

**Newcastleton & District Community Council
Tuesday, September 12, 2023
Minutes of Ordinary Meeting**

Info and documents available online at:

<https://livenewcastleton.com/community-services/newcastleton-and-district-community-council>

Present: Barbara Elborn (sec) Jim Lewis (acting chair), Rob Irwin, Kevin Hawkins, Lisa Rogers, Keith Brough

Apologies from NDCC: Iain Crosbie

Resignations from NDCC: Lyndsay Patterson, Ian Nichol

Apologies from SBC: Councillor Annette Smart

Non-attendance from SBC: Councillors Watson McAteer, Jane Cox

Welcome: Chris Ryde, Scottish Forestry, PC Allan Patterson

1) **Declarations of Interest:** none

2) **Police Report** (PC AP) Local report and monthly regional feedback

July:

- Resident had 'threatening letter' placed through letter box during evening. Checked, letter was not threatening, probably childish prank.
- Issues regarding neighbours noisy TV. Several similar complaints over the months, involved SBHA over the issue; poor house design, ASBO unit to resolve.
- Report of horse being stolen from field; horses were found nearby having escaped.
- Police contacted by Community Alarms (monitor alarms for residents) regarding an elderly resident who had no one to attend. Police attended; person had unknowingly pressed by mistake.
- Two vehicle accident; vehicle skidded on loose chips, collided with oncoming vehicle. No injuries both parties swapped details, no police involvement.
- Complaint by horse rider regarding speeding van on rural road, no details provided, no further progression.
- Report of youth injured on bicycle at Rock UK; SAS attended no Police required.

August:

- Family member phoned Police concerned about relative in village who they could not contact.
- Police attended no issues.
- Two vehicle accident involving a lorry and car on road near Stobs. Minor injury, lorry driver taken to BGH showing signs of possible heart attack.
- Complaint regarding possible bogus workman in village. Vehicle details passed still being checked.

Request for follow up to Other Incidents: further actions on other incidents, including vehicle accidents, speeding (with CCTV footage) and indications of drink-driving incidents will be reviewed in closed meeting. Speeding remains a concern particularly on Riverside and Underburnmouth. Residents report increased level of speeding motorbikes crossing Underburnmouth bridge.

SBC advised that maintenance works had been actioned and the current 30mph signs would be removed. After the meeting this was investigated by members and photos clearly showing this was not the case were provided to SBC to seek clarity.

The CC sought reassurance that the remedial works to the bridge had been completed or would be completed and that until this concluded the signage needed to remain in place.

BE requested details of the regional police traffic monitoring pilot scheme proposed at the Area Partnership communities (community volunteers be trained to track speeding vehicles). This would be addressed at the closed meeting.

- 3) **Minutes** of the last meeting on 8 August 2023 were formally accepted: proposed JL, seconded LR
- 4) **Matters arising**
 - a) Bank of Scotland (BoS) Community Banking update: begins 18-week pilot at Buccleuch House starting Nov 9 providing advice services for personal and business customers. Available Thu 10am to 2pm, probably by appointment. All transactions can be undertaken at the Post Office/Spar.
 - b) Lighting for Riverside steps feedback: no new information from SBC – carried forward.
 - c) Bus timetable/workshops feedback: no new information – carried forward.
 - d) Dog poo bins: no new information from SBC – carried forward.
 - e) Holm Bridge damage: Some work undertaken but now stopped – carried forward.
 - f) Flood group update: summary of proposal for the bund ends and flood barrier to finish flood protection works at the south end of the riverside tabled. Forwarded to NDCT Trustees for approval on the basis that any works will be funded by SBC and with Cllrs support the Small Schemes grant. NDCT continue to seek reassurances that this is necessary and have requested SBC provide reassurance in writing so residents' concerns regarding trapped water can be addressed. CC agreed with SBC's that any protection on the north end was unnecessary given this section had not previously flooded.
 - g) No decisions have been made on the detail of step access over the bund, which was agreed in principle with SBC but not concluded.
- 5) **Planning** (Chris Ryde from Scottish Forestry in attendance for afforestation projects)

Flatt Farm – consultation feedback:

- NDCC's written complaint about behaviours was acknowledged by agent/owner, and apologies provided with a statement that the proposal would be updated to respond to feedback. However, the latest proposal received showed no material changes.
- Residents raised specific concerns, including the need for immediate and ongoing protection of the private water supply, reference by applicant to a red squirrel project when no red squirrels are known in the area, and a statement by a contractor that planting would begin in January 2024.
- It is the applicant's responsibility to respond to community feedback and questions, such as use of recommendations for riparian areas, provision of basic reports (such as hydrology, ecology, wildlife, and ornithology), and community benefits. SF explained that applications must meet three objectives with their proposals: economic, social, and environmental. In the CC's opinion the current proposal did not meet the level required.
- NDCC would provide the formal response to the applicant for review, copies would be provided to FS for their reference.

Powisholm:

- The CC response was previously circulated for comment and residents confirmed that this covered their main areas of concern.
- In addition, CC had commented on viewpoints which it felt were significant to the community and not considered sensitively enough by the applicant. Key issues were seen as:

- **Castleton Cemetery** – this in time would be hemmed in by trees on either side, it was felt that given this was a site of repose and reminisces for many as well as the sombre ceremony of burial, it would be too closed in for mourners and relatives visiting the graveyard. Requests to move planting back and to soften the edge facing the site with varied species was requested.
- **Redheugh** – Elliott Clan and historic lands surrounding the site would not be seen by those attending future gatherings if the requested open area of land was planted in the middle of the site. This was also valuable graded land and could be productive if grazed. Applicant was asked to review this as part of the proposal to protect our local culture.
- **Viewpoints from White Gate/Newcastle Golf course** – this is considered iconic by the community and will soon be enhanced as part of the community investment on Holm Hill, another large block of mono planting effectively extending the existing blocks at Newcastle Forest was very unwelcomed. The CC felt that this would in time impact golfers, walkers and users currently enjoyed using the viewpoint facilities on Holm hill. The applicant was requested to reduce this block planting and to consider including mixed species in any revisions.

Afforestation surrounding the community

- The CC had written to Mairi Gougeon Cabinet Minister for Rural Affairs as well as Jane Morrison-Ross, CEO of South of Scotland Enterprise seeking help and support to manage the significant increase in forestry applications. Limited resources/expertise were available to review applications. They were not being provided with the level of detail/reports associated with sites to consider proposals and come to an informed view; cumulative impact of adjacent and existing planting would soon remove all vistas surrounding the community if measures were not taken to assess cumulative planting programs.
- Existing resources Scottish Forestry provide were ineffective and not transparent; currently the registry of approved planting schemes was published but unless the CC were informed by applicants of proposed schemes there was no way of finding details about them.
- CC wishes to see a more open transparent process not unlike the current procedures for standard residential planning where all documentation is published openly for anyone to consider and comment.
- Additionally, there is no currently facility to consider all plans in scoping or review forest plans cumulatively like we would expect to see for cumulative wind farm impacts, this is also urgently needed.
- The CC/SOSE hosted a summit to discuss the lack of resource and consider ways this might be tackled.
- Scottish Forestry, SOSE, Communities for Diverse Forestry and SBC officers were all in attendance on Sept 12th.
- Outcomes agreed to review short, medium, and long-term solutions, there was recognition by all that the 'ask of CC's' was now enormous and given the need to consider community wealth building and community benefit as part of this process much more resource was required.
- The CC stressed the need for urgency in actions given the volume of local proposals in scoping they were aware of

EDF Liddesdale Windfarm (Newcastleton & Wauchope East/West):

Originally reviewed 5 years ago, when Scottish Government Energy Consents Unit supported the communities' views that three separate proposals need to be submitted providing detail specific to each location given that this was unique in terms of wildlife, hydrology, access, etc.

The CC expressed major concerns about the potential short and long-term impacts on local businesses and leisure assets, extended traffic impacts, environmental impacts as well as local habitats violated.

It was noted that any forestry areas cleared for the windfarm would be required to be replanted anywhere in the region with unknown consequences for the local area. The current timeframe proposes site development in about 2030, with connection to the grid in 2033. The CC scoping response was available on the website for community review.

Pines Burn Windfarm:

Response from SBC on traffic management issues; CC will attend SBC meeting when confirmed. BE will follow up on community benefit offer by coordinating with other community councils to ensure that the precedent for minimum payments is retained.

Windy Edge Windfarm:

notification received that this application has returned. It was first put forward in 2009 and again in 2021.

Douglas Square Crossing update: no new information from SBC – carried forward

6) **Public forum/Community issues**

- a) Playpark upgrade/consultation: This is underway with relevant children's groups in Sept via school, youth club etc.
- b) Community Council recruitment for new members: BE proposed requesting support from SBC to have a campaign to attract new members. LR will draft short item for the Clatter.

7) Correspondence: none other than noted above.

8) Date of next meeting: **Tuesday 10 Oct at 7pm in the Village Hall to include AGM**

9) Area Partnership meeting: Tue 19 September 6pm via teams

10) AOB - none

There being no other business of note the acting chair closed the meeting at 8:55pm.