

Solwaybank Wind Farm Community Liaison Group (CLG)

Minutes

In attendance: Jill Callander (JC) - Hoddum & Ecclefechan CC
Craig Martin (CM) - Hoddum & Ecclefechan CC
Elaine Irving (EI) - Kirtle & Eaglesfield CC
Jim Rae – (JR) -Kirtle & Eaglesfield CC
Alex Thomson (AT) - Gretna & Rigg CC
Harry Barrett (HB) - Gretna & Rigg CC
James Fleming (JF) - Canonbie & District CC
Janet Lawther (JL) - Middlebie & Waterbeck CC
Mike Potts (MP), Member of the general public
Ken Domoney (KD), Member of the general public
Olive Repton (OP), Member of the general public
Rachel Anderson (RA) - RES
Ruth Elder (RE) - RES
Ben Jeffreys, (BJ) - Bellenden (Chairman)
Karen Freel, (KF) - Bellenden

Venue: Village Hall, Waterbeck

Date: 5th April 2011

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from:

Margaret Sanderson, Langholm Community Council;
Rose Sutherland, Middlebie & Waterbeck Community Council;
Jim Warbeck, Canonbie & District Community Council;
Nick Jennings, Eskdalemuir Community Council;
Isabella Tranter, Springfield & Gretna Green Community Council.

2. Welcome & Introduction

BJ thanked everyone for coming and asked everyone to introduce themselves and reminded everyone that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the proposed Solwaybank Wind Farm.

3. Approval of the Minutes of the Last Meeting

BJ ensured that everyone at the meeting had a copy of the minutes of the previous meeting and gave everyone the opportunity to read them.

JF raised the issue of grid connection seeking to clarify that the grid connection was not made at the same time as the planning application. RA replied the application for grid connection is made separately.

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as accurate.

4. Solwaybank Project Update And

5. Layout and Constraints

Mr Jeffreys suggested that these two agenda items should be taken together as RES had a presentation for the Group. This was agreed.

RE had prepared a presentation on the layout and the constraints of the Solwaybank site. RE spoke about the design process for a wind farm. There are site specific survey requirements including : ecology, hydrology, geology and archaeology.

AT asked about the birds – the wild fowl, geese and their migration patterns. RE said that bird surveys have been carried out for the previous application and following a discussion with SNH, it was agreed that RES would carry out an additional years survey work to update the data. This survey work is currently underway. RE continued by saying that this is the start of the breeding season for birds and there have been both vantage and ground survey points which have been chosen. The survey work will continue until August 2011.

Hydrology studies are undertaken to identify water courses, private water supplies and catchments. Geology, peat depths is one of the main issues here including recording the quality of peat present – e.g. modified bog (drained or fragmented) and blanket bog as well as peat depths. Peat depth survey work is due to begin in the following weeks.

Archaeology studies include identifying features of importance, such as Scheduled Ancient Monuments, the presence of which are taken into account when siting turbines and infrastructure.

AT asked about SNH and the snakes- Adders. RE said that SNH have not requested any survey work for these species. RE said that she would check with the Ecologist regarding this.

RE moved on to talk about site specific constraints information such as the buffer zones around the houses, telecoms - microwave links and masts, aviation issues such as radar, low flying, Eskdalemuir and NATS. RE was asked about Eskdalemuir and how far away it was from the site. RE replied that it was in the approximately 20-30km away from the site. RES is actively working with the MOD and other organisations on a solution.

There is also existing infrastructure which requires consideration, these include roads, gas pipelines and electricity lines. Landscape is also a consideration and as such visual impacts, including cumulative impacts with other wind farms, are assessed. MP asked about cumulative effect and turbines in Cumbria. RE said Cumbria Council had been consulted.

AT asked about access to the project site. RE said that abnormal loads (turbine blades and towers, transformers etc) would be via Chapelknowe with construction traffic entering the north of the site via the Lockerbie–Langholm road. HB asked why the turbines need to be so tall. RE explained that the nature of the wind means that it is winder higher up. HB said that he did not believe wind speeds were significantly different higher up and was concerned that wind turbines might be too high generally.

OP asked about the amount of forestry which would require to be felled. RE stated that the area with turbines would be clear felled initially and the majority would be replanted. There would also be areas of forestry to be felled around the turbines to allow a 500m clear buffer. RE could not state the exact number of hectares but this would be covered in the ES. .

RE showed the group a map with all the site constraints that had been talked through at the meeting.

OP asked about the height of the turbines. RE said that they may be in the order of an 80m hub with at 126.5m tip and a 90m diameter. OP asked how much concrete would be required. RE said she did not have the number to hand but would find out and get back to OP.

RE showed the 2009 project layout which showed 21 turbines and also the 2011 layout which has 15 turbines.

RE said that the redesign of the project had been primarily driven by landscape and MOD low flying considerations. The result of this has been a reduced east-west spread of turbines. In response to a question from KD RE said that the turbine closest to KD's property and on the north side of the pipeline is Turbine 1, approx 1.4km away.

RE stated that some of the forest area has already been felled but is not shown on the OS map. RE continued by saying that there is a plan to replant OP stated she assumed RES would not be replanting the trees. RE replied that RES would be re-planting trees in accordance with forestry commission forestry design guidance in order to meet the recent policy on control of woodland removal. OP said that at Dalswinton there is no replanting. RA said that it is not possible for RES to comment on other developers or their developments.

EI asked for paper copies of the layout to be circulated to the Community Councils in order that they could show them to their Councils. JR reinforced this request.

RE said that nothing had changed in the project timetable and that seasonal studies are ongoing.

GC asked about the grid connection and the options. GC asked if the Community Councils could see the options. RA said that grid had been covered at the previous meeting and the next update would be at the public exhibitions. GC said that this would be key.

AT asked about the roads and the potholes. RA said that RES had literally just completed dry run of the access route, the DGC roads department were in attendance. The overall length of the vehicle was 49m to imitate a 45m long wind turbine blade. The aim of carrying out this study with an empty lorry is to verify our computer modelling of the route. AT said that the local people do not want the roads to be left in a poorer condition than they currently are. RA said that there will be more information on the access routes at the exhibition. RE said that there would be a review of the road condition along the route with the Council prior to construction commencing and financial agreements put in place to ensure roads are reinstated to their previous condition. BJ asked if more detail will be available. RA again said that this would be available at the public exhibition.

BJ said that if there are no further questions on the timetable.
JF asked for the project timetable to be attached to the minutes.

6. Future Meeting Dates

RA stated that the public exhibitions would be:

Thursday 30th June 2011 3pm – 8pm – Waterbeck Village Hall

Friday 1st July 2011 10am – 1pm Eaglesfield Village Hall
Saturday 2nd July 2011 11am – 4pm Lockerbie Town Hall

RA said that there would not be an exhibition in Langholm this time. RA confirmed her attendance on all three days. JR said that another exhibition he had attended was a shambles and requested that people who know about the project are used to staff the exhibition. OP said that she thought that there should be an exhibition in Langholm. RA explained that RES had been in touch with Dumfries & Galloway Council to agree the venues. There had not been a high attendance at the previous exhibition RES held in Langholm. OP said that the project would be visible from Langholm. BJ said that contact would be made with Margaret Sanderson regarding this. AT asked would the exhibition be advertised in the press. RA confirmed that they would be and that there is a likely to be a newsletter in May/June 2011.

It was agreed that the date of the next meeting would be Tuesday 12th July 2011. The venue would be Eaglesfield Village Hall. JR would confirm the booking.

7. Any Other Business

JC asked for the website to be updated please.

AT asked if any formal complaints had been received. RA said that there had been none to date

FOLLOW-UP ACTION POINTS:

Paper copies of the layout to be circulated to the Community Councils (RES)
Project timetable to be attached to the minutes (RES)
The minutes of the meeting to be added to the website as soon as possible (RES)