



Ardersier Community Liaison Group

Meeting Minutes

Date of Meeting: Wednesday 27th May 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)

- Gavin Steel, Corporate Affairs Manager (GS)

Apologies:

Cllr Roddy Balfour, Cllr Glynis Sinclair



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 and noted the apologies that had been received.

2. Review of previous minutes and actions

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

At the previous meeting, it had been agreed that the May CLG meeting would be held at the Ardersier WWTW site offices and would include a walk around site for members to see progress. KR noted that this was unfortunately not possible at present and the decision had therefore been taken to hold the meeting via video / telephone call instead.

GC noted that the great majority of Scottish Water's capital programme had been paused in response to the public health restrictions that came into effect in March, responding to the Covid-19 pandemic. While a small number of sites had restarted where there was a critical need for work to be completed, responding to government guidelines, work had not yet resumed at Ardersier. The situation remained under review in light of the latest advice and plans were being put in place to allow work to resume safely at the appropriate time.

Action 1: *GS to contact Dawn Mackenzie to explore possibility of joint event, combined with annual beach clean.*

GS explained that he had not contacted Dawn Mackenzie as it had become increasingly clear that an event in the Spring to mark completion of work to improve Ardersier Common was not going to be able to take place. He indicated that he would be happy to revisit this



possibility in the future if members felt it would be worthwhile once it becomes feasible again.

TR noted that many people had been using the Common for exercise over the period of restrictions on travel and she thought the new interpretation boards had been noticed and appreciated.

GS noted that an issue had been raised about the height of a structure within the site via the Highland Council's planning department, and also via an email received from Cllr Glynis Sinclair. An update on this would be given after GC had updated on wider progress.

3. Scottish Water update

Waste Water Treatment Works (WWTW)

GC explained that 5 subcontractors had been working on site and making good progress until the final week of March when work had to stop.

He explained that the project required approval from Scottish Water to recommence, when Scottish Government guidelines allowed. When work did restart, all activity would take place under a Risk Assessment and Method Statement (RAMS) tailored to construction work taking place during the Covid-19 pandemic. ESD had recently submitted proposals to Scottish Water for review and was awaiting a response once these had been reviewed.

GC noted that the site is segregated from the existing operational WWTW, but the involvement of a number of different subcontractors in the project meant that there would need to be consideration to numbers of personnel on site and social distancing arrangements. While many ESD personnel had been on furlough, the Site Manager was returning to assist GC in implementing preparations for work to resume safely, with enhanced hygiene, social distancing and additional Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for any tasks where working in close proximity was required.

GS explained that Scottish Water's approach to date, reflecting government guidance, had been to restart work that was essential to maintain reliable provision of drinking water and treatment of waste water; or for safety reasons. Members of the CLG would be updated further when there was a confirmed date for work at Ardersier to restart.

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



GC noted that the road notice that was required for the operation of the Traffic Management Plan on the C1005 had lapsed, but had been renewed in consultation with the Highland Council's roads team to resume from Tuesday 30th June. The road would remain open as usual from this date, both until work resumed at the site and until deliveries were required (which may be a later date). As previously, the road closure would only then be in place when the site was open and deliveries were scheduled.

He explained that as part of measures to prevent the spread of Covid-19, individuals would be prevented from sharing vehicles for the foreseeable future, but lower numbers of people would be attending site at one time.

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

GC indicated that it remained too early to anticipate the impact of Covid-19 on the project's programme. It was likely to equate to at least 3 months of delay, dependent on when site activity could restart. Limitations to prevent the spread of the virus were likely to slow progress when work resumed and GC apologised that this was likely to mean construction activity continuing for longer than had previously been anticipated.

GC explained that the site team were pushing to get confirmation of dates for the upgrade to the site's power supply, which would be delivered by an independent contractor, iUS. If the connection involved any impact on other power supplies, notice of this would be given to affected homes and businesses via the process maintained by Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks. Once dates were known for this activity, the CLG would be informed.

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

GC reiterated that great care was being taken, and would be taken, in restarting work considering the requirements both of local contractors and suppliers, such as AJ Engineering and Global Construction, and of some suppliers who would need to travel from further afield within Scotland, the UK and the Republic of Ireland.

Personnel attending site would be briefed on the measures in place to keep them and the local community safe. Accommodation and welfare needs would be a key consideration and personnel would be asked to minimise the need for contact with the local community and services as far as possible. GC was exploring whether there might be a controlled basis on which local services within the village could be used, for example via delivery or collection of packed lunches for the site team in bulk.

CW noted that some accommodation providers in the village may have availability with the impact of the situation on tourism. GC noted this, but thought it was possible that accommodation catering specifically to key workers may be used to minimise risk.

4. Discussion

Questions and feedback from members

GC noted that a query had been raised via Highland Council planning, and by Councillor Glynis Sinclair more recently via email, linked to the height of the Picket Fence Thickener tank / structure within the site.

GC presented a photo showing two tanks. The PFT was the higher of the two, with a conical top. He explained there are bars within the tank which rotate in order to mix the sludge. The rotation is achieved by a motor which is built into the top of the tank. For safe access to maintain the motor, when required, there is a gantry with a hand-railing. The concern that had been raised was that this structure was higher than the 5 metres height above ground level indicated in the planning consent.

GC confirmed that investigations had identified that the structure is higher than the latest planning consent, with the bulk of the difference being the access gantry. An issue had also been identified linked to the height of the inlet works and the details were still being worked through.

GC apologised that these variations from the planning consent had not been identified and addressed before construction. He explained that an earlier version of the design had envisaged housing these structures within a sludge thickening building, which would have been higher. The design had been revised to remove the building, which was felt to be beneficial in reducing the footprint of the development and the volume of sludge held on site.

TR noted that the gantry could be seen from the coastal path, although she hoped this would be addressed by final landscaping and planting. She expressed disappointment that the issue had arisen and had been brought to light via a complaint, which was harmful to efforts to establish trust between Scottish Water and the community.

KR agreed, and emphasised that he felt the situation had echoes of the way Scottish Water had conducted itself during the planning process.

GC apologised again and explained that the tank could not be designed to be smaller without adverse effect on the hydraulics of the site and impact



on management of odours. The gantry was the safest available way to enable access at height for operators to maintain the motor.

TR asked whether the gantry was shown on the plans submitted.

GC explained that the original plans showed a different design. Non-material variations had been submitted to allow the removal and reduction of some structures but the gantry and one or two other revisions, as the final design was developed, had been overlooked. He stressed that changes overall had sought to address community concerns, particularly to minimise odour risk by ensuring structures were fully enclosed.

TR noted that the appropriate steps would have to be agreed with the council's planning team to allow the situation to be considered and addressed appropriately. She believed that the changes being discussed were material in nature.

GC was unsure, but confirmed that a detailed submission to the council's planning team was being made to confirm the position and their advice would be taken on the process required. He added that the planting and landscaping, once established, should ensure the structures within the site were well screened from key vantage points.

GS reiterated apologies on behalf of Scottish Water that this issue had arisen and recognised that the correct process had not been followed, creating an issue which would now need to be addressed after the relevant structures were in place.

KR expressed the view that it was a ridiculous thing for Scottish Water and ESD to be apologising for. He felt it undermined significant work which had been done to build a more positive relationship with the community.

TR asked what would happen if the change to the design was not accepted via the planning process.

GC indicated that there was not a good alternative solution available, but that any further steps would arise from the outcome of engagement with the planning process.

Action 4: ESD / SW to advise CLG members of next steps to enable variations from the planning consent to be addressed.

Leaving a legacy

GS indicated that there was nothing to add in relation to Ardersier Common beyond his earlier update about the proposed community event.



There was still an outstanding item to improve the track down to the beach, beyond the old WWTW access. This was to be addressed when the final civils work was taking place.

TR noted that it was fitting that Geordie's Path had been improved and recognised by the new signage, as this had happened a short time before the local person after whom the path was named had passed away.

5. Any other business

There was no other business.

6. Future meetings

The proposed dates of future meetings were 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.

Future meeting dates for 2020 are:

Wednesday 26th August
Wednesday 25th November