

Blair Hill Wind Farm Community Liaison Group (CLG)

26/03/24

7pm

Attendees	Name	Representing
	Mary Harkness (MH)	Kirkcowan Community Council
	Alan Howatson (AH)	River Cree Hatchery & Habitat Trust SCIO
	Jamie Hyslop (JH)	Cree Valley Community Council & River Cree District Salmon Fishery Board
	Nicola Garmory (NG)	Machars and Cree Valley Climate Action Network
	Craig McMilken (CM)	Ditch the Blair Hill Project
	Iain Service (IS)	Cree Valley Community Council & Ditch the Blair Hill Project
	Sarah McArthur (SMc)	RES
	Fergus Johnston (FJ)	Cavendish
	Sarah More (SM)	Cree Valley Area Development Trust
	Hugh Leslie (HL)	Cree Valley Area Development trust
Apologies	Name	Representing
	Cllr Katie Hagmann	Ward member for Mid Galloway and Wigtown West
	Cllr Jackie McCamon	Ward member for Mid Galloway and Wigtown West
	Cllr Richard Marsh	Ward member for Mid Galloway and Wigtown West
	Cllr David Inglis	Ward member for Mid Galloway and Wigtown West
	Terence Flanagan (TF)	River Cree Hatchery & Habitat Trust SCIO
	Clifford Smithers (CS)	Cree Valley Area Development Trust
	Hazel Matthews (HM)	Kirkcowan Community Council
	Linda Woodfield (LW)	Newton Stewart Initiative
	Charles Marshall (CMA)	Cree Valley Area Development Trust

Agenda Item	Activity	Actions
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Apologies	Apologies were noted from TF, CS. and Cllr Katie Hagmann. HL would substitute for CS.	
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Membership Review	JH noted that following the Cree Valley Community Council elections, there was now nobody representing the community council on the CLG. JH stated that members would take this back to the community council to see if they would like to represent the CVCC at upcoming meetings.	
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MH stated that Kirkcowan Community Council had also held their election, however there would be no change to their representation on the CLG.

SMc noted that the Cree Valley Area Development Trust will now be represented by SM and CS.

Project Update	SMc stated that the consultation period for consultees is open until 31st March. These apply to all listed consultees on the application such as D&G Council, NatureScot, SEPA, and Historic Environment Scotland.	
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SMc stated that they haven't had any communication from D&G Council. A few consultee responses have been received and are now available on the ECU portal.

JH enquired whether there would be a delay in uploading the responses to the ECU, as this has been an issue with other projects locally. SMc confirmed that the timing of response uploads is determined by the ECU and acknowledged that it can be frustrating when comments take time to be uploaded. She stressed it was outwith RES' control.

SMc stated that Cree Valley Community Council had requested an extension to respond to the application. MH noted that Kirkcowan CC has not yet submitted a request but confirmed that they will be doing so.

SMc anticipated that it could take up to a year for D&G Council to provide a response. The timeline for consultees' responses is difficult to predict as some agencies take longer to respond. SMc also mentioned that SEPA has requested higher-resolution copies of some maps, which would be uploaded to the ECU portal once produced. SMc agreed to inform the CLG if RES submit any additional information.

JH asked how long it would take to receive a final decision on the project. SMc responded that RES hope for a decision within three years, although this is out of their hands. She explained that if a statutory consultee objects, and that objection is maintained, then a public inquiry would be held.

**Post Submission
Drop-in Sessions**

SMc provided figures for the attendance at each event, mentioning that over 100 people attended across the two days. She hoped that members found them useful and felt informed to make a representation to the ECU.

AOB

NG asked about the connection to the substation and whether an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) would take place for this. SMC confirmed that an EIA would be carried out. However, she noted that this would be the responsibility of Scottish Power Transmission, as the network operator. It typically takes place after a consent is granted and would be subject to its own consultation process.

IS mentioned that the substation alterations at Glenlee have not been completed yet and expressed doubts about there being space at Glenlee Substation currently. He asked if there were any plans to expand the substation. SMC responded that RES had received an offer to connect to Glenlee in 2036, however they expected this date to be brought forward with the ongoing grid reform process that will see connection dates for viable projects be accelerated. She said she could not comment on substation expansion plans, however SPT are contractually obligated to meet the 2036 deadline and will have planned their substation expansion in order to deliver this.

IS shared that he had spoken with someone from Scottish Power Transmission, who informed him that the Glenlee substation will be expanded as more wind farms are consented.

MH asked when construction would begin if the 2036 grid connection date was to go ahead. SMC responded that construction would likely start 2-3 years prior to a grid connection, so around 2034. MH inquired about the penalty for failing to deliver a grid connection on time. SMC agreed to look into this and get back to them.

IS and the MH asked if a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) would be drawn up to ensure the community benefit package promised would be delivered were RES to sell the wind farm upon a consent. SMC replied that she would be happy for a MOU to be drawn up if that was something the community wanted to have. She reminded members that they had agreed at a previous meeting not to discuss community benefit until a consent was granted. IS reiterated his concern that if the project was to be sold, the community benefit could be lost. SMC insisted this would not happen as community benefits would form a condition of sale.

IS then raised his concern about the £5,000 per megawatt commitment, stating that if inflation continues, it might not be as valuable in 10-15 years. SMC acknowledged that this figure hasn't changed since its inception. She assured members that if the good practice guidelines on community benefit changed, RES would abide to these.

JH asked what SMC felt the riskiest part of the application was. SMC explained that RES had designed a project that they felt confident submitting into planning and noted the main changes had been as a result of cultural heritage and landscape concerns.

JH then asked about the potential impact of the Galloway National Park (GNP) on the application and its decision. SMC acknowledged that there is uncertainty surrounding the future of planning policies in the

GNP but stated that if new policy was adopted, they may be required to submit additional information to the ECU.

HL asked about the lifespan of the wind farm. SMC clarified that they have applied for a 50-year consent.

HL asked what had been done about the archaeology on the site. SMC confirmed that RES has already undertaken significant work in this area from the results of their site surveys and feedback from Historic Environment Scotland.

**Date and Time of
Next meeting**

IS proposed holding a meeting at least within the next 12 months. SMC added that she would keep members updated via email and that a meeting could be called sooner than this if there were any significant updates. This proposal was universally agreed by the group.

The meeting concluded at 7.55pm.