



Ardersier Community Liaison Group

Meeting Minutes

Date of Meeting: Wednesday 26th August 2020

Location: Meeting held via video call

Present:

Highland Council

- Cllr Trish Robertson (TR)

Ardersier and Petty Community Council

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

ESD (WWTW Project)

- Graeme Campbell, Project Manager (GC)

Scottish Water (SW)

- Paul Sexton, General Manager – Alliance Management (PS)
- Gavin Steel, Corporate Affairs Manager (GS)

Apologies:

Cllr Roddy Balfour



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

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

KR noted the outstanding Action relating to a possible event at Ardersier Common that had been discussed at the previous meeting. He noted that he had recently spoken to Dawn Mackenzie and the decision had been taken not to hold events for children at least until March 2021.

GS confirmed that there had not been any further follow-up on this point, but that the Spring was likely to be the earliest that an event might be feasible and that this could be kept under review.

Action 1: GS to update CLG members when a date and plan was agreed for the restart of work at Ardersier WWTW.

It was noted that a note had been circulated to the CLG advising of plans for work to restart on the site; and that work had since restarted with measures in place to allow safe working during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Action 2: ESD / SW to update C1005 residents and CLG members in advance of Traffic Management Plan resuming operation.



GS confirmed that a letter had also been sent to residents affected by the C1005 HGV delivery route to let them now of the resumption of work and the renewed operation of the Traffic Management Plan.

Action 3: ESD / SW to advise CLG members when dates are known for work on the site's power supply.

GC confirmed that progress was being made with the power supply and that ducting that would be involved had been obtained from iUS. A date for cable installation and connection was not yet confirmed and the CLG would be kept informed. GC noted that a notification would be sent via SSEN to households as he understood there would be a planned supply interruption associated with the connection.

Action 1: ESD / SW to advise CLG members when dates are known for work on the site's power supply.

3. Scottish Water update

Waste Water Treatment Works (WWTW)

GC explained that work had resumed on site from mid-July and there had typically been around 12 personnel working on site, focused on civils, with 2 additional people supervising and managing the work.

As had been discussed at the May meeting, robust measures were in place to allow safe working during the Covid-19 pandemic, particularly for any activities that required people to work in close proximity.

Final surfacing work was about to begin and this reflected good progress. The bulk of civils work was expected to be complete by the end of September. A landscaping company had now been engaged and were expected to start work in November. The timing of this work was influenced by the rootball tree planting season over the winter months.

Once most civils personnel were off site, this would create greater capacity to get mechanical and electrical personnel on site. It was hoped that some mechanical work might be able to get on site earlier to work on the half-bridge scrapers for the Final Settlement Tanks (FSTs). This would be followed by work on the odour control, aeration lanes and inlet works.

The surfacing works were expected to have the biggest impact in terms of HGV convoys on the C1005, particularly this week (w/c 24 August) and in around 2 weeks' time.



It was hoped that most mechanical work could be completed by Christmas, subject to the ongoing planning process. Most electrical work would follow afterwards, with attention being given to managing the challenges of work within confined spaces, particular in the Motor Control Centre (MCC) building.

GC indicated that the project was targeting completion of all construction work by May / June 2021. He shared a number of photos reflecting the latest progress of construction work around the site.

Retrospective Planning Application

PS thanked the CLG for the opportunity to attend the meeting. He was aware that Scottish Water and ESD colleagues had already apologised for the non-compliance with planning consent that had been identified on the site. He wished to add his own personal apology that this had happened. He understood and shared the CLG's frustration and disappointment.

PS explained that he had carried out an initial review of the matter and noted a full investigation was in progress to allow appropriate lessons to be learned.

PS's initial finding was that there had been a failure of process between the design team and Scottish Water's planning team. He did not believe there had been a conscious act, but equally understood why people may not accept this.

PS confirmed that a retrospective planning application had been submitted in early July, responding to the requirements of the Enforcement Notice served by Highland Council. The process of this being given consideration would now need to run its course and the outcome was not known. Scottish Water hoped that the application would be accepted, but would engage with the process appropriately.

Should the application be accepted, there was ongoing discussion about measures which might be taken to reduce the visual impact of the tallest structure. One possibility was to paint the galvanised steel gantry on the Picket Fence Thickener tank in a matt finish (of suitable colour) to make this less prominent from key vantage points. There might also be opportunity to review the bunding at the front of the site, around the site entrance, to raise the height a little and review the final specification of the landscaping.

GC expanded that the existing landscaping plan showed two bunds in crescent shapes on either side of the site entrance, designed to provide some screening from the road. These were proposed to be around 1.5 metres in height and it was believed it may be possible to increase this a



little or consider options for additional planting in this area. Substantial bunding and planting were already envisaged in the landscaping plan on the seaward side of the site.

4. Discussion

Questions and feedback from members

TR reiterated that it was extremely disappointing that such a basic mistake had been made. She felt that the application would have to go to committee and that the consideration of the issue would have further negative impact on Scottish Water's reputation.

PS acknowledged this. There were a combination of factors that may have led to the significance of the design change being missed, but he recognised that someone should have had oversight and been in a position to catch it. GC reiterated an apology on behalf of the design team. PS explained that the only option now available was to follow the planning process as it applies in these circumstances and consider what reasonable mitigation was possible.

KR stated that he felt the greatest visual impact is experienced when walking along the coastal path towards the village from Fort George.

PS explained that some short term benefit might be possible by painting the galvanised steel gantry in a matt colour.

KR suggested that a dark green colour would be best if this was to be done.

PS explained that the team was looking at what colour might be best from a number of different vantage points, but the suggestion was noted.

Action 2: ESD / SW to consider the vantage point highlighted and potential colour options for gantry, subject to the outcome of the planning process.

TR queried whether the Picket Fence Thickener's height had been discussed at an earlier meeting of the CLG in February. She thought she recalled it being discussed at the PACE Café and apologies being offered.

GS said that he did not recall this, although there had been discussion about the progress of the tank's construction. The minutes of the meeting reflected this, based upon his notes. KR did not recall the matter being discussed in February.



CW asked why the planning application had been advertised and then re-advertised a second time.

GS explained that the Planning Department carried out the placement of adverts. He understood that in this case they had originally abbreviated the description of the application in error, so that it appeared in the title that part of the application related to fencing, rather than to the Picket Fence Thickener tank.

When this error was drawn to their attention, the Planning Department had proposed to readvertise and extend opportunity for representations to ensure no-one missed the opportunity to comment as a result of this. Scottish Water had been supportive of this approach.

TR asked if Scottish Water would appeal if the planning committee refused to grant retrospective consent.

PS indicated that he did not want to pre-empt the outcome of the process. Scottish Water's response to any decision would be influenced by the detailed grounds for it being taken. He stressed that Scottish Water would comply with the outcome of the planning process.

CW noted that GC had mentioned an alternative to the gantry structure at the previous meeting.

GC confirmed that he had explained at the previous meeting of the Group that, if the gantry were not allowed to remain, the only option to access the motor would be by use of a cherry-picker. A fixed gantry with handrails was a safer option for working, especially on a relatively exposed site.

CW asked if it was a cost issue and whether there wasn't a safety concern about use of the gantry during high winds.

GC indicated that it was mainly a question of safety and practicality. The potential need to access the motor at any time would mean that a cherry-picker would need to be available 24/7. The gantry, combined with normal risk assessment processes, would allow safe access outside extreme weather conditions.

TR sought confirmation about the height of the PFT tank, relative to the previously consented height.

GC explained the development of the design and the engagement that had taken place about this. He understood the consent currently in place provided for a finished ground level of 4.7 metres AOD; and a structure height of 5.9 metres, meaning a total consented height of 10.6 metres



AOD. The handrail of the gantry was 12.08 metres AOD (7.38 metres above ground level).

GC noted that one planning comment had highlighted the difference in shape and appearance of the tanks compared with earlier designs. He explained that ESD had removed a structure, the Sludge Thickening Building. The PFT was included to allow the removal of this building, but the detailed design work had produced a higher structure than was anticipated.

PS added that the designers had been trying to do the right thing, but a mistake had been made.

CW indicated that she didn't feel the number of objections was a true reflection of the widespread feeling and disappointment in the village. She wanted Scottish Water to be clear about the community's views. PS noted that Scottish Water had apologised to the CLG. He understood there had not been a recent newsletter, but that something like this could perhaps be used to communicate with residents.

GS noted that the possibility of issuing further newsletters had been left open, but that members had not felt there was value in producing a further issue in recent times. He suggested it might be better to revisit this once the planning process had taken its course.

KR stated that he felt that issuing a newsletter at the current time might inflame the situation.

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

TR underlined that she felt the application should be considered by committee and that she would ask for this to happen if it was not happening automatically due to the objections received. It was confirmed that the application was expected to go to committee.

Leaving a legacy

GC noted that the improvement previously discussed to the track access from the old WWTW entrance down to the beach would be completed before the civils personnel left site.

TR asked if something could be done to prevent cars from accessing the footpath and the beach using this route, as this had been an issue this summer.



GC indicated that he would explore what was possible. He thought that placement of boulders may be an option.

GS asked who at the council could be consulted about this and TR confirmed that the Access Officer would be the best contact.

Action 4: GC to follow-up with civil contractor to establish options; GS to make contact with Access Officer to confirm his views.

5. Any other business

There was no other business.

6. Future meetings

The proposed date for a future meeting was noted and it was agreed to keep under review whether it was possible to meet in person, or whether meetings should continue to take place via video / telephone call on each occasion.

The remaining meeting date for 2020 is:

Wednesday 25th November

KR thanked everyone attending for their time and their honesty in the CLG's discussions; and closed the meeting.