



NEWCASTLETON
COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Newcastleton & District Community Council
Tuesday, November 14, 2023, at 7pm
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, Keith Brough, Lisa Rogers

Present: SBC Councillor Annette Smart, PC Allan Patterson

Apologies from SBC: Councillors Watson McAteer, Jane Cox

Welcome: Dave Keir and Simon Stainer from Oxygen Conservation, Gordon Brown and Andrew Sheridan from Tree Story; Sarah Cullverwell from SBC and 10 members of the public

1) **Declarations of Interest:** none

2) **Police Report:** Hawick & Hermitage ward monthly report on NDCC website.

AP presented a report on local activity.

a) OCTOBER

- Call from remote security covering the windfarm site regarding male on the site on weekend when site closed. CCTV indicated a runner no crimes reported.
- Concern for call regarding elderly resident of village. Police attended all in order.
- Alarm call to primary school, key holder contacted. No police attendance.
- Several concern for calls regarding village resident. Police attended and no issues, referred to Ambulance Service.
- Call regarding vehicle travelling at excessive speed in village, registration passed. Vehicle reported and checked - registered and insured to Arnold Clark Agency.
- Call regarding 2 vehicle accident, damage only and both parties exchanged details. No further police action.

b) NOVEMBER

- Call from resident regarding being constantly bombarded with unwanted text messages. Police attended advice given and matter resolved with provider.
- Report from resident that he had traced an item stolen some time ago for sale on Ebay, Checks made, sought action from relevant force to attend and check, ongoing.
- Report of an abandoned vehicle on rural road. Checks made and all in order.
- Two thefts of scrap from addresses in the village, vehicle identified through village CCTV. Checks made and the vehicle also involved in thefts from Langholm. Intelligence checks with Northumberland returned that the vehicle is linked to an organised crime group linked to quad thefts etc. across Scottish Borders/Northumberland.

3) **Planning**

- a) **Blackburn & Hartsgarth** planting and windfarm proposal: DK of Oxygen Conservation made a brief presentation and answered questions. He stated circa 40 people attended the onsite session earlier in the day. OC's strategic approach is to restore natural processes. OC Maps included indicative tracks, planting areas and access points, this will be available to view at Buccleuch House and added to web site.

GB of Tree Story said that a range of restored habitats are proposed, from broadleaf woodlands (not commercial planting) to peat restoration on the moor. Community consultation will take place over the next six months, presentation in Newcastleton spring 2024 before formal proposal goes to Scottish Forestry summer 2024.

GB said that they would like to receive formal approval in 2024 and anticipate planting over three years starting from autumn 2025.

DK clarified media reports on the size of the proposed wind farm: two potential sites north at Hartsgarth or south at Blackburn/Tinnis; either site considered not both; 20 turbines generating 120 megawatts (more details available Feb 2024). He stated OC investment is based on returns from carbon credits, in addition to power generation.

DK clarified media reports on predator reintroduction; no current plans to reintroduce lynx to the area stating the site is too small and would have to be linked to much larger areas, such as Kielder to make it viable.

GB said that they are aware of the community's areas of cultural and recreational significance. They intend to minimize fencing; tracks shown on the maps are for access/planting/restoration and will not remain permanently.

GB said that cumulative impact studies will be produced at the request of Scottish Forestry.

NCC stated; scale was enormous; community needed time to absorb and to seek wider feedback prior to formally responding. Immediate concerns were raised about the ringfencing of the site/deer fencing/lack of access seen as having major impact on the vistas and new Coast to Coast route. Planting proximity next to road was also major concern given shadow/ice collecting on road which wasn't gritted during winter. Level of pasture land would also impact land uses which was disappointing given OC's previous statements about maintaining farming on the lands.

Further discussions would be had once the community consultation was completed and plans/refinements were known.

- b) **Leahaugh Afforestation:** NDCC feedback sent (see NDCC website); no response received yet from the developer.
- c) **EDF Liddesdale windfarm** (including Newcastleton Forest): JL reported ECU scoping report had been published (see NDCC website), identified need for developer to split the planning proposal into separate areas to address local issues, as recommended in 2016; developer also directed to respond to all feedback, including implications for community 'dark sky' plans.

Three host communities are developing an MOU to ringfence the CBFs to protect index linking.

Geoffrey Kolbe added that feedback included requests to make environmental impact assessments iterative and global (to include impacts of sourcing construction materials such as rare earths), consider community benefit funds (CBFs), and how the scheduled monument and SSSI at the site will be impacted by access.

- d) **SOSE/Biggar Economics Report on Community Benefit Funds:** NDCC response on website. Some areas that public sector agencies could support to help legacy planning for communities but generally NCC saw no reason to rock the boat currently in respect of process in relation to CBF's.

GK agreed that shared ownership is not recommended and that CBFs are preferred.

- e) **Windy Edge windfarm:** BE reported that the developer has confirmed that the CBF will be set at £5,000 per megawatt. She added that NDCC should require that this be index linked. NDCC continues to pursue copies of the developer's plans. See NDCC website for drawings of visual impacts of the turbines from local viewpoints.
 - f) **Pines Burn windfarm:** BE reported that transportation of the turbines to the site was ongoing. Delays and last-minute cancellations of movements have impacted local traffic/Hawick. An update from the developer confirmed equipment had been vandalised on the transporter. BE also proposed that the host communities send a formal letter to the developer requesting an update on the status of the proposal.
 - g) **Teviothead/Muirhall windfarm:** Developer meeting on Nov 20. She pointed out that NDCC has no funding for legal advice on the current proposed CBF rate of £3500-4000/MW. This funding should come from the developer. BE proposed the host communities model ref MOU's be applied to address this if funding forthcoming.
- 4) **Minutes** of the last meeting on 10 October 2023 were formally accepted: proposed RI, seconded LR
- 5) **Matters arising**
- a) Douglas Square Crossing update: SBC advise works will begin soon.
 - b) Lighting for Riverside steps feedback: no new information – Cllr AS will chase
 - c) Revised bus timetable/workshops feedback: BE pointed out that SBC promised a community consultation but no action has been taken. Sarah Culverwell will pursue this.
 - d) Bins: Cllr AS said that she is awaiting a reply to her three requests for information.
 - e) Holm Bridge damage: Some work in process intermittently but not complete and some areas deteriorating further; Cllr AS will press for this to be finished before winter.
 - f) Flood group update: BE reported that SBC is not recommending the flood gate at the south end of the bund and shared feedback received from SBC Flood Mgt team:

Charts illustrating the flood mapping up to a 1:30 year flood show how the water builds up. SBC's assessment of this remains that the introduction of a flood barrier between the bund and the Manse wall will do little to reduce flood risk any further, much of the flow will come from a flow path coming from the Polysport/playing fields area into Walter Street before being joined by another flow path coming from Union Street and through the public park. However, SBC are aware that some residents have indicated there is a flow path that comes back up the path locally in front of the manse, hence the desire to block off this section of path.

SBC don't believe the introduction of a flood barrier at the path will cause any increase in flood risk given the area will be flooded already, but there will likely be a localised area of flooding on the path up to the height of the barrier once the flood water and river levels drop as the water will remain trapped in this area up to the tree. The road etc. will drain away as normal provided the road gullies remain clear as the water level drops.

The outcome of the analysis is that any barrier has potential to trap waters. No further actions will be taken by the CC.

6) **Public forum/Community issues**

- a) **Bank of Scotland pilot** at BH: BE reported that the first session was well attended; the pilot continues Thursdays from 10 am until 2pm
- b) **Changeworks/Everwarm Warm Homes** program: BE reported that although the NDCC has supported this in the past, the current program is focused on heat pumps and is not generating very much interest in the community.

Concerns include possible equipment damage from ongoing random power cuts; lack of local specialists for maintenance and repair; aggressive 'selling of the program' around the village.

Local housing stock is more in need of insulation and the community would prefer to see a focus on that. Cllr AS said that Home Energy Scotland will hold an open session in Hawick on Nov 30 from 10am to 3pm; visitors can arrange a free home visit for advice.

- c) **Area Partnership** meeting: JL reported; new regional head of Police Scotland advised all parts of the system are being reviewed; 10% increase in community council funding confirmed (+£63), SBC's Placemaking consultation in its early stages now. Also, minutes of previous meetings (with action items) and supporting materials are not sent out to participating councils until just before the next meeting. Sarah Culverwell will press for more timely distribution.
 - d) **Playpark** upgrade consultation: BE reported that there were 107 responses to the consultation. SBC's response will be discussed with user groups, and then focus on work starting early in 2024. See NDCC website for report.
 - e) **Tinnis Bridge** speed limit update: KH reported Oct site visit; SBC traffic department agreed to 18-month trial of 40mph limit across the bridge and through the settlement and Whisgills junction, including improved signage. BE pointed out that forestry works planned at Tinnis and South Blackburn farm accessed via Whisgills over the coming 3-5 years make signage even more important.
 - f) **SBC Footway Parking Consultation**: BE noted that this is online and there are some areas of concern in the village.
 - g) **Burning** in the village: Recent large-scale burning in the village resulted in many complaints, including thick, choking smoke in nearby homes and flying embers from unattended fires. A notice has been posted in the Clatter providing contact details for residents to formally complain to SBC, the CC is not empowered to do anything. Residents are encouraged to report issues if they arise and those who burn are requested to acknowledge the community concerns and adopt more consideration to when materials are burnt.
- 7) **Housekeeping:**
- a) SBC new Community Council Scheme available to comment
 - b) **NDCC community paths funding**: The increase is confirmed at £200/year
- 8) **Consultations**
- a) SBC How We Will Look After Roads and Bridges – closes Dec 17
 - b) Holm Hill update: drop-in sessions showing paths, trails, upgraded viewpoints, community garden at BH on Nov 23 & 24 from 10am to 4pm and Nov 25 from 10am to 1pm;
- 9) **AOB**
- a) A member of the public reported that at a lamp at the end of Moss Rd has been partly installed but not finished. Cllr AS will follow up.
 - b) A member of the public reported that the sign on Ashwell Court needs replacing.
- 10) **Date of next meeting: Tuesday 12 Dec at 7pm in the Village Hall**

There being no other business of note the acting chair closed the meeting at 8:35pm.