

Scottish Water Gairloch Stakeholder Group – Outline Agreement

The Stakeholder Group which was formed to review Scottish Water's proposals for Gairloch Waste Water Treatment Works has met twice over the summer.

Much of the work carried out so far has been focused on an independent technical review of the existing plant; Scottish Water's proposed replacement; and potential alternatives, which has been carried out by a specialist consultant, m², a partnership between Mott Macdonald and Stantec (formerly MWH). The full report which has been produced by m² can be made available to anyone who would like to read it and will be published online.

Following the Group's most recent meeting on Thursday 30 August, an outline agreement was reached which members felt presented a basis to move forward.

Context

- The Group has discussed the significant operational problems affecting the existing Membrane Bioreactor Plant at Gairloch. Even with further action to tackle the ingress of surface water and seawater into the Gairloch sewer network, and other possible remedial actions, the m² opinion is that the plant would not be recommended for Gairloch and would not be capable of treating required flows during necessary maintenance. This presents a risk of spills of untreated sewage from the network, which Scottish Water wishes to address.

Proposed new Waste Water Treatment Works (WWTW)

- The Group agreed that Scottish Water should proceed with installation of the proposed new WWTW, which would comprise septic tank, disc filter and UV treatment.
- It was recognised that this is an unusual combination of 3 tried and tested treatment processes. The suppliers of the equipment involved have provided performance guarantees to Scottish Water which suggest the plant will significantly exceed the licence standard set by SEPA to maintain the excellent status of Gairloch's bathing beaches. m² has identified a further check which Scottish Water is carrying out; and a further treatment process which could be added to the proposed site layout if it was needed in future.

Proposed operating regime

- Scottish Water agreed that, once built, it will operate UV treatment year-round on a pilot basis for an initial 2 year period.
- Towards the end of the period, Scottish Water will operate for a period in midwinter without UV treatment to allow evidence to be gathered of the difference made to

water quality at the designated sampling points when operating outwith the bathing season.

- Additional sampling would be arranged throughout this period, beyond the bathing season monitoring that SEPA currently carries out, to build a better understanding of the overall water quality at the bathing beaches in Loch Gairloch.
- The evidence collected via sampling will provide a basis to agree the appropriate long term operating regime in consultation with the Stakeholder Group. Scottish Water and other group members agreed to approach this with an open mind.

Next steps

- Community representatives on the Stakeholder Group agreed to report back to Gairloch Community Council on Monday 11th September on the progress that has been made.
- Scottish Water will organise and advertise an information event to run between 3:30pm and 7:30pm on Monday 24th September in the Main Hall at Gairloch Community Centre in order to update the wider community and answer any questions.
- Scottish Water will work in consultation with the Stakeholder Group (including SEPA) to establish a basis for year-round sampling to take place, ideally starting this winter in order to have data to show the current plant's performance.