

# Upper Liddesdale & Hermitage Community Council

## Ordinary Meeting 12th September 2024

### Draft Minutes

Meeting was held at Hermitage Hall.

#### **Those attending:**

Councillors: Watson McAteer, Annette Smart

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

Members of the public - 10

Meeting started at 19:00hrs

#### **1. Apologies for Absence**

Councillor Jane Cox the Warburtons apologised for not being able to come

#### **2. Approval of the Minutes of the Ordinary meeting of the 11th July 2024**

A motion that the minutes are a true and accurate record of the meeting of the 11th of July 2024 was proposed by IH and seconded by RW. The motion was carried without dissent.

#### **3. Matters arising**

GK read out a letter from Andrew Dunsmuir of Tilhill Forestry, who is in charge of deer management. He stated that about eighty signs had been put up across Scotland and there had been no other instance of concerns being raised. These signs were put up so the public could “exercise responsible access”

Regarding the gralloch, Tilhill are sensitive to the issues of gralloch being left near where dogs are walked and continue to ensure nothing is left near to the paths. GK noted that the phrase “exercise responsible access” could be interpreted as keep out! Jane Bower commented that the public do not have a right of access to areas where trees are growing (as this is considered as a ‘crop’ for Right to Roam considerations). One problem that is difficult to control is poachers who are not bothered about where they leave the gralloch.

#### **4. Place Plan Update**

RW reported that a consultant Douglas Westwater of Community Enterprise had been engaged to help create our Place Plan. It has been agreed that Scottish Borders Council will pay for ten days work. They have experience, having worked on ten previous place plans and are also working on the Denholm Place Plan. The Place Plan Committee had a meeting on 10th September, where RW said that she was trying to order our aspirations into short, medium and long term. Short term aspirations were discussed including more public benches, walking routes and signage thereof, information boards and the community garden being created behind Hermitage Hall. GK noted that he suggested using paintings by Nell Hardie of Scottish Borders wild flowers as illustrations in the Place Plan. He asked if anyone knew of the current owner of the copyrights on the pictures. It was suggested that Beatrice Scott would know.

## **5. National Park Report**

Jane Bower reported that the Campaign's bid for a National Park in this area had not been accepted by the Scottish Government. In consequence, the Campaign was now being wound down as it was not considered likely that there would be another chance in the lifetime of the Campaign members. Meanwhile, NatureScot is to perform the due diligence on the Galloway National Park. However, Minister Marie Gougeon had stated that NatureScot was due to report in April 2025 (pushed out from February) and if that was not long enough, NatureScot would be given more time. The problem is that there is no more time if the legislation is to be passed in this session. A reasonable interpretation is that the clock is being run down and there will be no National Park announced in this session. Jane went on to comment that the protection that a National Park in this area would have given against wind farm developments will now not come about. Another problem for proposing wind farms in this area is getting the power out onto the grid. A new cross-border transmission line which will take in the wind farms has now been proposed and everyone must get busy opposing that.

## **6. Financial Report**

MS spoke to his financial report. He noted that the bank balance as of this date is £3136.72 and the net funds available after the ring-fenced funds had been accounted for was £1014.88

## **7. Any Other Business**

GK noted that Lynda Graham (LG) had agreed to be co-opted onto the Community Council. He asked if the Community Council agreed and there was general assent. GK invited her to sit at the top table! GK noted that LG was co-opted under Section 4.2(b) of the Constitution. She would need to agree to follow the Community Council code of conduct. She would not be able to vote for another two CC meetings.

GK noted that Barbara Elborn of Newcastleton was starting discussions with landowners at this end of the valley about taking measures to hold back the water in times of heavy inundation so that Newcastleton is not threatened with flooding. GK had hoped that Barbara would come to this meeting to explain her thinking in more detail, but she was otherwise engaged. GK hoped she could come to the next CC meeting. GK noted that there was a UK Forestry Standard Practice Guide on "Designing and Managing Forests and Woodlands to Reduce Flood Risk" and urged people to look at it.

GK reported the breaking news that Scottish & Southern Electricity Networks (the Scottish version of National Grid) was planning to develop a new electricity connection between a location near Lauder in the Scottish Borders and the Carlisle area. He gave a short powerpoint presentation showing the proposed route. SSEN had developed a number of different options for the route, but the preferred route is one that conveniently takes in all the various wind farm applications in the area. A sub-station was also proposed to be built near Sundhope Rig. A number of people had already had letters warning of the possibility of pylons on their land. A number of exhibitions and consultation events were planned and GK noted these. Too, there would be a presentation by SSEN on the project at the meeting on the 14th November.

Jane Bower commented that the power line route was to serve the wind farms that are currently in planning. It is a chicken and egg situation. If the wind farms are successfully repelled, there will be no power line. Conversely, the power line must be fought to prevent wind farms having a legitimate reason to build here.

Councillor Smart reported a conversation with John Currie (SBC Director of Infrastructure and Environment) where he stated it would make good sense to use the power locally. GK noted that Muirhall were talking to Perth city about building a 140MW wind farm to serve the city rather than wait to be connected to the grid.

Councillor McAteer commented on the vandalism of the Muirhall office in Hawick the previous evening, with windows smashed and 1514 - a Hawick symbol - daubed on the wall. He noted that while the action can in

no way be condoned, it is frustrating that the Council does not have the power to act for the people of Hawick in preventing these large large infrastructure projects that the people do not want. GK commented that this was a democratic deficiency and the consequence was that there would probably be more vandalism.

LG reported that a number of bags and tubes connected with forestry operations had been near the railway line at Kirndeane. **LG said she would contact Andrew Fisher of Tilhill about getting them removed.** Councillor McAteer said he would like details of the location as this was an environmental problem which he would like to follow up. There had been a number of other such incidents, most recently at Roberton. **LG said she would send Councillor McAteer the location of the bags and tubes.**

IH proposed a vote of thanks to the Campaign for its hard work in trying to promote a National Park in this area. The Meeting concurred.

Councillor McAteer reported that the Community Action Police had (finally) made an appearance at the Newcastleton CC meeting. He said that there had been a marked increase in rural crime. The CCTV cameras in Newcastleton were a marked help in catching criminals. The question was asked about the Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) cameras on the roads, but Councillor McAteer said that there are no ANPR cameras on the A7 and that is the route the criminals use to get into the area. Rural Watch Scotland was mentioned as a rural version of the Neighbourhood Watch scheme which should be signed up to and can make a difference.

## **8. Date of the next meeting**

14th November 2024

The meeting ended at 20:00 hrs