

# Upper Liddesdale & Hermitage Community Council

## Ordinary Meeting 9th May 2024

### Draft Minutes

Meeting was held at Hermitage Hall.

#### **Those attending:**

Councillors: Annette Smart

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

From EDF, Andrew Bennett, Rose Yates.

Members of the public - 10

Meeting started at 19:00hrs

#### **1. Presentation: Update on Liddesdale wind farm by Andrew Bennett of EDF**

Rose Yates gave an introduction to EDF Renewables who have 36 onshore wind farms in the UK as well as solar farms and battery storage. They have 530 MW installed capacity operational in Scotland and another 450 MW in construction, with a further 2GW in development.

Andrew Bennett reported on the Liddesdale site that they have been doing surveys of bats, badgers, birds and peat probing, but they are only about 60% complete in this work as the wind blow from Storm Arwen and more recent storms is still in the process of being cleared and this has hampered their work.

After careful consideration of the initial consultations on the project, they have now decided to reduce the number of turbines from 80 to 59, with a range of tip heights from 220m to 250m depending on location. They are also looking at battery storage of 80MW which will be screened by forestry. The 30 turbines in Newcastleton Forest have been reduced to 25 by removing the turbines from the Western edge of the original site which were near habitation. The site area has been correspondingly reduced. They aim not to interfere with the existing 7 Stanes bike track. They had not been in consultation with Forestry Land Scotland regarding future plans for extending the cycle and walking paths in the area. The Wauchope West site has been reduced from 16 to 10 turbines, now on the Eastern side of the original site. The Wauchope East site near Southdean has been reduced from 34 to 24 turbines by removing the turbines to the North, which mitigate the cumulative effect of the proposed Millmoor Rig wind farm which would be directly to the North on the other side of the A6088.

Site access point remains the same. Loads will enter off the A6088 into the Wauchope East site and the route will be through the forest, crossing the B6357 to enter the Wauchope West site, then exiting at Palmers Cutting just opposite Upper Burnmouth Farm onto the B6357 once more and then South to the Florida entrance to the Newcastleton Forest. Return trips would be in reverse.

The blades and other turbine parts would enter the country at the port of Blyth just North of Newcastle, and would then travel A696 - A68 - A6088 to the site.

On timetables, the project was now in a “design chill” stage with minor details to be worked out and would enter the “design freeze” state at the end of the year prior to submitting a planning application. In the meantime there would be public exhibitions on 13th June at Kielder, 18th June at Newcastleton and 19th June at Southdean. They also intended to have a stall at the agricultural shows in the area, including the Holm Show at Newcastleton.

On Community benefit, it was confirmed EFD would offer the Scottish Government’s suggested £5000 per installed MW. They would index link this to the date of signing an agreement, rather than the date of connection to the grid which would be about ten years away. There would also be an opportunity for community investment to acquire up to 10% of the development.

On repairs to the B6357 due to damage from delivery lorries and abnormal loads, Andrew Bennett confirmed that this would be a rolling operation throughout the construction period and they would not wait to the end of the project to reinstate the road to the condition it was in before they started.

On business loss compensation, Andrew Bennett stated that where a good case could be made they would be sympathetic. GK commented that the small businesses in the region could not afford to chase reluctant wind farm developers through the courts for compensation and it would be preferable to set up a fund administered by an independent body to compensate businesses. Andrew Bennett thought that the best way forward was for businesses who thought they would be impacted by the construction to come forward now and discuss how this impact could be mitigated, rather than wait until the loss had happened.

On the potential objections from the MoD with regard to threat radar, low flying jet training and the Eskdalemuir Noise Budget, Andrew Bennett commented that no project was ever ‘clean’ and without any problems which had to be overcome. He was optimistic that negotiations with the MoD would result in workable solutions to potential problems. Andrew Bennett confirmed that they were in the “early stages” of talks with the MoD and serious discussions would only really start once an application had been submitted.

On connection to the grid, Andrew Bennett said that as far as he was concerned, the plan remained a grid connection at Harker in about 2033. He was not aware of the latest proposals by the Electricity System Operator, which if implemented would leave Harker essentially bypassed.

GK showed a short video of a peat slide that had happened at the Viking wind farm development in the Shetlands just a few days earlier. GK explained that the Energy Consents Unit had asked Ironside Farrar to audit ‘Peat Landslide Hazard Risk Assessments’ that wind farm developers were required to submit and asked Andrew Bennett where they were with their risk assessment? Andrew Bennett replied that they were following this process, but had been hampered by the Storm Arwen wind blow and more recent storms.

## **2. Apologies for absence**

Councillor Watson McAteer sent his apologies. GK said that Councillor McAteer was aware that he had not been able to attend meetings recently and apologised for this, but GK noted that Councillor McAteer had served this community in other ways when needed.

Gary Cooper apologised that he could not attend the meeting.

### **3. Approval of the Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting 14th March**

IH proposed that the minutes were a true record of the meeting. RW seconded the motion. The motion was carried without dissent.

### **4. Matters arising**

There were no matters arising

### **5. Financial Report - Martin Steed**

MS spoke to his year end report, which is appended. GK proposed that the report be accepted and RW seconded the motion. The motion was carried without dissent.

### **6. Reports on Meetings attended**

GK reported on a meeting of affected Community Councils on the Pines Burn wind farm community benefit agreement at Southdean on 20th April. Barbara Elborn (Newcastleton) was trying to create a template document to use for all the prospective wind farms in the area. However, there were a number of problems with the agreement which had to be addressed and it was agreed that there would be another meeting to ratify the agreement

GK reported on a meeting to explore the possibility of creating a dedicated heritage trail and improve access to Nine Stanes Rig stone circle, held at Hermitage Hall on 12th April. The meeting was called by Gary Cooper and his written report (appended below) was read out by GK.

### **7. Place Plan update**

RW reported that she had spoken to Sarah Culverwell of Scottish Borders Council who had confirmed that the 'Place Plan' (in contrast to the Community Action Plan) was to be a formal planning document with a prescribed format. It was possible to have a consultant write or review our Place Plan, and though a grant was available for it the cost was "eyewatering". The document needed to be ready by April 2026 so that it could be incorporated into the next Local Development Plan that was being produced by the Scottish Borders Council.

IH asked if there was not a "template" provided by the Council which could be used? RW responded that the available templates were for urban communities and not well suited to our rural community. RW said that Jess Hawton was now back from leave and was being very helpful.

GK asked if a Place Plan committee meeting should be called and RW replied that July was looking better for her to arrange that - hopefully in time for the July Community Council meeting.

### **8. National Park update**

Jane Bower (JB) reported that the then Minister responsible for creating new National Parks, Lorna Slater, visited this area on the 18th of April on a very rare sunny day. The visit was a great success - but shortly afterwards she lost her position followed very quickly by the First Minister! So, at the moment we do not know what is going to happen with the National Park designation project. The Scottish Government team working on this project have done a lot of the work now and are just going to carry on until they are told to stop. When Nicola Sturgeon resigned as First Minister, JB asked Pete Rawcliffe of NatureScot, who are leading on the project, what would happen if Lorna Slater lost her position as a result of any Cabinet reshuffle? Pete Rawcliffe said (then) that a lot of work had been done and there was a lot of cross-party support for a new National Park, so he thought it would continue despite the loss of the Green Lorna Slater. JB thought that though much of the primary

legislation going through the Scottish Government is contentious and is being held up because of the politics, designating a new National Park only requires secondary legislation and should not be encumbered on that account. However, it would still be true to say that nobody knows what is going on!

## 9. Any other business

Lynda Graham reported that Tilhill has put signs up at Bloody Bush and Hewisbridge saying that deer management was in progress and the public should take care. It was generally agreed that this information was inadequate. **GK said that he would ask Tilhill to come to the next meeting to explain their deer management policy and explore how better communications with the residents who use the forest tracks could be fostered.**

IH reported meeting with a shooter from Derbyshire who had a shooting lease on Buccleuch ground and was paying £1 an acre for the shooting rights. This would amount (IH calculated) to about £8000 per annum. GK noted that it has been agreed with Buccleuch Estates that the shooting syndicate from England would arrange a meeting to explain their shooting policy and safety procedures - but that had never transpired. **GK said he would contact Buccleuch Estates to try and make some progress on this matter.**

RW reported that it had been agreed with Penny Scott and Gloria Hunter that we should arrange for two info boards, one at Hermitage Hall and one at the Resilience Shed on the B6357 opposite Larriston. The boards would portray what generally is to be seen in the area.

RW reported that we needed to get the application in for Pot 'A' and Pot 'B' money for the resilience shed at the top end of Hermitage Water and the bench on Gorrenberry. Councillor Annette Smart suggested that the Small Scheme Budget could be used for the bench. It was remarked that this pot had been used for the last bench at Hermitage Hall Bridge.

Councillor Smart noted that there had been a campaign initiated by John Lamont MP to stop the closure of the Hawick Community Hospital. She reported that in reality, Chris Myers (Director of Scottish Borders Health & Social Care) had been conducting a review of community hospitals in the Borders to see how they could best meet the changing needs of the people of the Borders, who were demographically getting older and so the emphasis should shift from medical care to social care needs. She stated that this did not mean the Hawick Community Hospital was going to close and that any claims to that effect were overblown. She noted too that the Day Care Centre in Hawick had reopened and was serving the community well.

RW reminded everybody that Newcastleton & District Community Trust has sent out a survey on housing in the area and urged everyone to fill it in - either the paper form that had been posted to every household or online.

The meeting ended at 20:30.

**Upper Liddesdale & Hermitage Community Council**  
**Financial Report for fiscal year 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024**

**Bank Balance as at 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023** **£3,216.65**

**Income:**

Scottish Borders Council Grant	£540
Hermitage Hall Hire Reimbursement	£144.97
Coronation Contribution from SBC	£500

**Total Income** **£1,184.97**

**Expenses:**

Coronation Celebration	Chq 30		£594.91
Hire of Hermitage Hall 1	Chq 31		£55.88
Notice Boards	Chq 32		£895.99
2022/23 Insurance Premium	Chq 33		£84
First Aid Training	Chq 34		£75
Hire of Hermitage Hall 2	Chq 35		£65.40
2023/24 Insurance Premium	Chq 36		£179.20
Hire of Hermitage Hall 3	Chq 37		£73.80
Hire of Hermitage Hall (P/Plan)	Chq 38		£29.80

**Total Expenditure** **£2,053.98**

**Bank Balance as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024** **£2,347.64**

**Ringfenced funds:**

- |    |   |         |         |
|----|---|---------|---------|
| 1. | ULHCC resolution 03 December 2018<br>Formation of Community Trust | £250    |         |
|    | Less expended   | £128.16 | £121.84 |
| 2. | ULHCC resolution 18/11/2019 & 15/02/2021<br>Interpretation Boards |         | £750    |
| 3. | ULHCC resolution 08/03/2022<br>Resilience Equipment               |         | £250    |
| 4. | SBC Resilience Support (02/04/2020 & 24/02/20)                    |         | £1,000  |

**Total set aside** **£2,121.84** **£2,121.84**

**Balance of funds available for ongoing ULHCC activities in FY 2024-2025** **£225.80**

I have examined the books and records for the Upper Liddesdale & Hermitage Community Council for the fiscal year 2023-2024 ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024 as prepared by the Community Council Treasurer and, with the explanations given to me, find the correct to the best of my knowledge.


Signed: 

Dated: 03/5/2024

Name: Kathryn Penrith RNM  
 Title: Admiral Nurse Practitioner  
 Address: Wayside Cottage, Newcastleton, Scottish Borders, TD9 0SG

Approved at the Meeting of the Upper Liddesdale & Hermitage Community council held on 9<sup>th</sup> day of May 2024.

  
 Dr Geoffrey Kolbe – Chair

  
 Martin Steed - Treasurer

## **Nine Stanes Rig Heritage Trail Meeting**

By Gary Cooper

The participants of this meeting on 12th April comprised;

The Woodland Consultant for Buccleuch Estates, Stephen Adlard.  
Keith Elliot Principle Archaeologist with Scottish Borders Council,  
Piers Dixon an archaeologist with expert knowledge of the medieval history of Hermitage,  
Katie O'Connell, Project Officer for Public Archaeology with AOC Archaeology Group  
Myself and my wife Mary.

After meeting up at the community hall, the group travelled along the B6399 to consider the possibility of creating a small informal parking area for visitors to access the Ninestane Rig stone circle. The path route from this parking area would utilise the access roads laid out for the new forestry and include both a prehistoric settlement and medieval deer dyke associated with Hermitage Castle. Explanatory information boards would be erected at each of these historic sites.

Unfortunately crossing the river Whitrope and climbing its steep river bank, severely constrains options for access from the B6399. However, there is an existing informal footpath that is used by people to access the stone circle. This is somewhat difficult to traverse and would require the cooperation of Forestry and Land Scotland whose land it crosses and where the stone circle is located. Further discussions are currently being sought with that agency to explore whether this can be made into something more accessible for visitors. These discussions would also include the possibility of extending an existing forest road to access the new forestry and improve the current access in the immediate area of the ancient site.

As this was outside the remit of the woodland consultant, this regrettably could not be discussed at this stage, but Mr Adlard agreed to redraft the forestry access routes to keep options open for laying out a heritage trail which could utilise them, should an agreement be reached with Forestry and Land Scotland.

These revised plans will also significantly roll back the tree planting area around the prehistoric settlement of "Twae Rings" to facilitate more extensive views south and west from the site. This is something Historic Environment Scotland required in accordance with my request as part of an application to have it scheduled listed as an ancient monument.

Revised details of planting arrangement, along with section drawings showing the sight lines over the surrounding trees at this viewpoint, are to be supplied to the Scottish Border archaeologist and a copy will be made available to members of the council and community for discussion.

Should forming a dedicated walk from the road be unable to be agreed with Forestry and Land Scotland, it should still be possible to access all of the historic sites, and the provision of information boards could be something the Community Council may still choose to pursue.

A further report will be made at the next meeting of the council to discuss progress.