to pin down.

GK reported too that Teviot & Liddesdale CCs had so far not been able to get a meaningful response from EK regarding the community benefit for Pines Burn. Barbara Elborn (Newcastleton & District CC) had passed on the advice from CARES (The Scottish Government's Community and Renewable Energy Scheme) that it was vital that an agreement on community benefit was reached before Pines Burn was connected to the grid as there would be no leverage for EK to come to any agreement after that. GK said he did not see the logic in that, but there it was. This was important as EK were talking about putting in an application for a replacement Windy Edge wind farm and we needed to secure a community benefit agreement for that.

6. Report. Liddesdale wind farm

GK gave the background that EDF had put in a Scoping Application in order to secure a Scoping Opinion from the Energy Consents Unit (ECU) of the Scottish Government. We had put in a response to the request for comments on the EDF Scoping Report. We had raised a number of issues regarding the consideration of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of the transmission line to connect the wind farm to the grid, the wider EIA of the project outside the site of the wind farm and the way the community benefit was to be administered. GK reported that ECU had so far stood firm on the first point, that the EIA of the wind farm and the transmission line should be considered separately due to the fact they were governed by separate regulations and would be built by different organisations. The EIA Regulations are clear, however, that the EIA of the whole project must be considered at the same time. On the other two points, it would seem that ECU had agreed with them and they would be considered at determination, should the project go for an Application. A partial victory then.

GK noted some sections of the ECU Scoping Opinion, which had now been published. In particular, that the ECU was "strongly encouraging" EDF to put in three applications instead of one. Also that the EIA process was iterative and there should be further engagement between the developer and the relevant parties before the proposals reached "design freeze". Also, that the ECU wanted to be kept informed on these engagements. So, we should invite EDF to come to a CC meeting and talk over the issues raised, perhaps at our March meeting.

7. Report National Park

Jane Bower reported that there had been movement on a number of fronts. First, historian Professor Richard Oram had now completed his work to examine the wider records archives relating to the 1545 raid on the Rule Valley in which twelve towers had been burned down. This had been done using a £2k grant from the Scottish Society of Antiquaries, £1k each from the Pot 'A' grants from Southdean and Hobkirk and £1k from Campaign funds.

Jane Bower (JB) also reported that the Scottish Government had appointed a firm of consultants to help community groups putting in nominations for a National Park to build their case. The Campaign had had an introductory Zoom meeting with them today and they would come down (from Glasgow) for a face-to-face meeting within the next few weeks. She stated that as the Campaign were very advanced in their case compared to all the other bids (but one) the Campaign would have to think of how best to use the £15 share

of the £150k pot that the Scottish Government had set aside to help groups put forward their nominations. She thought it could be beneficially spent on the 12 Towers project, given the background of the consultants in immersive technology and marketing.

IH asked who the main competition were? JB replied that the Galloway National Park bid was the most advanced other than the Campaign's, (for a Scottish Borders National Park), but they had two weaknesses: firstly, the Biosphere which had been created in Galloway had not been a success and the Scottish Government would not want to create and fund a National Park simply to make the Biosphere a viable project. Secondly, there was no defined area for the Galloway National Park and so it is difficult to unify a story to justify a National Park without a defined area.

JB was asked if there was support from Scottish Borders Council for the Campaign's bid? She replied that as yet, there had been no definite movement either way. Councillor Smart said she did not really know what was going on.

8. Financial Report

MS reported that two new noticeboards had now been bought. The bank balance now stood at £2695.84 of which £394.80 was unencumbered.

It was noted that there was £750 ring fenced for "interpretation boards" and it was mooted that these funds could instead be put towards the noticeboards. However, there was a general feeling that the idea of interpretation boards for sites like Nines States Rig, Castleton and so on was a good idea and this cash should be used to get moving on this project. **Penny Scott and Gloria Hunter said they would start considering how to implement the creation of interpretation boards in the area and RW said she would help.**

10. Co opting a new member on the Community Council

GK reported that his efforts to persuade a number of suitable candidates had not been fruitful. RW said she would continue to ask and some residents at Larriston might be amenable. IH suggested a wine and cheese party...! There was a general feeling that having various people take on specific tasks, as with the interpretation boards, as the need arose was probably the best way to go.

11. Meetings attended

GK reported having attended the Teviot & Liddesdale Area Partnership meeting. A presentation by Robbie Noble of the area police revealed that there are 134 Response Police, 33 Community Police and 101 CID Police. MS commented that if there were 5 shifts - as is common in policing - then that meant there were only 27 police covering the Borders at any time.

There had also been a presentation by Carly Lyall of NHS Borders, who were launching a consultation under the banner "Time for Change" . For a number of reasons which GK listed, the NHS was going to come under increasing demand in the next ten years and its ability to meet that demand was probably going to decrease. There needed to be a conversation with the community on how the NHS would cope. In line with this, they are doing face-to-face consultations around the Borders and there would be a drop-in meeting at Heart-of-Hawick on Wednesday 15th November from 2 to 6:30pm and which anyone could drop in, listen to a presentation and engage with NHS staff on how they could improve their service.

One interesting point was that the NHS does not run the ambulance service.

It was also reported that out of a budget of £131k for the year, £86k had now been distributed through Pot 'A' applications. The deadline for the next application is 9th January.

There had also been a Resilience Groups meeting which GK had attended with Sandra Murray. The main theme of the evening had been how to react in the event of an electric power outage. One interesting idea had been that if the outage went on for three days and food in freezers was about to go off, take out the

barbeque and cook it, then it will last a little longer. Communications was another major factor. GK related that the latest smartphones now have SOS satellite capability and this could be very useful as a back-stop means of communication in times of extreme resilience stress.

12. Any Other Business

Sandra Murray reported that the newsletter from Oxygen Conservation noted the intent to create the largest onshore wind farm in the UK on the Blackburn-Hartgarth site. They also intended to plant broadleaf trees (they are against sitka spruce) and they are keen to introduce Lynx.

Oxygen Conservation have invited a number of people to a meeting at Hartgarth on the 14th to talk about their tree planting.

GK noted that he had invited them to CC meetings a number of times but so far without any luck. But he would try again.

Lynda Graham noted that SBC had been carrying out ditching operations along the B6357 near Dinlabyre, but had left a lot of rubbish, fence posts and fence wire there which could be a danger to wildlife. The diggings from the ditch had been left piled up and not spread out. The banks of the ditch were too steep and animals crossing the road would have difficulty getting up them - and they were already falling. GK said he would take this up with the SBC

It was also noted that media personality Jane Dotchin, 82 years old, had passed through this area in the past week with her horse. She was on her way to Hexham via Bloody Bush.

The meeting ended at 8:30 pm

The next Ordinary meeting will be on 11th January 2024