

Heriot Community Council

Minutes of meeting March 22nd 2017

Present: J. Williams, G. Whittaker, F. Connelly, I. Hall, K. Finlayson, P. Hood, Cllr. Aitchison, Cllr Mitchell + 15 members of the public.

Apologies: Cllr. White, S. Sharp

1. Minutes of previous meeting: Agreed, but with correction to the amount recorded for the fund potentially available from the proposed Gilston windfarm. The planning application incorrectly lists this value as £200k, which was the amount recorded in the minutes; the true value is approximately £100k.
2. Police report: No police report had been received.
3. Roads Issues.
 - A7 Action Group paper. JW presented a summary of the suggestions in a paper from the A7 Action Group, which suggests four stretches of the A7 north of Galashiels that could be significantly improved. The total required for all the work is approximately £17m, which is highly unlikely to be immediately available, but the document provides a sound basis for lobbying for funds from Holyrood towards road improvements.
 - Cllr Aitchison reported that two signs would be erected on the A7 warning of unmarked police cars operating. This is not an idle threat, and the cars are already in operation.
 - The voluntary group had reported that they were about to purchase and install unofficial warning signs on the A7 with the support of SBC officials and councillors.
4. X95 Bus service – change of operator. It was noted that First Bus was about to divest its operations in the Scottish Borders, and these would be adopted by a new company – “Border Buses”, formed by West Coast Motor Services of Campbeltown. It was suggested that the CC engage with the new operator to discuss the timetable for the X95.
5. Gilston wind farm application, 17/00226/FUL. The Chair provided a summary of the application, including the reasons for the previous application being refused on appeal. This application is very similar to the previous part of the application that was within Scottish Borders, but with the same number of significantly larger turbines (127m v. 110m) on a slightly smaller site. The turbines are only sited in the SBC area, but positioned right up to

the boundary with Midlothian. The turbines would not be visible from the Heriot Station area, but would be widely and highly visible from all elevated points around the village area and way beyond. They would be particularly visible from Brothershiels, from Soutra Aisle and B6368, and from the core path north of Shoestanes. It was reported that the residents at Upper Brotherstone, whilst particularly adversely affected, are financially involved in the application.

Noise is a potentially significant issue for the residents at Brothershiels, and the applicants have, after some pressure, finally agreed to release the raw noise data to the Council for its experts to inspect.

The SBC supplementary planning guidance on windfarms indicates that there is no capacity for turbines of a height greater than 80m in the area.

The issue of community benefits was raised, and it was noted that the developers had been quite circumspect on this issue. It is likely that the proposed amount of £100k per year would be split between up to five community council areas. It was noted that Heriot is not spending its current income from windfarms, so that there would be no immediate practical gain from these funds.

The CC members were invited to provide their opinions on the application, which ranged from general support for windfarms through to outright objection. A number of detailed points were discussed and strong opinions were expressed by the public at the meeting. Public opinion expressed at the meeting was universally opposed to the application.

The CC overwhelmingly voted to object to the application (5 members voting to object, and one member abstaining on the grounds that they had not had sufficient opportunity to assess the application). The grounds for objection included the inappropriate scale of the windfarm and the severely detrimental effects on the residents at Brothershiels. Other points of objection raised at the meeting would be included in the Council's submission.

JW agreed to formulate a response to SBC, to be circulated to, and agreed by, the CC prior to submission.

6. Windfarm Funds. GW reported that funding from the windfarm funds had been obtained for three bus shelters, as discussed in previous meetings. A condition set by Dun Law Trust was that the CC should attempt to obtain approximately £2k of funding from SBC. Cllr Mitchell was assisting with this, and was optimistic about funds being found early in the new financial year.
7. Heriot Community Broadband update. The AGM will take place at 7pm on Tuesday May 9th changing to an evening meeting in an effort to encourage more people to attend. FC reported that a couple of new masts had been installed in the old part of the village and Hangingshaw, and that a funding application had been submitted to the community fund to subsidise costs for residents.
8. AOB

- Resilience plan for Heriot. There is still no resilience plan for Heriot, nor is there any obvious interest in one from residents.
- The future of the snow blower was briefly discussed. It is no longer insured by the Council, so anyone using it does so at their own risk. Some suggestions were made for its future use, but the council now wishes to divest itself of this item.
- Underpass maintenance: The property division of Network Rail has temporarily takes over responsibility for ensuring that the underpass is gritted in winter. It being a year since the petitions committee at SBC agreed actions over the underpass, no progress has been made that has resulted from the actions of the CC. JW and Cllr Aitchison agreed to chase this up with SBC.
- The CC agreed to fund a replacement battery for the defibrillator. In response to a request from the public, GW agreed to look into organising another defibrillator training session.

The meeting closed at 8:40 pm

Dates of Heriot CC meetings in 2017

May 24th

July 12th

September 27th

November 15th