



Newcastleton and District Community Council
Minutes of ordinary meeting
May 14th 2024
Newcastleton Village hall 7pm

1) Welcome & Apologies

Present: Rob Irwin, Chris Ruddock, Jim Lewis, Barbara Elborn, Kevin Hawkins, Keith Brough, Cllr. Watson McAteer, Cllr. Annette Smart and 13 members of the public. Apologies: Cllr Jane Cox, Shane Mitchinson

Declarations of Interest BE advised declaration of interest with point 5D on agenda

2) New Members

Adverts had been run to encourage new members for the CC. JL had received correspondence from 3 members of the public seeking to join, paperwork also received from one member of the public but she was not present; this will be carried forward to the June meeting. Ms Connell asked to be considered and was proposed by Keith Brough and seconded by Rob Irwin. Completed paperwork sent to SBC.

3) Police Report :

APRIL

- Multiple concerns for person calls to address in the village. Police attended, medical issue
- Two vehicle VA at D'Main Holm. Driver of the offending vehicle was cautioned and charged with road traffic offences.
- Call regarding persons welfare. Police attended and referred to Ambulance Service.
- Call regarding a vehicle which had been abandoned for several days at the roadside near to Saughtree.
- Checks made with registered keeper who was utilising Bothy whilst walking in the area.
- Call regarding a possible scam targeting elderly resident. Attended and checked all details, no financial loss and advice given. Call regarding possible bogus call from alleged Police officer. Checked, all in order.

MAY

- Call regarding phone scam, person was phoned by person alleging to be friend of a family member who needs funds. Caller transferred funds and then discovered it was a scam. Action Fraud notified, no enquiry possible and phone number used was a 'burner' phone which had been deactivated.
- Call regarding possible ground nesting bird disturbance. Checked and no offences. Other areas have been similarly quiet.

Monthly report for Hawick & Hermitage available to review online

New Chief Inspector appointed, Stuart Fletcher. Invite extended to visit the community to review CCTV.

Recruitment of police specials - note circulated, approved by members to help support promotion of new recruits.

4) Roles of members of the CC

Current members of the CC agreed to take on roles for specific categories which they lead to help spread the increasing workload:

- Barbara Elborn - Wind farms and forestry
- Keith Brough - Policing and crime
- Shane Mitchinson and Chris Ruddock - Farming
- Rob Irwin & Kevin Hawkins - Roads and infrastructure

5) Minutes of last meeting April 24

Accepted and passed Proposed by RI, seconded by BH.

6) Matters arising:

a) Bus timetable update

JL had chased SBC for further updates as this was now slipping with the changes and funding for the taxi bus 3 months into the 12 month trial with no movement. Cllr McAteer advised he had spoken to Gordon Grant indicating time was ticking and a conclusion must be reached ASAP. Realistically there was no further update to the update in the April minutes. ACTION JL to push for a resolution ASAP.

b) Bins

JL had chased SBC over the bin that was never installed on the 2 bridges walk at the road junction with the road to Rock UK and the unclassified road to Priesthill; the one previously allocated was placed by the surgery. Cllr McAteer advised a bin had been located and was to be fitted in the near future.

c) Holm Bridge upgrade status

JL had chased SBC in regard to the North side of the Holm Bridge and areas of disrepair and missing mortar. This has been inspected and work has started to rectify these issues.

d) Tinnis Bridge repairs

BH reported that works had finally been completed, it had been pressure washed and looked fab.

e) Speeding vehicles

This was discussed under the Police to allow PC Patterson to comment. KB advised 7 complaints of speeding vehicles last month in the village. All investigated using CCTV; any with identifying business/liveries allowed direct follow up. Response favourable from

businesses who were supportive in their responses. Private vehicles continue to be forwarded directly to Police Scotland who send a follow up letter. MOP advised of speeding vehicles entering the north end of the village; danger of walking children to the school. Discussion to consider actions; calming measures/site inspections.

ACTION Cllrs McAteer/Smart to investigate alternative approaches to the village to slow vehicles. (Signdean example of signage given as a positive solution to reduce road traffic accidents) RI & KH would progress. The meeting was reminded that residents had previously rejected any suggestion of calming options previously proposed by SBC given the rumbling/increased disturbance from wood lorries.

CC had recently received email from the roads team requesting feedback on placement of pavement signage to direct users to the build out crossing. The CC had previously declined this following feedback from the community. However, this stimulated the need for further calming methods to stop/slow traffic at the build out.

f) Ettleton & Castleton Cemetery paths and roadway status

SBC have proposed using temporary matting to help with underfoot conditions at both cemeteries. Noted this was “temporary” and a long term resolution was needed. Road to Ettleton cemetery was to be inspected by SBC, but again no time frame was given as to when works would start.

Cllr McAteer confirmed he had requested legal guidance on the role/responsibility of the local authority in respect of cemeteries to ensure their obligations were being actioned.

Given the time this subject has appeared on the CC agenda and the continuous level of complaints from users, mourners and visitors to the sites the CC would write formally to David Robertson, CEO/SBC to seek a speedy resolution with a view to agreeing an action plan prior to the onset of the wet autumn/winter period where once again this would become a hazard.

Cllr McAteer would also seek to request a site visit by officers to observe a funeral at the cemeteries so they could see for themselves the challenges undertaker/mourners endured to be present at burials.

g) Unpaid work within Community

Apparent from ongoing discussions with the unpaid work team that larger projects are not viable for them to take action; CC agreed a request for them to clean benches, signs, remove old signs etc. ACTION JL to advise the work in the community liaison.

h) Flood Group

It was agreed that the flood group would become a sub committee of the CC;

Purpose

To advise and represent NDCC on matters relating to flood risk alleviation in Newcastleton and the surrounding area.

Objectives

Exclusively in pursuit of its `Purpose`, this sub-committee will:

- 1) *Liaise with agencies, organisations, groups, and individuals to better understand issues and solutions.*
- 2) *Engage with consultations.*
- 3) *Propose and/or support plans.*
- 4) *Attend NDCC meetings to advise, report, and comment.*
- 5) *Consider other advisory tasks that may, from time to time, be required by NDCC.*

David Braithwaite, member of the flood group, advised the CC they had liaised with SEPA to get an understanding of high water events over the last 30 years, for which they have digital data from the monitoring station. Unsurprisingly, it was found that events above 2.5m (When a flood warning is given) had increased in regularity over this time period.

Cllr. McAteer requested a “handover” meeting with the new group, Duncan Morrison and the CC. BE requested that flood group sub committee members were added to the website to allow members of the public to make easy contact with them.

The group confirmed they were completing the current SEPA consultation and their report would be circulated.

i) Lynx Project

Lynx project contacted CC advising they were holding events across Northumbria/Scottish borders ref proposed reintroduction of species making it clear that although these would be open to the general public this was to be by timed slots, not in an open public forum. The CC had invited them to a public meeting to address community questions but this was declined with offers of a closed session to CC only members. The current discussion is not about the introduction of lynx but their proposed methodologies the project is utilising to “consult”. SBC officers, neighbouring CCs and elected members have been advised and guidance sought as to how the CC is required to act in this regard.

j) Whithaugh Bridge

Complaint received from a member of the public following a fall on the approaches to the bridge through a hole that has appeared by the fencing. ACTION BE to contact Rock UK to understand how they are looking to proceed.

7) Planning:

a) Pines Burn Wind Farm community benefit fund update

- Final blade delivered, all parts now on site
- Phase 2 planning in progress: SBC request for clarity from MOD on seismic budget and their previous concerns to see if this still applies – technology and ‘phased approach’ provided by EK enabling them to measure change in a phase way.
- CBF: Communities meeting reviewed draft CLG paperwork, feedback awaited from BP on this before completing the structure agreement.
- Paperwork summary of offer provided to EK, PK chased on May 3rd no response as yet.

b) Teviothead/Muirhall CBF update

- Negotiations are on hold until T&L CC's feel comfortable about the offer; index linking should start in relation to the signed CLG or no point in signing.
- No details known on site development changes.
- No offer on share ownership yet tabled.
- Meeting at All Energy conference/SECC expect progress following that.

c) EDF – Liddesdale Wind Farm BE met with EDF on May 9th, summary of discussion:

- Surveys 60% complete. Storm Arwen/more recent storms still in the process of being cleared and this has hampered their work.
- Battery storage of 80MW is being considered which will be screened by forestry.
- Turbines: Newcastleton Forest now 25 turbines from 30, Wauchope East now 24 from 34, Wauchope West now 10 from 16 = Total 59 from 80
- Turbine locations sited: shared detail on the maps for proposed walks/paths/trails proposed by FLS in their local current upgrade proposals.
- Heights: Range between 220-250 meters
- Application: one submission; only 1 grid connection/1 landowner/1 proposed transport route. However, within this there will be separate analysis for each site, and they will be reviewed separately and cumulatively against all other proposed sites.
- Site access point remains the same. Loads enter via A6088 into the Wauchope East site through the forest, crossing the B6357 to enter the Wauchope West site, exiting at Palmers Cutting opposite Upper Burnmouth Farm onto the B6357, then South to the Florida entrance to the Newcastleton Forest. Return trips would be in reverse.
- Blades enter the port of Blyth just North of Newcastle travel A696 - A68 - A6088 to the site.
- Submission: Planning Spring 2025, grid still 2033 – unless anything changes on Eskdalemuir – expected decisions on this from MOD by end of 2024.
- Road repairs to the B6357 due to damage from delivery lorries and abnormal loads; EDF confirmed a rolling operation throughout the construction period; not waiting to the end of the project to reinstate the road to the condition it was in before they started.
- Grid connection remained as before; Harker about 2033. EDF unaware of the latest proposals by the Electricity System Operator, if implemented, would leave Harker essentially bypassed.
- Business loss compensation: impact of Bonchester Bridge/Pines Burns issues raised. Where a good case could be made, EDF would be sympathetic. Small businesses could not afford to chase developers via courts for compensation; EDF proposed a potential way forward was for local businesses who thought they could be impacted by construction to come forward to discuss how this impact could be mitigated, rather than wait until the loss had happened.
- CBF – updated on the legal entity; happy to sign off on the MOU's model with the 4 host CC's as agreed previously.
- Est 400 MW £5k pr MW = £2m pa for 30+ yrs

- EDF confirmed Index linking will commence from point of signature to MOU to be signed on behalf of the wider CC benefit region by the 4 host CC's. This is likely to be signed post summer community meetings to ring fence the sums and protect the Index linking
- Rural presentations planned in June; **Newcastleton June 18th 2-7pm, village hall**

A member of the public was very passionate about his opposition to the windfarm and the damage he could see it having on the beauty of the village.

c) Permitted Development in Conservation Areas The changes introduced by the Order are intended to help support:

- deployment of domestic and non-domestic renewables equipment, such as solar panels, wind turbines and heat pumps
- alteration/replacement of windows to improve energy efficiency.
- roll-out of electricity network infrastructure.

Provides additional domestic Permitted Development Rights in conservation areas to help support renewables equipment, such as solar panels, wind turbines and heat pumps as well as alteration/replacement of windows to improve energy efficiency.

- SBC is still assessing the implications of this, including for their own planning policy.
- initial reading: changes will allow the installation of UPVC windows in Conservation Areas under PDRs, subject to certain conditions around opening mechanism, colour, and glazing pattern.
- But, rather than simply being a case of being permitted development that people can get on with, Government has seen fit to make this another category of development where the unwieldy and confusing prior notification process applies, meaning that homeowners still need to go through a notification process to let SBC know what they're doing, which SBC still need to administer.
- Along with the implications of the changes, SBC needs to consider how they are going to deal with that application process.

d) 24/00507/FUL Change of use of land to form community garden, reinstatement and formation of new multi-use paths: Land At Holm Hill Land North West And South Of Golf Course

NDCT had applied on behalf of the community to seek permission to implement phase 1 of the new connected trails/paths in conjunction with the new woodland planting at Culter Syke and to include a site to host community garden.

8) Consultations/correspondence

Newcastleton Forest proposed upgrades to trails and walks. Details of the proposals were available on the CC web pages. This community consultation held by FLS at Buccleuch House had been badly advertised, an online session was planned for May 20th to review again.

9) Public forum/Community issues

- a) **Playpark update BE chased SBC;** contractors briefed on wishlist feedback from consultation; designs being created to share which will clearly identify items affordable in the budget (£200k) and those that would need further funding to provide. The plan would be designed with all aspects incorporated so that ongoing permissions were not necessary once the plans had been approved. This would enable local contractors to undertake works reducing cost. Timing still planned as site clearance late august, install Sept in readiness for the Oct half term period.

10) AOB

- a) **Douglas Square update** SBC feedback: this is on schemes to be considered for possible inclusion in future years planned works programmes. Unfortunately, at present there is no indication when the resurfacing of the square will be included in future programmes, but it will continue to be considered along with all other competing priorities. Square to be reinspected and an instruction will be issued for the reactive repair of any actionable defects noted (this was requested to happen prior to Festival weekend July 5/6/7).
- b) **Area Partnership Venue:** CC requested the AP chair to consider hosting meetings in the new Hawick Business Centre, surprisingly the response was *"I visited the new business centre and asked that very question but unfortunately, they cannot do blended meetings yet! I am trying really hard to get a venue to hold blended meetings. In this day and age it should be an easy ask.*
- c) **Area Partnership Minutes etc:** SBC web pages still show Feb 23 as the last date for minutes being published, access to these has been requested by us and others. Not really understanding why this is such an issue for SBC to resolve. It is difficult enough for CC's to continue to recruit new members but this lack of visible effort by SBC doesn't help us to persuade members to play an Active role in the AP.
- d) **War Memorial** - needed an inspection to consider refurb. Cllr McAteer to follow up.
- e) **Grass cutting** - was their adequate cover to do this over growing period given staff absence/holiday. Assumed this had been planned.
- f) **Cllr Smart surgery** advised - every 2nd Friday of month at Buccleuch House 2-4pm. She would provide copies of postal forms if people wished to subscribe to postal voting for the forthcoming election.
- g) **AGM** JL proposed the NDCC AGM be held prior to the Sep 10th, all agreed.

11) **Date of next meeting** : June 11th (no meeting normally held in July)