

Strathisla Community Council
Meeting Minutes
7:30pm Wednesday 3rd April 2024
Keith Community & Sports Centre, Banff Road, Keith

Attendees:

Strathisla Community Councillors: Priscilla Gordon-Duff (PGD), James Mark (JM), Geraldine McKillop (GM), Tina Murphy (TM), Rhona Paterson (RP), Karen Price Iddon (KPI), John Taylor (JT)

Moray Council Councillors: Theresa Coull (ThC), Donald Gatt (DG)

Visitors: none

1. **Welcome** – PGD welcomed all to the meeting, where we will be joined via Zoom by representatives of Vattenfall
2. **Apologies** – Bryony KSRP, Tracy Colyer
3. **Guests Speakers** – by Zoom – Aultmore Wind Farm - Project Manager Lucy Blake and Consultant Ruth Liddicoat – see addendum
4. **Approved - Minutes of meeting** – 4th March 2024 - proposed GM, seconded JT. PGD reminded that she will not be available on 3rd May; meeting appointed John Taylor as Vice Chairman
5. **Matters arising:**
 - Approved Minutes** – TM to circulate to local halls / community associations by email
 - Laptop & Printer** – after TM checking with KPI and George Gartly, the SCC laptop appears to have been lost, TM has the SCC printer, which apparently does not work (untried as yet). The printer uses 2 expensive ink jet cartridges. TM to use own laser printer and claim for ink / paper.
 - Hustings** – Colin Burch is checking viability with major political parties. PGD happy to represent SCC at a potential meeting to arrange hustings
 - Gibston Farm - Battery Energy Storage System** (at Blackhillock) - 2nd Exhibition 18-04-24 – Keith Sports Centre
 - Statkraft – Keith Greener Grid - Battery Energy Storage System** (behind Tesco) – 2nd Exhibition 25-04-24 – Longmore Community Hall
 - Newmill Flood Scheme** – partially cleared at Back Street – RP and ThC have been to look at ditches
 - AMEY** – plan to replace road signs on A96 – nothing happened yet – more signs down
 - Alexandra Road Traffic Lights** – seem to have reverted back to changing very slowly
 - Outfit Moray – First Aid Training** – CCLO confirmed if a first aid training session is booked with Outfit Moray they can send the invoice to Moray Council and the Community Support Unit will organise payment.
 - Kings Portrait** – TM applied for six unfortunately each Community Council is only entitled to receive one, which is on order.
 - New Email** – TM created but not in use yet – strathislacommunitycouncil@gmail.com
6. **Treasurers Report** – balance sheet stands at £53,076.43 (including the £50,000 resilience) also includes the £362 received from Moray Council. JM to confirm amount left in Beatrice Micro Grants Fund
7. **Planning / Weekly wards** – no comments made
8. **Reports, Events Attended and KSRP CDO** – Police and KSRP CDO reports circulated by email
9. **Updates**
 - a. **Boharm / Mulben** – no report
 - b. **Botriphnie / Drummuir** – waiting on new electric speed signs
 - c. **Grange** – no comments
 - d. **Rural Keith** – lots of potholes, more road signs down. Comment from dog walker on building waste in Keith Show ‘Nursery Park’ – RP to raise with Show
 - e. **Newmill** – discussed potential to undesignate field marked for development back to agricultural to enable it to be sold as part of the Newmill Estate sale. Development plan will not be done in time to facilitate this. Development Plan to go on Agenda for next SCC meeting.
 - f. **Rothiemyay / Knock** – no report

10. Correspondence:

Barbara Steinwehe – Aultmore Wind Farm – raised with Vattenfall - see addendum

Trista Shanks – Aultmore Wind Farm – raised with Vattenfall – see addendum

Alastair Davidson, Moray Council Promise Engagement Officer – request to discuss Care Experienced Young People and their role in Our Communities. Initial meeting with PGD at Sports Centre.

Moray Council, Senior Librarian & Info Officer – potential for Pop Up Libraries in Keith area locations of Newmill, Mulben, Rothes and Glenlivet

11. JCC – next meeting Thursday 9th May at Elgin Town Hall

12. AOCB

Keith in Flower - GM enquired if SCC would like to sponsor with sign at the bandstand. Meeting agreed £400 sponsorship. Sign to say: 'Strathisla Community Council representing Boharm, Botriphnie, Grange, Newmill, Rothiemay & Rural Keith'

Rosearie Quarry – meeting held at Longmore **Community** Hall last Thursday was not well attended

Next Meeting – Wednesday 1st May - to be held at Newmill Hall – TM to book with Sonia Gerrie

PGD thanked everyone for attending

Meeting closed at 9:00pm

Date of next meeting - Wednesday 1st May 2024

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**Addendum:**

**Vattenfall – Aultmore Wind Farm Redesign**

Lucy Blake – Project Manager, Ruth Liddicoat – Consultant

***Strathisla Community Council (SCC) – Putting things succinctly & clearly, why is this a redesign and what are the salient points?***

The project is for a redesign as it already has planning consent, which was awarded in 2014 for slightly smaller 13 turbine scheme. It was a very long time going through planning and was for a lesser MW scheme. This time, due to the increase in output, the Application has gone to the Scottish Government Energy Consents Unit (ECU). The original 2007 application was for 29mw, using smaller turbines and generating much less output.

During the long time the original application spent in planning, Scottish Government Policy changed and the technology changed. Vattenfall have redesigned the scheme with different turbines and to include a west array, which will quadruple output to 105.6mw within the same footprint. The Application has been submitted to the ECU and currently representation is open for all key stakeholders. SCC is one of 4 community councils adjoining the scheme and as a key consultee, its opinion is much valued, whether opposing, neutral or supporting, it is very important for the ECU to hear.

***SCC – which are the other three Community Councils?***

Lennox to the North West, Buckie to the North and Cullen & Deskford to the East; these three Community Councils will all host infrastructure, tracks or turbines within their area. The scheme includes 2,500 hectares, which is essentially the current Aultmore Forest. Vattenfall are used to operating across CC boundary lines. Although the site area covers 2500 hectares, the actual land take, which means the area physically used for turbines, hardstanding, foundations and tracks is much smaller, wherever possible using existing tracks. There will be new spur roads to turbine locations, but the main tracks will reuse what is already on site, so that the land take is as small as possible to try and avoid disturbing the ground as much as possible.

The site currently is a commercially forested site in operation by Land and Forestry Scotland. With an aim to minimise disturbance, turbines will be key holed into the forest, which is mostly Sitka Spruce, with a 100m radius to reduce tree loss. One of the other key points, in redesigning the site, is that it quadruples output from 29mw to 105.6 mw, which in turn quadruples the community benefit fund to £528,000 per annum throughout the lifetime of project.

Vattenfall like to maximise inward investment, jobs and employment by working with local business. They are working with Buckie Harbour on the feasibility of bringing turbine components into Buckie Harbour, which is currently too small for this, so Vattenfall are working with the Buckie Harbour Masterplan and with their consultants undertaking feasibility work to understand the specifications Vattenfall would require. Currently as part of their planning application, Vattenfall are planning to bring turbine components into Inverness Harbour, as the planning application must provide a viable harbour option, but they would prefer to use Buckie.

There would be a lot of benefit if they could come into Buckie and it would cut down on road transport and be a big win for Buckie, so Vattenfall are working closely in the background with Buckie Harbour. Recently a very productive meeting was held with Moray Council, the Harbour Master and the Engineers creating the Masterplan, to be able to get the requirements of not just Aultmore Wind Farm and Vattenfall but all of the onshore sector, into a scenario being presented to Moray Council, creating a possibility that would really maximise as much as possible for the various sectors for Buckie Harbour, they felt very fortunate to be able to meet the engineers to put the scenario forward.

Vattenfall achieved something similar in East Ayrshire and Dumfries & Galloway, where the original harbour was too small. Vattenfall progressed and made it work for them, which delivered £93.4m inward investment into Scotland of which £44m, almost 50%, went into the local East Ayrshire and Dumfries & Galloway areas primarily because they were able to unlock the opportunity with the use of Ayr Harbour, so not all went to the Harbour but created a real cascade of local opportunities and contracts, so Vattenfall see how important it is to use local harbours.

### ***SCC – Public Meetings, Exhibitions and Consultations?***

Vattenfall had already held two public exhibitions, the first in March 2022 and the second in August 2023. The Application had now been submitted to planning and there would be no further engagement with public until the project received consent which would then open up the consultation on community benefit. Vattenfall also ran a workshop on 1<sup>st</sup> Sept last year.

Presentations have already been made to the other three Community Councils but this is the first time, they have formally engaged with SCC in its current membership, they have spoken to previous representatives over the years, including Karen Price Iddon & George Gartly. SCC representation has since changed and then the SCC unfortunately went into abeyance, so it has never quite worked out for a meeting. Engagement with other CC representatives has been at attended meetings and by zoom. Vattenfall really value engagement with Community Councils, and have spoken to Lennox, Cullen & Deskford and Buckie.

Any questions please send them on, at the moment the Scottish Government are holding the formal consultation period for this planning application, so Vattenfall will endeavour to get back to respond asap. There is also lots of information available in the public domain.

### ***SCC – Representations from concerned residents?***

Two representations have been received from the public, which may have been raised at the public meetings. Concerns have been raised about private water supplies, impact on wildlife, impact on the look of area and aesthetically and also concern for businesses which are promoting themselves as being in an area of natural beauty and interest. Vattenfall will almost certainly have been approached with these comments and what is the response.

All residents' concerns are very understandable and valid. Vattenfall take these concerns very seriously and did quite a bit of work prior to the submission of the Application to address them, for key statutory consultees that are specialists in their area, for example Nature Scot and Moray Council, both take a very close look in terms of visualisations and how the turbines will look. Consultees RSPB looking at the ornithology and Nature Scot looking at the ecology and hydrology along with SEPA. Vattenfall are very aware of some residents concerns and have been engaging with and corresponding by email to make them aware of where information is being held.

Private water supply came up at both exhibitions, there are a lot of people with private water supplies around Aultmore Forest. Initially enquiries went with a list supplied by Moray Council of properties with private water supplies but that did not capture all, so a surveyor was sent to go door to door, but this may still not have captured all. Over time things change, new properties may be built in next 6 years and it is not planned to break ground until 2029, so things may change; what is anticipated then, is further engagement to acknowledge private water supplies. The hydrology specialists set all the hydrology links and find out where the supplies are going, this is all written into the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and has a whole chapter about private water which is protected by a lot of legislation from the Scottish Government around private water supply, which will be protected throughout construction and then

ongoing through the lifespan of the wind farm, in accordance with very strict legislation. As many private water supplies as possible have been identified and any new builds will be added in. The detailed assessment comes later on and post consent. It is 2024, so when turbines are being delivered and construction started in around 2029 to 2030 detailed site investigations will happen again, so that there is clear understanding about private water supplies. Vattenfall have been emailing particular residents with specific enquiries about private water supplies, a lot of the information they have been seeking at the consultations and exhibitions will be in the EIA as well as lot of info about private water supplies.

Landscape and visually, was something that was listened to a lot from the second exhibition. The turbines are 200m to their tip, they are tall pieces of kit and Vattenfall are trying to mitigate their impact. Landscape specialists have looked over all the turbine viewpoints, and the wirelines and photo montages presented within the EIA. They are tall structures and is part of the landscape required in order to get to net zero and produce renewable energy. What is significant is the amount of energy, 6.6mw from one turbine, makes massive generational output from same footprint that was in 2014 application.

Turbines heights have changed considerably and very quickly over last 4 or 5 years, largely due to number of offshore turbines, which are 250 / 300m tall. This has pushed the market and technology, for 5 or 10 years 150m was tallest, but now 200m is very common, some parts of Scotland have 225m and 250m turbines but 200m is now very much the norm but it is quite a jump up from previous turbine heights.

With regard to the Ecology and the biodiversity of the site and how to manage habitat, as a commercial forest the site does not have a particularly diverse ecology. It has been a commercial forest for over 60 or 70 years. There are some protected species but they have all been accounted for in the EIA and all listed. Protected species such as badgers are only found on the access and details are included in a confidential annex of the EIA but the habitat management plan and the biodiversity net gain from this site and particularly riparian corridors, so along some water ways is how we can use what we have and enhance that, in order to get tracks for animals to move along, will encourage biodiversity on this site as will the peat management. There are areas of deep peat and no infrastructure will be placed there, no turbines or tracks. A couple of the areas identified have been degraded by commercial forestry and there will be a Forest to Bog Management Plan which Vattenfall prides itself on, with a good track record and history of doing this on an existing site in Wales which restores biodiversity and habitat back to when the deep peat was in its original state, which will take a few years and a Habitat Management Plan identifies this and will work with Forestry and Land Scotland to achieve this.

***SCC - Placing of pylons, covered by rules and regs as to how close to existing properties? Connection overground or underground? Connection to grid agreement?***

Vattenfall have agreement to connect with National Grid, this puts contestable works with the National Grid, so they are the ones to connect from their substation to the site to the Grid, working with Forestry and Land Scotland as they want cables undergrounded as least as far as the red line boundary where it leaves their control but because National Grid take the cabling from substation to the proposed Blackhillock to Macduff line to the East of site, if that is created, National Grid will do the works from substation on site to their substation. Forestry and Land Scotland and Vattenfall are both pushing for underground but it is for National Grid to put in the application for this and get that. There are a few issues with undergrounding, like deep peat potential along the ground and also unexploded ordnance on some sites, so have to consider this when trenching.

A lot of the time connection is by a double wood pole overhead on a trident line, so would be wooden poles not metal pylons.

***SCC – Thank you for such full answers and for taking the time to speak.***

If there are any questions in coming weeks please email.