

Heriot Community Council

Minutes of meeting, 15th Feb 2023

Present: John Williams (Chair), Frank Connelly, Sue Sharp, Helen Brinkworth, Gavin Whittaker, Cllr. Hannah Steel, Cllr. Neil Mackinnon, Cllr. Fay Sinclair, Julie Aitkinson (FORL), plus five members of the public. No apologies for absence had been received.

1. Minutes of previous meeting: Accepted and approved.

2. Wind Farms

- a) Scawd Law. A brief description of this proposed development was given by Julie Aitken, representing Fred Olsen Renewables Ltd. (FORL). The proposal is for 8 turbines with 48MW generating capacity.
- i. If granted, road access would be via the B6367, A7, B7007 and B709, requiring significant road widening, surface improvement and additional road construction. Whether the road routes would be restored to their original routes would depend on what planning conditions were attached to any permission.
 - ii. The effect on the Moorfoot area was recognised as having 'significant impact', with visibility from almost the entire Moorfoot plateau.
 - iii. Golden eagles are in the area, and the nest is still on site. JA reported that the nest is abandoned (note: this view not shared by the South of Scotland Golden Eagle Project)
 - iv. Employment: 30% of employment was required to be local, but the term 'local' is ill-defined and all contracts will need to be open to tender anyway.
 - v. Concern was expressed that this application, if granted, would open the way to increased numbers of turbines by the developer, as they have done at the Crystal Rigg site, which has been added to six times. JA reported that the site has no more capacity for more turbines, but it was argued that the expansion does not necessarily need to be within the same boundary.
 - vi. There was discussion of shadow flicker and the subject of reflections from the low sun. Shadow flicker is constrained, reflection flicker appears not to be.

JA left the meeting and in the subsequent discussion, the majority of the CC members agreed, with two abstentions, to object to this planning application on the grounds of impacts to the visual landscape, road alterations. It also fails to fulfil the criteria set out by the Landscape Capacity Study, and has a highly detrimental impact on the Tweed Valley. It was noted that the local CC (Walkerburn) were also objecting.

- b) Wull Muir. [SS recused herself from the discussion due to a conflict of interests.]

- i. The proposal has been discussed a number of times and none of the issues raised have been addressed. The discussion this time focused on the application submitted to SBC which is now for eight (8) turbines, each 150m height to tip,
 - ii. The previous application was rejected by SBC and on appeal by the Reporter, and the issues that led to that decision are unchanged. The development would still be visible from Midlothian due to the increased height, but now the impact on Heriot would be even greater, with larger turbines just 1400m from Shoestanes Cottages.
 - iii. Complaints were made by members of the public about the absence of any information or contact by the developers with residents at Shoestanes. GW complained that *misinformation* had been delivered to Nettlingflat by the developer in a leaflet that understated the scale and proximity of the development. This misinformation had not been corrected, despite repeated assurances from the developer that it would be. It was also reported that SBC officials had not discussed the development with the developers in the manner that the developer had claimed.
 - iv. The proposal was discussed and it was unanimously agreed that it was even worse than the previous one, with greater impact on the community.
 - v. The CC unanimously agreed to object to this planning application (SS was ineligible to vote) on the grounds that, *inter alia*, the visual impact was worse, the distance to the nearest property was too low, and the noise contours indicated that parts of Heriot would be subject to more than the permitted 35dB noise levels.

- c) Torfichen windfarm
 - i. This is a proposal at scoping stage for 19 turbines, 200m to blade tip, on the Moorfoots escarpment north of the B7007. At this stage, we are limited to requesting appropriate viewpoints for the photomontages in order to assist in assessing the visual impact if the proposal reaches the planning stage.

- d) Greystone Knowe
 - i. The SBC planning committee will convene in April to discuss the SBC response to this S36 application.

- e) Leithenwater
 - i. The proposed Leithenwater windfarm is still at the scoping stage.

- 3. Police Report
 - a) The Police report contained no reference to rural crime. It is not clear if this is due to there being no rural crime or lack of concern from the police themselves.
 - b) Thanks had been received from the police to be passed on to the public for all the help that had been given in locating the young girl who went missing in Galshiels recently.
 - c) The liaison between Northumberland Police and Police Scotland was reported to have been successful.

4. Roads issues

- a) The new speed activated signs on the A7 were reported to be working well and appeared to be influencing driver behaviour. It remains to be seen how the accident statistics change over the coming months and years, but we remain hopeful. GW had written to thank Philippa Gilhooley and her team for their help in dealing with accidents at this part of the A7.
- b) It was reported that signs had been removed from a post at Sandyknowe. HB agreed to report this via the SBC website.

5. Bus service

- a) The lamentable state of the bus service timetable was raised. The last buses depart from Galashiels too early for students to be able to use them after attending after-school events. The last buses from Edinburgh are too early to allow for any socialising in the city if one wishes to return to Heriot by public transport.
- b) A responsive minibus service and a private bus service were both briefly discussed, but with no conclusion.
- c) SS agreed to liaise with Jenny Mushlin (Stow and Fountainhall CC) to address the bus issue, with the aim of at least changing the time of the last bus from Galashiels.

6. First Aid course/Defibrillators

- a) GW reported that he had the costs for the defibrillators and the cabinets, but that as defibrillators need to be kept above ca. 10°C, heated cabinets would be needed for outside locations. This has meant locating suitable mains power supplies. Most of this is now in hand and FC had agreed to discuss the installation requirements with an electrician. Once costings have been obtained, a funding application would be submitted.

7. Microgrant applications

- a) Yoga Group - £250 agreed for yoga equipment, to be held in the Macfie Hall
- b) Parent Council - £250 agreed to assist with costs for a school field trip
- c) It was suggested that the decade-old £250 cap on funding applications was too low in the light of the effects of inflation. GW agreed to ask the panel and the DLX trust whether this limit might be increased.

8. Playpark

- a) This was again briefly discussed. Cllr. Mckinnon kindly agreed to arrange a survey by SBC.

9. Council Elections

- a) A timetable was agreed for the election process, which would be published in the public domain as soon as possible in order to avoid a break in the meeting schedule.
- b) JW thanked the CC members for their work over recent years and was thanked for his service in return. With that, he formally dissolved the Community Council.

The meeting, and this session of Heriot CC, finished at 20:55