

Innes Community Council

Minute of Public Meeting held at 7:30pm on Wednesday 15th May 2013 at Lhanbryde Community Centre to discuss the proposed Brown Muir Hill Wind Farm Development.

Attendance

Innes Community Council: Sandy Anderson (Chairman), James Mackie, Lansana Bangura, John Third (note taker)

Residents of Innes CC Area: Libby Amphlett, Peter Amphlett, George Herraghty, Aubrey Moore, Liz Daniel, Rebecca Smisson.

Residents of neighbouring area: M Ross, Derek Ross.

The chairman opened the meeting by welcoming those present and explained that the purpose of the meeting was not to enter into a debate at this point but rather to get the views of the community on the proposed Brown Muir Hill wind farm development before deciding on an appropriate course of action. He then handed over to James Mackie who explained the current structure of Innes Community Council by introducing those members present and gave a brief history of how the current council came to be formed, how they came to be aware of the development and action they had taken to date.

JM explained that he had attended a meeting of the Joint Community Councils in 2012 where he had seen a presentation by Vento Ludens and became fully aware of the extent of the proposed development. VL stated at that meeting that they had previously had discussions with ICC and it was pointed out to them that the previous committee were no longer in office and the current committee had been unable to access the electronic information passed to them so they effectively had to start from scratch.

JM subsequently had discussions with VL to get more background on the development and began to challenge statements that had been submitted by them as part of their application. JM also advised that he had attended a meeting organised by the developers regarding the community benefits which could be available should the development be approved. At that meeting, which was also attended by other neighbouring Community Councils, he emphasised that he was only there to listen to what was being proposed and did not enter into any discussion as he considered the subject to be likened to a poisoned chalice adding that there was no legal requirement for developers to provide community benefit and that there was nothing set in stone. JM advised the meeting that ICC had never discussed community benefit with any organisation and that he had advised the JCC that no negotiations should be undertaken with the developer on community benefit until such times as the development was approved. He also added that there is no legal mechanism to determine who receives community benefit or who is eligible to claim it and that even if agreed, the developer is not legally bound to actually provide any.

JM stated that ICC had identified many mistakes in the original application and had submitted a letter of representation in November 2012 and noted that VL had taken account of them when they published their recent addendum. ICC had also been disappointed with the quality of some of the photographs contained in the addendum and JM had taken some of his own from various locations and submitted them in support of their recent response to the addendum.

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Some of those present stated that they had been involved in gathering over 2000 signatures for a petition against the development.

JM stated that the current ICC had not been involved in that petition and pointed out that ICC could only represent those residents currently living in the ICC area.

It was noted that the date for the submission of further representation on the addendum had passed but it was pointed out that The Moray Council had requested an extension to enable further discussion at their meeting on 11th June 2103. If and when the matter goes to a Public Enquiry, which it is expected to do, ICC will be able to represent the residents of their area.

It was pointed out from the floor that most of the people attending this meeting had attended a previous public meeting and had expressed their opposition to the development at the time.

George Herraghty then spoke to his previous report he had prepared for previous submissions. He mentioned about the unspoilt nature of the landscape and how visitors to the area had been shocked to hear of the proposals and how it would have a detrimental impact on tourism, not only in this area but in the whole of Scotland. He continued saying that the proposed development, if approved, would affect the wildlife in the area and could also impact on water courses running into the River Spey and seriously damage the salmon fishery. He also added that half a million tons of rock would be required to build the access roads to the proposed development site and that as well as the risk to wildlife, there was also a risk to human health due to the inaudible low frequency sound omitted from the wind turbines which could cause people to suffer palpitations or even heart attacks.

Aubrey Moore emphasised that people were not anti-renewable, just against wind farms and suggested that the answer could be to build more hydro-electric power stations as wind turbines were unable to store electricity that was not required at any given time. He also questioned statements made by VL at previous meetings that the majority of local people supported the development and that only 30 people had objected.

Derek Ross added that people who do object are counted as only one objection even though they may submit more than one objection.

M Ross stated that a major problem initially was that people did not know where Brown Muir was and didn't realise it was on their doorstep.

GH referred to an article from the 5th January 2013 edition of The Spectator written by Clive Hambler entitled Wind Farms vs. Wildlife, which demonstrated the effects wind farms have on wildlife and the shocking environmental cost of renewable energy. He also provided copies of a leaflet published by The John Muir Trust, For Wild Land & Wild Places, and a map showing an alarming proliferation of both proposed and current wind farm locations in neighbouring areas. He also shared details of a website, www.losthorizons.org which explains about the alarming effect of offshore wind farms and also www.caithnesswindfarms.co.uk

It was pointed out that claims of the creation of up to 50 jobs would only be short term and would not affect the local unemployment figures as developers have a tendency to bring in their own workforce.

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AM stated that he had recently written to a national newspaper pointing out that wind turbines are built in either Denmark or Germany and shipped in from abroad so this is not likely to create jobs in the UK. Compensation is paid by the government amounting to £135-£185/Kwh when the wind farm is not generating while the actual cost of production is only about £50/Kwh thereby operators are grossly overcompensated when not producing.

JM stated that the scale and size of the development may be bigger than people realise and to put it into perspective, the height of Elgin High Church is 125 feet while the size of the proposed turbines is 125 metres.

AM congratulated the current ICC for everything they had done and achieved in such a short time.

JM thanked everyone for attending and the chairman closed the meeting at 8:30pm.

DRAFT