

Viking Wind Farm Community Liaison Group (CLG)

Minutes of meeting: Tues 19th January 2021 at 7pm via Microsoft Teams

Attendees

Group members: Chair Andrew Archer, Neil Leask (Tingwall, Whiteness & Weisdale Community Council); Vice-chair James Garrick, John Priest (Sandsting & Aithsting Community Council); Alastair Cooper (Delting Community Council); Willie Simpson (Nesting & Lunnasting Community Council).

Representatives of Viking/SSE Renewables: Aaron Priest, stakeholder manager; Andrew Smith, development manager; Jamie Watt, consents manager; Julie Graham, community engagement manager; Ryan Maclean, site agent for RJ McLeod (RJM); Ann McAnallen, site health and safety manager for RJM; John Robertson, community liaison officer (minutes).

Representatives of SSEN Transmission: Simon James, lead project manager for Kergord and project delivery manager for Shetland Link; Greg Clarke, head of corporate affairs; Sharon Powell, community liaison manager.

Guests: Moraig Lyall and Ian Scott, Shetland Islands Council members for Shetland Central.

1. Welcome and introductions

Group chair Andrew Archer presided and sought introductions from those present.

Special announcement: Mr Clarke regretted to inform the committee that one of the contractor workers on the SSEN Transmission project had passed away the previous evening in hospital on the mainland following an illness. Work was stood down at the Kergord site today as a mark of respect.

2. Apologies

None.

3. Approval of previous minutes

Minutes from the meeting of 3rd November 2020 were approved following previous agreement through email exchanges.

4. Matters arising from previous meeting

Actions from 3 rd Nov	Outcome
1. SSER to seek information from Vestas on its plans to replace use of SF6 gas in turbines	Vestas targeting 2025
2. SSER to arrange to attend next meeting of the SIC Outdoor Access Forum	See under agenda item.6

<p>3. SSER to circulate information on expanding the CLG membership twice a year to fulfil role of the Construction Liaison Committee (CLC)</p>	<p>SSER stated its wish to add SEPA and the chair of SWEAG to the CLG membership to enable it to act as the CLC, which is a required body under the wind farm's planning consent. Mr Archer asked that SSER send an email to the four community council chairs to seek their consent to the proposed change in membership and role.</p>
<p>4. SSER to better publicise CLG dates to help attract questions</p>	<p>Completed – advert in The Shetland Times helped attract around 50 public questions. The chair and vice-chair selected 8-10 to be answered at the meeting with the rest due to be answered by early February.</p>

5. Project updates from Viking/SSER and SSEN Transmission

5a. Viking/SSER: An illustrated talk (see attached slides) was provided by Aaron Priest with additional comment from Ryan Maclean.

SSER reported on progress of the access tracks and main site compound in the Nesting section of the wind farm. Office and welfare units are onsite at the compound with more to follow. More blasting will take place at the upper level above the compound to provide laydown areas. Compound works are expected to be complete within a couple of months.

Mr Priest described the progress on floating road sections, heading east over the Burn of Crookadale into increasingly eroded peatland. He pointed out a hardstanding area for a wind turbine and a series of silt traps to prevent pollution of water courses.

At the new Sandwater Road, abutments are being constructed for the bridge across Petta Water Burn. Leca fill is to be used to help bring the floating road sections up to the required level. One final blast is to be carried out at the cut section below the Mid Kame ridge. The road is due to begin being used by construction traffic in February and handed over to the council for public use late in 2023.

Mr Priest said the public would be able to experience good views from hilltop tracks, such as at Mid Kame, once they are opened up for use by walkers and cyclists. Currently, a spur road is being constructed up to Scalla Field from the Kergord access track, which will provide access to the western part of the wind farm site.

Local contractors have been working at full capacity and providing a huge and valuable resource to RJM, Mr Priest said. The demand meant companies were able to avoid furloughing or laying off workers and were taking people on instead. By early December, over £4.5m had been spent with local contractors, he said.

Mr Maclean said RJM had 84 people on site in December, comprising 48 people from Shetland and 35 from the mainland. He expected more of a 50-50 split during the first quarter of 2021 as overall numbers increase to 118 in March. He said local contractors had been valuable and good for RJM with the company able to offer more work packages to local suppliers than it would on jobs elsewhere, due to the project's island location.

Over the next month RJM would be completing the Main Compound and progressing the Sandwater Road, including profiling the batters along the road and the cutting area between Sandwater and Kergord.

The Mid Kame access track has about 1km left to construct. Crane hard-standings will be built and work will continue on peat restoration. The new track up to Scalla Field will allow drilling and blasting to start over the next month at a borrow pit to provide stone for the turbine access tracks.

In the Nesting, or East of Sandwater, section, the first borrow pit site should be reached shortly to allow more stone to be produced for hard-standings and roads, which will be a mixture of floating and founded.

Other works in the next couple of months include road junctions at Sandwater, Nesting, Hammarigrind, Scar Quilse and Scord of Sound and forming two satellite construction compounds at Scar Quilse and Scord of Sound.

Responding to questions about Leca fill and it possibly contaminating Sandwater Loch, Mr Maclean said the Leca fill was fully fired before coming to site and would be wrapped in a geo-membrane and stone to stop it spreading. It was environmentally friendly and approved by the council roads service. He expected the sides of Sandwater Road to have a similarly high level of reinstated finish as the Kergord access track.

5b. SSEN Transmission update on the HVDC Link: An illustrated talk (see attached slides) was given by Simon James.

SSEN Transmission reported that the subsea cable is being manufactured. The current focus is on enabling works at the Kergord site with a platform being built, water courses diverted and any dirty water retained and cleaned by chemical units using benign, naturally occurring chemicals from tree bark. The sediment is returned to the earthworks on the site and the clean water released, almost as clean as drinking water, into the burn. Blasting is taking place once or twice a week to gain rock.

There are around 57 workers on site of which 25 are local, although that includes him and a project manager from SSEN Transmission who are living in Shetland. A new community liaison manager, Sharon Powell, started at the beginning of the year.

Looking at the three months ahead, SSEN Transmission is still planning the cable route and the associated traffic management with the council to reduce impact on the environment and local disruption. Survey and enabling works are to be done for onshore cable routes before the end of April, including test holes, with minimum impact on local people.

Prefab units should be delivered for stacking at Kergord as an office base and canteen during February. The workforce will increase to about 80 by April including use of local companies such as EMN and Tulloch Developments.

Mr Clarke said the transmission project was split into two with the Kergord part and the cable works, which have separate contractors. The intention is to introduce the cable team and work programme at the next CLG.

6. Outdoor Access Plan – update from SSER on leaflets, signs and consultation

The chair added this agenda item to discuss a perception that agreed consultation had not taken place between SSER and the SIC. Jamie Watt from SSER said the leaflets had been designed and put in place in locations agreed with council officer Kevin Serginson. Unsuitable signs had been redesigned and replaced. SSER and RJM would be meeting the SIC Outdoor Access Forum on 2nd February to agree how to go forward with more detailed consultation with user groups and community councils.

The chair said there was still frustration over the signs, and he had noticed issues himself, including signs which contradicted what was written in the leaflets next to them. He said it would have been more helpful and a better result would have been delivered if the promised consultation had happened. He sought and gained an assurance from SSER that no more signs would be put up before being discussed with Mr Serginson first.

7. Questions submitted by community council representatives (from residents)

Nine questions were selected for answer tonight from over 50 submitted. The rest are to follow by early February.

- i. **Will the COVID testing be ongoing, i.e. every time somebody comes up or is it a one-off? What format are the tests, e.g. two tests several days apart or a single test followed by temperature checks?**

On behalf of both projects, Mr Clarke said that everybody involved had to be tested pre-departure to or from Shetland by PCR or antigen test, depending on the contractor. This will be on an enduring basis until it is deemed appropriate to no longer require tests. Both projects require people to work from home if they can. Travel is limited to those deemed critical to the progress of both projects. Temperature testing takes place at both sites each time anyone arrives at a compound.

Mr James described the latest measures taken on the Transmission project site, which he said far exceed the requirements in government guidance. One-way systems are in operation at the compound. Face masks are worn all day, even outside when near colleagues, but not inside a vehicle on your own. If someone tests positive for Covid, the site has atomisers, misting guns and compliant suits to wear for sterilising used areas. If a driver requires to use another machine, the cab and touch points have to be sterilised.

All touch points are cleaned regularly and toilets are cleaned every half hour. All meal times and breaks are rota'd so that no more than two people at a time eat in a cabin. Eating in machines or workers' own vehicles is encouraged. Vehicles are wiped down and sterilised, Covid care packs have been issued to each SSEN employee working from home with face masks, hand-sanitiser etc.

People from outwith the workforce who come to site to carry out a specific job, such as pump repairs, or to make a delivery, are required to park separately and wear a pink sleeveless jacket while site staff remain segregated from the visitors during the task. Pink helmets are also being brought in for visitors.

RJM has just taken on a dedicated Covid compliance officer to ensure procedures are followed. Mr Maclean said masks must now be worn outside if a person is close enough to have a conversation with. The workforce is banned from entering the site offices and RJM briefings are held outside.

Mr Clarke declined to go into details about the circumstances relating to the worker who has died other than to say that the man had not been on site this year.

He said SSE believed it was doing everything it could to manage and mitigate the risk of coronavirus. However, locally based workers were not being tested at the moment although the situation remains under review. Alastair Cooper warned of the risk that a local worker with the infection could cause a part of the workforce to have to stop activities and isolate.

It was reported that shift rotation patterns have not changed on either project, although some travelling workers had agreed to stay in Shetland longer. RJM now transports workers by charter plane and they work the same weekend and all go home the following weekend. Previously, half had gone home each weekend while the others worked.

- ii. **I've heard a rumour that they are going to build temporary accommodation at the Sandwater site for construction workers. Is this correct?**

SSER confirmed there was no such plan.

- iii. **What happens during bird breeding/nesting season? Significant disturbance to habitat during construction will obviously occur, is it just accepted that this is unavoidable and assumed it will recover following completion of construction?**

Mr Priest said all construction work was done under an approved Bird Protection Plan (BPP), available [here](#) on the council planning portal. Day-to-day construction is overseen by environmental clerks of works (ECoWs) to ensure compliance. SSER also has an ornithological consultant, Atlantic Ecology, which keeps in touch with SSER and the contractor RJM.

The chair said there were lots of good plans and measures in the BPP but people did not realise that such measures were in place. He suggested SSER should dedicate a page to the bird plan in its next community newsletter – an idea taken onboard by Mr Priest.

- iv. **People are concerned about the number of stones and parts of loads that end up on the carriageway of the A970. We (TWWCC) were contacted by somebody whose windscreen was smashed by stones coming off the back of a truck. Fortunately, they weren't hurt but it could have been a lot worse. (This was reported to SSE in November.) What steps have been taken to minimise the risks to people on the roads? How are loads inspected before they leave the quarry? Are loads always covered? Why do these problems keep happening?**

Mr Priest said that following an incident in November, contractors delivering aggregates were instructed to check before leaving the quarry or site that their loads are secure, are within load limits and sheeted and also to check for stones stuck between tyres etc which might fall out on the road. A dedicated road sweeper is in use for cleaning the roads and the council sweeper can be brought in.

The chair said he had observed a lorry arriving today with a load un-sheeted. Mr Maclean said he would raise it with the contractor, however it was suggested that the sheet may have just been taken off, either manually or electronically.

- v. **Why has there been only one environmental audit so far? Aren't they meant to be monthly? When is the next one expected? What reassurances can you provide that they will be produced regularly from now on?**

Mr Priest said planning monitoring reports were being produced regularly, subject to the challenges and restrictions for Covid. So far there had been three visits to site by the planning monitoring officer with a fourth due in January. [Two reports](#) are currently available on the council planning portal website.

- vi. **Two people have raised the same concern about how the surface layer of the peat is being removed. They are concerned that the top layer is not being removed and stored carefully enough so that it can be replaced in a way that will allow it to recover and grow. Are the ECOWs satisfied that people know what they are meant to be doing? If so, why does it not seem to be happening consistently?**

Mr Priest said the ECoWs viewed the removal, preservation and reinstatement of turf as one of their top priorities each day. They provide guidance to all staff on the ground by way of toolbox talks as well as discussions with excavator drivers to ensure that the stripping is done to maintain as much of the integrity of the turves as they can. It is in the project's interests to succeed at that, ensuring as much reinstatement as possible. Hydro-seeding and other alternatives are Plan B and more expensive. Contractors are encouraged to put their most-experienced operators on the reinstatement works.

Mr Maclean said the ground conditions were variable. Reinstatement at Mid Kame was better than in Nesting where the wet ground made it more difficult to save the turves, which were also not as fibrous. A growing season will help improve the appearance of work done over this winter.

- vii. **TWWCC have concerns that cement dust from the proposed concrete batching plant at Kergord will blow off the site and end up in the watercourses. How will this be prevented?**

Mr Priest said there shouldn't be any dust. Batching plants would be fully enclosed with cement put into silos. They are required to be fully maintained and inspected.

Mr Maclean said modern wet batchers would be used, rather than dry batchers, so the cement is pumped into the mix rather than down a chute, becoming concrete before it is exposed to the open air. There is no potential for dust to blow anywhere.

Answering a follow-up question from the chair, Mr Maclean said dry cement would not be used to prime the cement pumps. A gel or liquid is used. He undertook to provide information on this pump-priming product.

[Post-meeting note from Mr Maclean: "Until we appoint a pump contractor, it is unknown what product will be used, but something similar to [Leyco Slick](#) would be our expectation."].

- viii. **What measures are in place to prevent sheep from being trapped in excavated moor around turbines, roads, borrow pits etc.? When we are caaing sheep, will construction work stop until the sheep are away from the area? Concerning the boundary fences through and around the construction site, will they be kept stockproof and in good condition at all times?**

Mr Priest said the general rule is that RJM tries to keep open excavations to a minimum so the areas of risk should be minimised. The SSE team and clerks of works keep an eye out for livestock and anything that could potentially trap them. Where there is a risk, mitigations are put in place to try to stop problems.

For caaing times, SSER would try to work with people. Good liaison and communication with the grazings clerks and committees, along with good forward planning, should enable works to be stopped in relevant areas for certain parts of the day. SSER is in touch with the grazings clerks and this contact would increase as works progressed further into common grazings areas. It was stated that a liaison meeting is to be organised with grazings representatives in February.

Boundary fences which are breached between estates or common grazings will be fenced or have permanent gates or cattle-grids put in once construction works are completed. In the meantime, temporary fencing, hurdles and gates are put in place.

- ix. **Has shadow flicker modelling for all areas around Aith & East Burrafirth, with low morning sun in Nov, Dec & Jan been shared publicly before? And can we be reminded where to find this information or can VEWf share this again please to clarify 100% that there are no issues for existing houses in these areas?**

Mr Priest said the information on shadow flicker is in Chapter 12 of the Viking Wind Farm Section 36 variation application, available on the wind farm website [here](#). The map shows that there would be no shadow flicker at properties in Aith and East Burrafirth because they sit outside the assessment area, which is the equivalent of 10 rotor diameters (1200 metres) from a turbine. If there are issues, residents should report it to SSER and/or the council as planning authority. Professional assessment could be undertaken and individual turbines could be shut down during certain conditions.

Additional question asked by the chair:

People living in the Cott road are worried about potential peat landslides. Can you tell us what the Peat Risk Register (or Management Plan) had stated about the area involved in an incident reported yesterday in the media [noted in the Planning Monitoring Officer [Audit Report 002](#)]? What caused the slide and what does that mean for the other assessments?

Mr Priest undertook to add the question to the list to be answered by early February.

8. Any other business

None.

9. Date and time of next meeting

The next meeting of the community liaison group is proposed to be held on **Tuesday 20th April 2021.**

The chair thanked all for attending. The meeting ended at around 8.58pm.

Actions agreed	Date due
1. SSER to email the four community council chairs seeking their consent to the proposed change in CLG membership and role to double up as the Construction Liaison Committee (CLC).	Not specified
2. SSER to discuss all planned outdoor access signage with SIC outdoor access officer before being finalised	Ongoing
3. SSER to consider publishing an article in its next newsletter explaining the measures and precautions contained in the Bird Protection Plan.	Not specified