

Scottish Water Gairloch Stakeholder Group

Meeting Minutes

Date of Meeting: Wednesday 22nd April 2020, 7pm

Location: Via Skype

Present:

Gairloch Community Representatives	Alex Gray (AG)
SEPA	Paul Griffiths (PG)
Scottish Water	Kevin Clifton (KC) James Wiseman (JW) Gavin Steel (GS) Iain Jones (IJ)

Apologies:

Karen Buchanan, Ian McWhinney

Minutes

1. Welcome

Gavin Steel welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for understanding the need for it to be held digitally in light of the restrictions in place to prevent spread of Covid-19.

2. Minutes of meeting held on 10th December 2019

GS noted that the minutes of the previous meeting had been circulated by email and asked if there were any comments or amendments. No amendments had been received by email and none were requested at the meeting.

3. Actions and matters arising

Action 1: GS to contact Paul Griffiths to request an update on the additional monitoring carried out of the Sand River.

PG indicated that he would cover this in his update on sampling.

Action 2: GS to provide email update to stakeholder group members on the scheduled work to put the new treatment process into operation.

GS noted that he had circulated an update via email on 21st December.

Action 3: Scottish Water to confirm depth of extended WWTW outfall.

JW explained that, while there were different ways to express the depth relative to tide, the discharge was 2.2 metres below Mean Low Water Springs (MLWS). AG asked if this was the intended depth and JW confirmed that it was.

Action 4: Scottish Water to prepare postcard and other communications for distribution once turn of flows and final commissioning were complete.

GS explained that this had not been done. It had been intended to issue communications ahead of the 2020 bathing season, but the view had been taken that, with some ongoing work at the site and the information people were receiving about Covid-19, it was not the best time. He suggested that the best timing for an update to the whole community be kept under review.

4. Implications of Covid-19 pandemic

GS noted that the Covid-19 pandemic had a number of implications. Following the start of 'lockdown' on 23rd March, Scottish Water had stopped the great

majority of planned investment work and focused on continuing provision of essential services to customers. Some essential planned work was now being restarted in line with Scottish Government and Construction Scotland guidelines and remaining work at Gairloch WWTW was a high priority. Any work would take place with measures in place to safeguard the health of people on site and the local community.

PG explained that SEPA was only carrying out monitoring or other site investigation activity in response to serious pollution incidents while lockdown measures remained in place.

There had not yet been a decision on what this would mean for the 2020 bathing season. The decision would be taken by Scottish Ministers whether to have a full-length bathing season, a shortened season or none at all. SEPA's monitoring would depend on the decision taken.

PG indicated that SEPA was happy to review how the pilot operating period, and the associated sampling arrangements, should proceed in the exceptional circumstances now in place. GS noted that Scottish Water similarly was happy to vary the pilot period in consultation with members of the Group to ensure that a good amount of data was obtained. It was agreed that this would be reviewed at the Group's next meeting when the impact on the 2020 bathing season and sampling was known.

Action 1: Scottish Water Gairloch Stakeholder Group to agree any required revision to the timing of the pilot operating period at its autumn meeting.

5. SEPA / Sampling Update

PG noted that the provisional 2019 bathing water classifications had both Sand and Gairloch beaches achieving 'excellent' standard again. This would be published on the SEPA website but the classifications were unlikely to be publicised in the usual way given the public health situation and uncertainty about the 2020 season.

PG explained that water quality was not quite as good as 2017 and 2018, but was still comfortably meeting the 'excellent' standard and it was believed the variation was largely a result of wet weather during the period.

PG apologised that, as a result of an oversight, SEPA had not initiated winter sampling as had been agreed until January, but had then obtained data for January, February and March before routine sampling activity was stopped.

Both bathing beaches had been found to have 'excellent' water quality over these months, with bacteria below the limits of detection. PG noted that sampling of the River Sand was continuing, in addition to the Sand Beach sampling point, and that results were very good for the river too.

PG stated that the final effluent from Gairloch WWTW with the new treatment process in operation had been found to be well in excess of the standard required by the site's discharge licence. With the UV operating, he indicated that the effluent quality was as good as or better than the previous treatment process.

6. Scottish Water Project Update

JW explained that there had been a difficulty encountered during final commissioning with the operation of the disk filter, which is part of the new treatment process. The filter had an automated cleaning process and this did not appear to be working as expected, requiring manual cleaning by operators more regularly than it should.

Work was still ongoing with Ross-shire Engineering to address this and the supplier of the filter had been asked to assist. Progress was being hampered by travel restrictions and the furloughing of some supply chain staff, but efforts were being made to find a resolution. In the meantime, the UV was working and consistently exceeding the standard of disinfection required, even when the disk filter was offline.

JW noted that there was some final tidying up of the site still to be carried out when possible and installation of a wind break which had been identified to ensure a door could be used safely in all weather conditions.

Questions

AG asked if the disk filter being offline impacted on the efficacy of the UV lamps.

KC explained that the UV unit includes a sensor which monitors the quality of the incoming effluent and adjusts the power of the bulbs in response. This was helping to ensure a good level of disinfection even when the disk filter was offline for cleaning. Poorer quality effluent, over time, would necessitate more frequent cleaning of the UV bulbs to maintain their performance.

AG asked if the cause of the disk filter's performance problems had been identified and would be resolved.

KC indicated that work was still ongoing to understand the cause of the problem and that Ross-shire Engineering were seeking support from the supplier of the unit. Unfortunately, it had not been able to get an engineer from the supplier to the site before public health restrictions on travel made this impossible. This would be progressed as soon as wider circumstances allowed and a specialist engineer could be brought to site.

7. Communication review

GS suggested that communications arrangements be reviewed at the next meeting of the Group with the timing of the pilot operating period.

Action 2: Scottish Water Gairloch Stakeholder Group to consider best timing for an update on progress to the full community.

8. Any other business

There was no other business.

9. Date of next meeting

It was anticipated that the next meeting would take place in the autumn. As it was not known whether meeting in person would be possible, and low attendance at the meeting, it was agreed to identify a suitable date via email.