

Upper Liddesdale & Hermitage Community Council

Ordinary Meeting 10th January 2022

Draft Minutes

Meeting was held virtually on Zoom.

Those attending:

Community Councillors - Geoffrey Kolbe (GK) Chairman, Andrew Warburton (AW) Vice Chairman, John Scott (JS) Treasurer.

Ward Councillors - George Turnbull

SBC Bridge Maintenance, Paul Frankland, Stuart Moir

Members of the public - three

Meeting started at 19:03hrs

1. Apologies for absence

Ward Councillor Watson McAteer. (Ward Councillor David Paterson did attempt to join the Zoom meeting, but had technical difficulties.)

6. Repairs to Billhope Bridge

Item 6 on the agenda was brought forward to accommodate SBC Bridge Maintenance representatives Paul Frankland and Stuart Moir, who were in attendance.

GK started by reading out a letter from Sarah Laing, (Twislehope Farm) who noted that the slated repair time in July would be a very busy time for them, requiring many transits across the bridge per day. Also, visitors to Hermitage Castle who came from the A7 would be impeded.

Paul Frankland explained that while he was sympathetic to our concerns, the bridge was defective and weakened and needed repairing. He was actively consulting with landowners to seek the best way to repair the bridge while minimising inconvenience.

Stuart Moir explained that it was the intention to replace the bridge with a "traditional" concrete box, which would be slightly wider than the existing bridge, so easier to navigate in large vehicles. It would be rendered with masonry to make it look authentic commensurate with its environment. This would take 5 to 6 weeks. The anticipated design life of the new bridge is 120 years.

An alternative being explored was to put a 'liner' under the arch of the existing bridge to support it, which would take less time and would leave us with the existing bridge. Putting in a Bailey bridge to carry normal traffic around the bridge would cost £30-40k and was outwith the budget. But a light-weight alternative to carry farm traffic (quads and tractors), which would be under the control of the bridge repair workers during the working day, was a consideration. This would not need to be made up to the standard required for regular traffic.

Consultation was ongoing with SEPA and with landowners. The work had to be done between May and September to meet SEPA's time window, so there was some leeway on when the job could be done.

It was agreed to review the alternatives and reach a consensus which could be agreed at the next CC meeting in March.

GK thanked Paul Frankland and Stuart Moir for their attendance.

2. Approval of the Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting 4th November 2021

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

3. Matters arising

GK reported that the defibrillator for the B6357, to be placed at the resilience shed opposite Larriston Farm, would be delivered next week, as would the cabinet to put it in, and all the other parts had been delivered. GK reported that the new road signs for the accident black spot at Fanna Hill, near Singdean, would be installed next week. This would include chevrons to warn of a sharp right hand bend, and a hazard warning sign of right hand bend with a junction with a minor road, to warn of the forestry road at that point. This would complete the operation to improve safety at that corner, now that Tilhill have re-landscaped the run-off area so that motorcyclists have a safe exit route.

JS reported a delayed meeting of Resilience Committee co-ordinators to be convened by SBC, which had not been held due to Covid restrictions, would hopefully be held soon, virtually if necessary. JS also commented we still do not have a final copy of our ULHCC Resilience Plan, and he will follow up again on that.

4. Treasurer's report

JS reported that the CC had received funds from the BBBB scheme for the defibrillator of £1974. He noted that there had actually been two payments of this sum and one payment would be returned. Currently, the bank balance stood at £6013.65 of which the sums £2624 were ringfenced for the defibrillator, £750 for the info boards and £121.84 for the Trust. There was also £1000 for the Covid Resilience Support, which we had been asked to hang onto for the meantime. This meant that a total of £4495.84 was ringfenced, leaving an unencumbered sum of £1517.81.

5. Improvement to the Nine Stanes Rig footpath

AW reported that the grant application to Sue Gray of SBC was still on hold due to Covid. Too, Sue Grey wished to visit the site.

JS noted that if our bank account exceeded the annual grant amount by a factor of two or more on March 31st, we would not receive any grant next year. If AW could produce specific spent requirements that could be met by the CC, this would be helpful all around.

7. Change to the Constitution of the Panel for Pot 'A' Community Funds

Currently, applications could be made by constituted bodies up to £500 and by unconstituted bodies up to £250 to the local Pot 'A' panel. It was proposed that this be amended so that applications could be made up to the limit of £2100, which was the sum that the panel had at their disposal. AW proposed that this be accepted, JS seconded, the motion was carried.

AW reported that the Area Partnership Panel for Pot 'B' funds had had a successful meeting and he confirmed that the funds had now been spent. Only Pot 'A' funds remained.

8. Lessons learned on resilience matters after Storm Arwen

GK started by asking Alena Warburton to speak to her letter in which she addressed her concerns on resilience matters after Storm Arwen. Alena was concerned that during prolonged electricity power cuts, homes which relied on electricity for their heating and cooking were especially vulnerable and that to be robust in the face of resilience stresses, a mixture of energy sources was necessary.

It was generally agreed that for rural communities, the drive to convert to 'green' energy sources in pursuit of a net-zero energy policy would leave them especially vulnerable.

It was particularly noted that we rely on electricity for communication, and to find out what was happening with regards to the response to the resilience stress. GK noted that modern telephones require electricity to work, and the old analogue phones that only need to be plugged into the wall socket would no longer work after 2025 when BT would go all digital and would discontinue analogue exchanges.

It was agreed that the Resilience Group did not have sufficient information about the community members to assess their vulnerability, or their ability to help other members if needed. It was agreed that a

questionnaire should be devised by the Resilience Group to be circulated to the community, to determine the extent of their vulnerability and what resources they had to help other members of the community. GK noted that the storage of personal information was a concern as it was the subject of GDPR and he had contacted Gillian Jardine of SBC Democratic Services for guidance on how to proceed on this.

It was also agreed that an information sheet on how people can prepare for resilience stress situations and help themselves during such times should be prepared and circulated.

JS noted that the phone in the public phone box on the B6399 at Netheraw Cottage has been removed by BT without notice to UL&HCC. JS also noted that the Storm Arwen situation was an example of how public phone boxes could provide an emergency communication service, another reason to object to the removal of phone boxes in rural areas.

There was general agreement that Hermitage Hall would be a useful help centre in the event of a resilience stress situation. It had water and cooking facilities and it would be very useful if it also had a generator. GK agreed, but thought that it would be better if people could stay in their own homes and keep their own systems operational. To this end, GK thought that having a few 'suitcase' generators would be very beneficial as a resilience aid.

9. Any other business

GK reported that he had registered an interest in the UL&H CC making a representation at the forthcoming Public Enquiry into Fawside Wind Farm. He noted that only matters that had already been raised in previous responses by UL&H CC could be addressed. The UL&H CC response to the Fawside scoping report had been put up on the UL&H CC website under "future meetings".

10. Date of next meeting

March 7th 2022

The meeting ended at 20:09