

Ardersier Community Liaison Group

Meeting Minutes

Date of Meeting: Wednesday 29th September 2021

Location: Meeting held via video call

Present:

- Kevin Reid - Chair (KR)

Ardersier and Petty Community Council

- Janet Scorgie (JS)
- Christine Wood (CW)

The Highland Council

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

Scottish Water (SW) and ESD

- Paul Sexton, General Manager – Alliance Management (PS)
- Graeme Campbell, Project Manager, ESD (GC)
- Gavin Steel, Corporate Affairs Manager (GSt)

Apologies: n/a



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.

GSi explained that she had another important meeting which she had to prioritise, but had wanted to attend briefly to read out a letter from Fergus Ewing, which had been sent on behalf of Cllr Sinclair and the local community to Douglas Millican. Fergus Ewing had asked for the letter to be read out to the CLG to inform members as follows:

Dear Douglas

I am writing in relation to the developments at the Ardersier WWTW. Recent adverse media attention has once again drawn Scottish Water at Ardersier into public and political prominence. The long awaited review by the company achieved little to allay concerns within the community.

Indeed, I understand that SW have openly conceded there is a significant and ongoing controversy as stated in the review "...there has been significant community resistance to this planning application and SW are working with the local community to develop alternative solutions..."

I welcome the company's forthright acknowledgement as a step in the right direction. Nevertheless we must consider how the public interest is best served to bring about a credible and satisfactory solution for all parties concerned. To accomplish this my constituents propose that a local inquiry would serve to reset the debate and restore credibility between Scottish Water, the local community, councillors and Highland MSP's.



To briefly summarise please find the following reasons for this to be considered:

Terms of reference for an inquiry:

- To concentrate on the most recent material developments at the WWTW
- To identify and agree key events in planning procedures (2018-20)
- To consider the role of Highland Council planning services
- To consider The Highland Council Enforcement Charter
- To consider the role of the community liaison group (CLG)
- To examine Scottish Water's corporate communication procedures in the context of revised planning applications
- A local inquiry located in Inverness and relatively "low key"

I further propose an inquiry be chaired by:

- A chartered planner (local authority, out with The Highland Council)
- QC or
- Retired judge - Scottish planning law

My constituents firmly believe the rationality for a local inquiry is cogent, persuasive and well-grounded. Scottish Water would be assured of an impartial and transparent process, overseen by a respected and honourable chairperson. The community would have its opportunity to be heard and listened to in measured tones. All parties would have the opportunity to state their position and express their opinions and concerns, for careful and detailed consideration by the chairperson.

As the local MSP I hope Scottish Water would support a local inquiry.

I look forward to hearing your response in due course.

Yours sincerely,
Fergus Ewing MSP
Inverness and Nairn

GSi believed the request had been sent to Douglas Millican yesterday (Tuesday 28th September) and she had been asked to relay it to the CLG. She noted there was a request for a local inquiry into the whole situation and this was as much as she was able to say in the short time available.

GSi noted local councillors, local members and the Chair of the Community Council were present and said she would leave the discussion to others. She gave her apologies and left the meeting.



2. Review of previous minutes and actions

KR confirmed members present were content with the minutes of the previous meeting.

[At a later stage in the meeting, GSt noted that he had been in touch with Shane Spence (SS) via email about the figure for the licensed capacity of the upgraded WWTW, which had been referred to from memory by SS at the previous meeting. SS had agreed it would be helpful to amend the minutes with the correct figure to avoid scope for confusion. Members were content for this amendment to be made.]

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved by members present.

Actions were reviewed as follows:

Action 1: Scottish Water / ESD to confirm whether placement of boulders had yet been carried out to discourage vehicles from encroaching on the coastal path at the end of the access track by the WWTW; and otherwise to arrange for this to be done when suitable plant was next available on site.

KR noted that he believed this had now been done and GSt confirmed. KR explained that he understood this had become a contentious subject and some people were not happy with the boulders being there.

JS explained that this was one of the reasons for her attending the meeting as concerns about the boulders had been raised via community facebook pages. She felt the boulders were unnecessary if the gate was locked, which had been the case in recent times. JS relayed that people were asking if the boulders could be removed.

KR noted that people had asked for the boulders to be placed originally as cars were driving on to the coastal path.

JS outlined a recent incident when a transit van had got stuck, but it had taken access via a different route rather than via the Scottish Water track. KR thought there had been a car stuck at the Scottish Water section of the path as well a few months earlier, which had to be towed out after driving on to the stones.

JS reiterated that people were unhappy and she didn't see why boulders were needed if the gate was kept locked. She thought it had



been a bigger issue in the past when the gate had been left open at times.

GSt sought clarification about the reasons for people's unhappiness with the boulders being there. JS said there were lots of different reasons. Her main concern was access to the shore for coastguard volunteers in the event of an incident or a marine mammal stranding. She thought the kite surfers were unhappy as they felt the placement of boulders was targeted at them. She wasn't sure if the appearance of the stones was an issue, but stressed that people didn't think the boulders were necessary if the gate is locked.

GSt noted that the boulders had only been placed there because the CLG had asked Scottish Water to do that, following the improvement work which had been carried out on the track to improve access for the kite surfers. He understood the boulders weren't intended to discourage the kite surfers, but they were intended to discourage any vehicles from driving on to the coastal path. He understood from GC that vehicles could still be driven around the boulders, so he thought access in an emergency was likely still to be possible.

GC noted that there had been kite surfers present when the boulders were placed. This had been done in such a way as to allow the people present to get out, which they had done, but he understood they had not been happy. He believed the padlock on the gate had 12 padlocks. Scottish Water and the site team only had a key for 1 of them. Not all users of the access were known.

JS reiterated that the community was asking for the boulders to be removed as they didn't understand why they had been put there.

TR noted that most of the community didn't have access to the track, given the padlock arrangement. There was some concern about cars parking on the path. TR was unsure if all members would be aware, but noted that the Community Council had an agreement to maintain the path for 10 years after it was improved, so this was something that she felt should be considered if parking was to be allowed. She added that the Access Officer was concerned that parking on the path would cause damage over time.

JS felt there had been concerns last year when the gate had been open, but this was not a current issue.

TR asked that the central boulder be moved to make space for vehicles to get through, but noted that she understood that the community would have to fund any repair work that might be needed to the coastal path if vehicles caused the surface to deteriorate.



GSt agreed that this could be done, but noted that he understood there wasn't currently a suitable machine on site to do this. GC indicated that there would be relatively soon when the altered Picket Fence Thickeners was assembled. He noted that this was expected to be around early November, although he would ask for the boulder to be moved sooner if there was an opportunity.

TR welcomed this and hoped there wouldn't be damage to the path that the community would have to find money to remedy.

JS noted that she would feed back to the community about the funding position for any repairs on the coastal path as she didn't think this was widely known and she would then advise Scottish Water of the Community Council's position. TR suggested the community consider this to confirm their view in the time before a machine was available to move one of the boulders.

Action 1: *If confirmed by the Community Council, ESD to arrange for the central boulder to be moved out of the way to restore easier vehicle access across the coastal path to the beach at the next opportunity.*

Action 2: Scottish Water / ESD to confirm dates for the site's permanent power supply to be installed when received from the contractor.

KR noted that he believed this had been delayed and there was not yet a confirmed date. GSt confirmed that the arrangements were still being worked through with the contractor who would carry out this work. He understood progress was being made, but recognised the dates for the work had been awaited for some time. He reiterated that the CLG would be informed when dates were confirmed.

Action 2: *Scottish Water / ESD to confirm dates for the site's permanent power supply to be installed when received from the contractor.*

Action 3: Scottish Water to provide an update on the current connected population equivalent compared with the licensed / design capacity of the current project.

GSt noted that this had been done via email when the draft minutes of the previous meeting were circulated. The expected capacity following the completion of the current project would be for a population



equivalent (PE) of 8,831. This compared with a currently connected population equivalent of around 2,000 following the connection of the new airport hotel. As had been reflected at the previous meeting, Scottish Water could not know how quickly development within the catchment served by the WWTW would take place, but members could see that in the short term there was significant capacity arising from the current work.

Action 4: Scottish Water to confirm permission and arrangements for proposed installation of life-saving / buoyancy aid on the wall surrounding its kiosk at Ship Inn WWPS.

KR noted that this had been confirmed by email although he had not yet had an opportunity to put the buoyancy aid in place. He hoped to be able to install it soon. GSt reiterated that Scottish Water's local team were happy for this to be done and asked if KR could email him once it had been installed so he could let them know.

3. ESD project progress update

GC noted that currently ESD was finalising electrical work on site, remedying minor defects and doing preparatory work in advance of the arrival of the altered parts for the redesigned Picket Fence Thickener.

Wet commissioning was being completed, which involved checking the throughput of all of the pumps and mechanical equipment on site, in advance of the permanent power supply being connected. He hoped the permanent power supply would be installed in November at the latest.

KR asked if the redesigned Picket Fence Thickener tank was expected to be back in November.

GC confirmed that he expected this to happen around early November. He noted that the supplier that was working on this was due on site from early October to carry out some outstanding internal grouting on the sludge holding tank. They were going to be working on this in advance of the altered panels for the Picket Fence Thickener arriving on site.

GSt noted that Shane Spence had raised concern about some of the trees on the bunds at the previous meeting and Scottish Water had explained that it was monitoring them and would arrange for trees to be replaced or for other remedial measures, where required, to ensure planting became well established. He explained the supplier of the trees had reviewed this recently and he understood that some changes to the landscaping plan were likely to be proposed in order to ensure trees were planted that would thrive in the well-drained ground conditions. There would be a process to work through in



relation to this and the CLG would be kept updated, but it was hoped that any replacement trees would be able to be planted within the coming winter, which was the best time of year for this to happen.

4. Feedback and discussion

- **Bund along the coastal path**

KR noted that it had been raised at the last Community Council meeting that some parts of the bund along the coastal path in the village were sinking at the top. He asked if Scottish Water would still be able to have a look at this following the work that had taken place in this area in 2017/18.

PS indicated that Scottish Water would have a look at this. He asked if any specific locations had been identified.

CW sought to clarify but unfortunately there was a sound problem which meant she couldn't be heard.

GSt noted that it would be helpful to have any details to ensure any areas of particular concern were identified successfully.

GC suggested that it might be helpful to meet someone on the coastal path to look at the bund with them.

JS and KR thought that the issue had originally been raised with CW. GSt suggested that he would follow up with CW via telephone to agree how to take this forward.

Action 3: *Scottish Water to follow up with CW and inspect condition of bund along the coastal path, where Scottish Water Horizons had installed the new rising main to the WWTW.*

- **Leaving a legacy**

KR asked if there was anything further remaining to be done.

GSt indicated that he thought the placement of the boulders following improvement to the access track by the WWTW was the final item of the list of legacy commitments originally identified. This had been discussed earlier in the meeting and a way forward had been identified.

JS sought clarification about the funding agreement relating to the coastal path and asked if this was an agreement with Scottish Water. TR indicated that it was not an agreement with Scottish Water, but she thought the arrangement would be reflected in Community Council minutes. KR thought that Shane Spence had been heavily involved and was likely to be able to explain the agreement. TR noted that the Access Officer at



Highland Council would also be able to provide further information if it was not otherwise to hand.

There were no other questions or issues from members.

5. Future meetings

KR asked if there was a date for a future meeting.

GSt confirmed the date previously proposed was Wednesday 24th November at 5:30pm if that remained suitable for members. This was agreed.

The remaining scheduled meeting for 2021 was therefore:

- Wednesday 24th November, 5:30pm

KR thanked attendees for their participation in the discussion and closed the meeting.