



## **Ardersier Community Liaison Group**

### **Draft Meeting Minutes**

**Date of Meeting:** Wednesday 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021

**Location:** Meeting held via video call

**Present:**

Highland Council

- Cllr Trish Robertson (TR)
- Cllr Glynis Sinclair (GSi)

Ardersier and Petty Community Council

- Kevin Reid - Chair (KR)
- Christine Wood (CW)

Scottish Water (SW)

- Graeme Campbell – Project Manager, ESD (GC)
- Gavin Steel, Corporate Affairs Manager (GSt)

**Apologies:** Paul Sexton, Scottish Water

## Community Liaison Group Objective

*'The aim of the community liaison group is to minimise any negative impact and maximise the positive impact on the local community.'*

*The group will provide feedback and guidance on Scottish Water's programme of engagement and communication with the local community, elected representatives and other stakeholders throughout the construction element of the approved projects. This will facilitate feedback and enable informed debate that will help Scottish Water identify areas of concern, explore solutions, aid communication and progress the projects.'*

## Minutes

### 1. Welcome & introductions

KR welcomed members to the meeting.

### 2. Review of previous minutes and actions

KR asked if members were content with the minutes of the meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> January. Members present confirmed they were content with the record of the meeting.

Actions were reviewed as follows:

*Action 1: Scottish Water to share findings of its investigation of the planning non-compliance with CLG once they are available.*

GSt confirmed that he understood this was now in progress with Scottish Water's internal audit team, but not yet complete. The action would therefore be carried forward.

**Action 1: Scottish Water to share findings of its investigation of the planning non-compliance with CLG once they are available.**

*Action 2: Scottish Water to share General Arrangement drawing reflecting potential future phases to provide additional treatment capacity when it is required.*

KR noted that this had now been circulated. GSt confirmed that the drawing requested was attached to the email circulated with the agenda and draft minutes of the meeting.

*Action 3: CLG to consider at future meeting whether production of a further newsletter would be helpful following the outcome of the planning process.*

KR noted this remained to be considered following the conclusion of the planning process.

**Action 2: CLG to consider at future meeting whether production of a further newsletter would be helpful following the outcome of the planning process.**

*Action 4: Scottish Water to arrange for information on the design changes in response to the planning issue to be displayed at the site and in the village as quickly as possible, with opportunity for residents to feed back.*

GSt noted that this had been done, with information displayed at 5 suitable locations at the WWTW site and within the village, as well as online, from Friday 5 February, with feedback requested by 5pm on Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> February. He thanked members who had shared the information on local social media pages too. GSt had circulated a summary of the feedback received via email to the CLG on 24<sup>th</sup> February.

GSi asked if the information could be shared on Scottish Water's twitter account. GSt explained that the information from February was time specific, so wasn't relevant at this stage, but indicated that he would be happy to share information on twitter when there was next a suitable opportunity.

GSi noted that CW had intended to download and share comments that people had made on social media about the information previously produced. CW confirmed this.

### **3. Scottish Water progress update on planning issue**

GSt explained that, as reflected in his recent email to the CLG, Scottish Water had now submitted the details of the proposed design revisions to The Highland Council for further consideration by the planning committee. His understanding was that the planning department intended to readvertise the application in the local press, but this was to be confirmed. People would be able to submit further representations to the Council if they wished.



GSt noted that visualisations had now been received from the specialist consultant who had been producing these on behalf of Scottish Water. These were in the course of being submitted to The Highland Council for consideration alongside the revised application, reflecting one of the three things that the committee had asked for, in addition to the two which had been the main focus of discussion at recent CLG meetings.

GSt noted that he understood there were quite detailed regulations about the production of photomontages, and guidelines on how they should be viewed. Even so, for the purposes of sharing them with the CLG in the best practical way, he proposed to share them on screen via Microsoft Teams and could zoom into images where that would enable members to see details more clearly.

GSt sought confirmation of whether a new planning application was being submitted, or whether Scottish Water was proceeding with the retrospective application previously submitted.

GSt explained that Scottish Water was seeking to follow the planners' guidance on the correct process to follow. The retrospective application, as he understood it, was originally submitted in order to comply with the requirements of the Enforcement Notice which had been issued by the council last year. The revisions that had been made in response to the feedback from the CLG, and other work in response to the planning committee's request for further information, were therefore being submitted as revisions / further information relating to the 'live' retrospective application, which had been deferred when the committee last considered it.

GSt asked if it could be confirmed that the proposed folding handrails on the revised Picket Fence Thickener tank were compliant with health and safety requirements for working at that height.

GC confirmed that the arrangements had been reviewed by ESD and Scottish Water health and safety advisers and were compliant with appropriate standards. He noted that the handrail when folded down will be below the height indicated in the 2016 planning consent for the site, of 9.7 metres 'above ordnance datum' which is 5 metres above ground level at the site.

GSt began to share the visualisations. He explained that each visualisation consisted of a baseline image at the top, showing a wide landscape photograph of the site as it was at a date in February when the pictures were taken, including the Picket Fence Thickener tank as currently constructed. There was then a lower photograph in each case, which was a photomontage showing the revised design of the Picket Fence Thickener tank and adding the Inlet Works (where either structure would be visible). For the vantage points where the PFT was visible, there were also versions with the handrail



in an upright position to give an indication of this – although this would only be the case to allow operational access when required.

### **Vantage Point 1 (coastal path, approaching site from Fort George)**

GSt explained that only the PFT was visible from this vantage point. He noted that the visualisations showed no benefit from the planting as part of the landscaping scheme, beyond the benefit that was there currently. The trees which had been planted over the winter would provide additional benefit as they came into leaf, became established and grew. He indicated the rough height of the trees which could be seen although they were newly planted and not in leaf, so not yet providing significant benefit.

GSt highlighted the PFT as it is today and the view of it with the handrail folded down; before moving on to the similar photomontage which showed the handrail in the upright position.

GSi indicated that she remained unhappy with what was shown.

TR asked if it was correct that the work had been done although the planning permission had not been granted yet.

KR clarified that the images were just visualisations, so he understood the work had not been done and the images were just an 'artist's impression' of what the site would look like with the revisions now proposed. GSt confirmed that this was the case, noting that the scale of the structures shown should be accurate. The visualisations attempted to show the proposed finish and a degree of detail, within the limits of what could be achieved via a photomontage of this kind.

GSt stressed that no construction work had been carried out on any of the structures covered by the planning application since the planning compliance issue was brought to Scottish Water's attention. Scottish Water was awaiting the conclusion of the planning process before taking further action in relation to these structures.

GSi asked if the visualisations should not be shared with the whole community.

GSt confirmed that they would be published and available to the community, primarily via the council's planning portal.

GSi said that she thought it had been agreed that the community should be able to see the visualisations before Scottish Water went forward with the retrospective planning application. She noted that she didn't feel comfortable agreeing to anything without confirmation from the community that the revised proposals were acceptable. She felt that the community was concerned that



revisions would make no difference and the visualisation didn't show sufficient difference. She wanted the community to have further opportunity to comment.

TR noted that the community would have opportunity to make comments to the council in the normal way. She felt that if the height of the PFT had been reduced to the level previously agreed, this reflected what Scottish Water had been asked to do.

GSt noted that the CLG's request for Scottish Water to update and seek feedback from the wider community had been acted upon in February, following the January meeting. The visualisations took time to produce and needed to reflect the final design proposals, which was why they had only just been supplied to Scottish Water by its consultant. He didn't think there should be any issue with making them available locally, if a practical way could be found to display them in the current circumstances. He reflected that the revised proposals had been submitted to the council, as had been the intention explained in previous emails to the CLG and as had more recently been confirmed via email.

TR noted a cable tray that appeared alongside the handrail in the upright position, but not shown in the visualisation with the handrail folded down.

GSt thought this was attached to the folding handrail and would fold down with it. GC indicated that the cable tray shown was linked with the mechanism for the folding handrail and would be below the consented height when folded down.

GSt indicated that if Scottish Water could arrange to have the visualisations printed out, she would be willing to deliver them to every door in Ardersier as she had recently been out leafleting for The Hub. She would then feel happier that every resident had received something to inform them of what was being done. She noted some people did not have access to the internet and the planning portal.

GSt indicated that there may be limits to what was practical given the number of visualisations and their size, but indicated that he would take the suggestion away and come up with a proposal to achieve the desired objective as far as possible. (See Actions 3 and 4 below)

### **Vantage Point 2 (coastal path, approaching site from the village)**

GSt noted that there were six vantage points in total, which reflected guidance from the council and well as feedback from CLG members about the most important locations at previous meetings.



Again, only the Picket Fence Thickener could be seen from this location, through a gap in the existing vegetation on Ardersier Common and visualisations showed the proposed new design both with the handrail down and with the handrail up.

### **Vantage Point 3 (from the road, approaching site from Fort George)**

GSt noted that all of the structures on the site were more visible from this side. There were again photomontages with the PFT handrail both down and up. In these images, the Inlet Works could also be seen closest to the public road in the photomontages.

KR asked if there was screening to be added on this side of the site as well.

GSt indicated that there was planting along the length of the bund on this side of the site which would provide additional screening over time. GC added that the bund on this side of the site was lower than the seaward side of the site, but it would be fully planted out. There was currently a small gap in the planting which awaited installation of the cable for the site's power supply and this would be planted out once this had been installed.

GSi asked what species of tree had been planted.

GC indicated that he didn't have the information on hand, but the planting and details of species had been set out in detail as part of the site's landscaping plan, which was part of the planning consent. He understood hardy species from the area had been specified and the coastal environment had also been taken into consideration.

GSi asked if the trees would be quite high growing.

GC indicated that rootball trees had been planted that were expected to grow to 4-5 metres in height with intermediate lower planting (which would grow to between 1 and 3 metres in height) to provide shelter. The plants had been supplied by a nursery in the Black Isle.

### **Vantage Point 4 (from the road, approaching site from the village)**

GSt noted that in this view, only the upper part of the Inlet Works was visible above the existing gorse along the roadside. There was therefore only one version of this photomontage.

### **Vantage Point 5 (distant view from next to Fort George car park)**

GSt noted the PFT and Inlet Works were not visible at all from this vantage point. Their position had therefore been indicated in red against a wire-line



drawing of the landscape to allow their position, behind existing trees, to be understood.

GSi asked what would happen with the hoarding which was currently prominent.

GSt explained that the hoarding was temporary and would be removed as soon as the construction phase was complete. Subject to the outcome of the planning process this was expected to be later this year. GC noted that it was felt to be desirable to keep the hoarding in place to provide some protection to the planting on the bund while it becomes established. He expected it to be removed by the summer. GC noted that the hoarding was checked regularly. It had been painted originally to reduce its visibility, but it wasn't proposed to repaint it as it would not need to be in place for much longer.

### **Vantage Point 6 (distant view from the village, near the dolphins / Stuart Street)**

GSt noted that although it was quite hard to make out, by zooming in closely, the Picket Fence Thickener tank could be seen and the improvement achieved by the revised design.

KR noted that this was the view that he felt was significant at times when the sun was catching the handrails, although this was not apparent in the photographs / photomontages.

GSt indicated that this was an issue where he expected the painting of the folding handrails and the base of the gantry in the same dark green finish as the PFT tank should make a significant difference, where it was recognised that the galvanised steel of the current gantry / handrails could currently catch the sun. The reduction in height and the fact the handrails would be down most of the time should also be beneficial.

KR asked if the visualisations were all submitted to the Council with the revised drawings and available on eplanning.

GS indicated that he didn't think the visualisations were available yet, but that he understood they were in the process of being submitted and should be added to the eplanning portal once received and processed by the Council.

GSt sought members' views on how the visualisations could best be shared with the wider community.

TR suggested using the same locations as the previous set of posters. GSi was concerned that many people hadn't looked at them and wanted to make sure that people were not in a position to say they hadn't been informed of what was happening and what the CLG was doing. She was also concerned



about properties without internet access. She felt a maildrop was important. TR noted that a lot of material was coming through people's doors currently about the election. GSi felt this weighed in favour of going ahead as soon as possible.

KR was concerned about how clearly people would be able to see and understand what was shown in the photomontages. He wondered if the pictures could be zoomed in to show people the relevant features.

GSt explained that he thought the visualisations would have to be printed as shown on the full page, which included a small map indicating the location of the vantage point. He understood there were quite detailed guidelines which Scottish Water, and Landscape and Visual consultants, had to work within to ensure a reasonable representation of what people would actually experience (as far as possible). He did not think it would be acceptable for Scottish Water to publish the images in a selective way which would no longer meet the industry standards. He felt the only option would be to print the most relevant visualisations in their entirety, with some accompanying text to explain what was shown on a separate page.

GSt thought that A3-size posters would give a reasonable view, but that it would be impractical given the quantity of paper to provide A3 copies of the visualisations for delivery to every door. GC suggested that A1 size drawings might be better if a suitable location could be found to display these, especially if somewhere like the PACE Café could be used for people to view them.

CW noted that the PACE Café was not yet open and would not be until 26<sup>th</sup> April. CW noted that there were 3 noticeboards around the village. TR did not think the noticeboards were big enough for A3 or A1 copies to be displayed. Various other potential locations were discussed, including shop windows.

KR suggested delivering a leaflet to people's doors, which could direct them towards locations where a larger number of bigger copies of the visualisations could be displayed.

GSi offered to approach the shops. TR thought A1 images would be too large for the main shop windows, considering the locations of their doors. GSi suggested A1 images might fit in the big windows of the shop on the High Street. KR noted that he knew the new owner and would approach them.

[CW knew the owner of the shop too, but part of her comments was not audible due to connectivity problems and she lost connection with the meeting.]



**Action 3:** KR / CW to approach the new owner of the shop on the High Street to see if they would be willing to display visualisations in their window.

GSt asked if members had a view on the best 2 or 3 vantage points to be displayed. Members suggested that Vantage Points 1 and 4 would be most appropriate. If more could be fitted in, the other vantage points nearer to the site (VPs 2 and 3) could be added.

**Action 4:** Scottish Water to arrange display of visualisations and communication with residents, depending on whether agreement was given for A1 prints to be displayed; and consider fall-back options.

#### 4. ESD project progress update

GC explained that there was relatively little to report.

Electrical work within the site had been continuing and was expected to be complete within the next 2 weeks or so. Electrically, the site was basically complete apart from the structures that were awaiting the outcome of the planning process.

A generator had been used to carry out dry-testing, testing pumps and other equipment without flows of water / waste water through the works.

After mid-April, there would be relatively little work that could progress until the outcome of the planning process was known.

[GSt noted that CW appeared to be attempting to rejoin the meeting, but he did not seem to be able to admit her.]

#### 5. Feedback and discussion

GSt noted there had been an approach by a member of the public, seeking permission to install a memorial bench, which would add to the sequence of benches along the coastal path. He was aware the family had also been in touch with the Community Council and with the Access Officer.

The proposed bench would be just into the section of land which Scottish Water owned, so Scottish Water's agreement had been requested. This had been given, on the understanding that the Community Council was supportive. Scottish Water had provided details of the existing benches as the family wanted to match them, with a plaque reflecting the dedication to their late mother who had enjoyed walking in the area. He understood the family



had found a local contractor who was able to install the bench for them. KR confirmed this and hoped it would be possible for the bench to be installed in time for the summer.

GC noted that there had been a recent theft of some traffic cones on the C1005, which had been reported to the police. These were in the process of being replaced.

## **6. Future meetings**

GSt noted the next meeting would be Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> May at 5:30pm. He thought it was most likely this would still need to be a virtual meeting, but this could be reviewed nearer the time if there was any change. KR was hopeful that by July there might be other options available again.

Remaining scheduled meetings for 2021 were:

- Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> May, 5:30pm
- Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> July, 5:30pm
- Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> September, 5:30pm
- Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> November, 5:30pm