

Viking Wind Farm Community Liaison Group (CLG)

Minutes of meeting: Tues 3rd November 2020 at 7pm via Microsoft Teams

Attendees

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

Representatives of Viking/SSE Renewables: Aaron Priest, stakeholder manager; Stuart Smith, site manager; Andrew Smith, development manager; Jamie Watt, consents manager; Julie Graham, community engagement manager; Ryan Maclean, site agent for RJ McLeod; 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.

Guests: Moraig Lyall, Shetland Islands Council member for Shetland Central (part meeting).

1. Welcome and introductions

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

2. Apologies

Apologies received from members Willie Simpson and John Priest. Alistair Laurenson was unable to join due to technical issues.

3. Approval of previous minutes

Minutes from the meeting of 11th August were agreed previously via email exchanges.

4. Matters arising from previous meeting

Actions from 11 th August	Outcome
1. Group members to discuss options for public access and reach an agreed position prior to the next CLG meeting.	Members had agreed the public should be invited as observers once Covid-19 restrictions make it practicable to hold meetings in public venues. In the event of disruption, a meeting may be suspended by the chair. It was noted that the chair had invited the 22 SIC elected members to take part in tonight's meeting. It was agreed that formal questions from the group should be lodged with SSE one week in advance of CLG meetings to allow time to provide answers.

2. Group members to identify a chairperson and vice-chairperson.	Mr Archer had been appointed chair and Mr Garrick as vice-chair. Positions to be reviewed annually.
3. SSER to suggest to SWEAG that discussions take place with Total regarding its arrangements for peat storage/restoration at Shetland Gas Plant.	SSE will table this at next meeting of SWEAG, scheduled for early December 2020.
4. SSE to consider/escalate the group's request that incoming workers be tested for Covid-19	See under agenda item 9, question ix.
5. SSER to circulate project contact details	Done.
6. SSER to provide traffic management plan information when available relating to anticipated vehicle numbers on the A971 during wind farm construction	This info will first be submitted to the SIC planning service.
7. Group members to consider and approve or amend the draft minutes from the CLG of 25 th February	Approved by email. The chair agreed to wait for official minutes of meetings to be produced, rather than publishing his own account of proceedings.
8. Date of next meeting to be discussed and agreed between SSE and members	This had been set by agreement for 3 rd Nov.

5. Project updates from Viking/SSER and SSEN Transmission

5a. Viking/SSER: An illustrated talk (see attached slides) was provided by Aaron Priest, Stuart Smith and Ryan Maclean.

SSER reported that the Kergord access track was now complete with Tulloch Developments having done a fantastic job to a high standard. The company had 25 local workers on site, including people who might otherwise have been laid off or furloughed. The track is a mixture of floated and founded road. SSER said Tullochs was particularly careful in how it handled the peat, having invested in specialised digger buckets and implements to minimise damage and maximise reinstatement. A network of silt traps and rubble chutes above roadside ditches helps minimise any damaging effects from dirty water run-off.

On the main wind farm site, SSER reported that the Main Compound east of Sandwater is due to be occupied by RJ McLeod before Christmas as the base for workers. Work is progressing on the access track over the hill towards Flamister, where 1.2km of mainly floated surface is now in place.

At the Sandwater end of the Mid Kame ridge, the hill is being cut away to provide the gentle gradient required for the new Sandwater road to facilitate the delivery of heavy components for the wind farm and converter station. A new junction is being formed at Sandwater onto the A970 road. RJ McLeod expects to resume work shortly on the access track up the Scord of Sound.

SSER reported that around 100 people are working on the wind farm site currently with SSER having a team of 10 in Shetland. On the main site contract, RJ McLeod had 66 people engaged as of 30th October. Of these, 36 were from Shetland including workers from large contractors EMN, Garriocks and Tullochs and nine directly employed by RJ McLeod. The

incoming workers are mainly from the Inverness area and they tend to live, travel and work together in teams. They are staying in rented houses.

RJ McLeod's numbers are to increase to around 75 by Christmas as more local workers join in. From early 2021, a charter flight service will be used to bring the travelling workers to and from Shetland as the workforce builds to 150-200 by late summer for around one year before tailing off during 2023.

SSER reported that wind turbine supplier Vestas will be on site from January 2023. It will operate laydown areas in the port of Lerwick and discussions are ongoing with the police and the council regarding transport of components to site. Overall, the workforces will peak in mid-2023 with over 500 people engaged between turbines, wind farm construction and building the HVDC station.

Discussions are ongoing with Police Scotland about workers' code of conduct, based on lessons learnt from the previous experiences with Total's gas plant. Talks are also taking place about handling problems that have arisen recently including abuse of incoming workers by islanders, which SSER said needed to be called out.

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

SSEN Transmission reported that work started on site from the end of August to build the HVDC station and AC substation at Upper Kergord along with the HVDC interconnector cable, a switching station at Noss Head, Caithness and cable connections to the existing Caithness-Moray link. Four main contractors are involved in the project, which is expected to be completed in December 2023 with commissioning completed by July 2024.

The workforce will build up under a phased approach with 35-50 on site currently, rising to a peak in summer 2022. SSEN Transmission said it was using a hybrid approach to accommodation with a split between the Sella Ness accommodation block and hotels. All but two of Transmission's management team of 9 are from Shetland and, while Mr James is not local, he will be living here for the next four years. His preference is always to recruit locally.

Principal contractor BAM Nuttall is due to start limited rock blasting in the next 2-3 weeks at the Upper Kergord site with monitoring carried out as far away as Sandwater.

In response to a question from the chair regarding Sunday working, Mr James said this was permitted under the consents for the Upper Kergord site. However, as regards the wind farm, Mr Priest said there could be deliveries and other limited activities (e.g. eventual turbine erection) on Sundays but not noisy construction work.

Agenda items 6,7, and 8: The chair agreed to delete these items due to being duplicated by questions lodged under item 9.

6. Pollution incidents at Sandwater Loch – update on causes and measures taken;
7. Outdoor Access Plan – update from Viking/SSER on replacement of restricted access signs and consultation;
8. Recreation Management Plan – update from Viking/SSER on the consultation plan and timetable.

9. Questions from community council representatives

- i. **The chair asked about proposed use of the A971 west road by construction traffic.**

SSER said use by vehicles under 3.5 tonnes was currently allowed. Information on proposals to use the road for heavier vehicles and abnormal loads would be provided to the council planning service and, thereafter, via the SIC planning portal.

- ii. **The chair asked whether all consents were in place for RJ McLeod to “move up onto the hill” to do wind farm construction.**

SSER confirmed that these were in place. When it was suggested that the Bird Protection Plan was not approved yet, Jamie Watt explained that this was the result of an admin error by the council and this plan related not to the wind farm but to consent to build the North Compound for which the conditions are still being discharged.

Questions provided in advance:

- iii. **Do Viking intend to supply any of their electricity from the wind farm to local (Shetland) consumers or is it all intended for the mainland market?**

Mr Priest said the wind farm's output was a wholesale product so was not sold directly to consumers, but a proportion would stay in Shetland and keep the lights on, with the surplus exported for use by wider GB customers. Details of a connection between the converter station and the local grid will be provided later by SSEN Networks and SSEN Distribution. Security of supply is a matter for SSEN Distribution.

- iv. **Were the recent pollution incidents caused by bad design of the prevention measures or poor implementation? What steps have been taken to prevent a reoccurrence? The chair said people felt the silt fences looked a bit haphazard.**

Mr Priest outlined two recent events. An incident of silt entering the Sandwater Loch was reported to SEPA by RJ McLeod in late September as a result of mitigation measures being temporarily overwhelmed in heavy rain. Very quickly, residual mitigation and control measures were implemented on the back of that. Since then, there has been continual review and adaption of those measures and proactive planning of additional measures to prevent further incidents.

A further incident was reported to SEPA on Saturday 24 October by a journalist who saw silted water entering Sandwater Loch. While the journalist was there it was also looked at by an environmental clerk of works who instigated remedial works. Following investigation, it is suspected that silted water flowed through an underlying, and previously unknown, hydrological system bypassing the mitigation measures from a small section of the site. This flow emerged within the roadside ditch area and measures have been taken to divert this silted water back towards the mitigation measures.

Despite public reports to the contrary, the pollution prevention measures are holding up well. Mr Maclean explained that silt fencing is not in place to stop the water but to allow clean water to pass while collecting the silt.

- v. **The EIA report on the Viking website says that the individual turbines must be able to be switched off at certain times if they cause shadow flicker. How will this be implemented when the site is operational (i.e. what steps happen**

between somebody suffering shadow flicker and the turbine being switched off?)

SSER said the Environmental Impact Assessment for the wind farm concluded that shadow flicker at all receptors would not be significant – under 30 hours per year. Turbines can be fitted with controls to enable them to be shut down during periods when shadow flicker could occur. In the event of a complaint to the planning authority, a specialist assessment would be undertaken and, if an issue is established, individual turbines would be shutdown when conditions required this.

vi. **How does the decommissioning bond work? Is the money lodged independently of SSE? How much is it? How can the community be reassured that it is sufficient?**

Andrew Smith said discussions with the council were still ongoing. SSE had submitted a proposal in July last year representing the decommissioning cost, based on assessments for other wind farms. Such bonds are commonplace for all SSE's wind farms. The SIC can get this amount assessed by a third-party independent expert – which it has done – and SSE is still awaiting the outcome of that process. There is scope to review the agreement every five years to take account of changing techniques and best practice. The final decommissioning plan won't be agreed until three years beforehand.

Alastair Cooper said the council had extensive experience in this area, dealing with Sullom Voe Terminal and 17 oil companies. He was reasonably content that the council would come to the right decision for the community on Viking's decommissioning bond.

vii. **The outdoor access plan agreed with SIC contains lots of detail about how the public will be kept informed and how continued access to the site during construction will be maintained. The plan includes details of the various signs and leaflets that will be produced but very little of this appears to have happened. Why hasn't the plan agreed with SIC been implemented?**

Jamie Watt said that, with work having started on the wind farm infrastructure itself, the required information leaflet had been agreed and would be printed and placed at key points where recreational users are most likely to come into contact with works. The locations for deposit will be agreed with the ECoW and the council's outdoor access officer and implemented as soon as possible.

SSER will engage with its contractor and ensure that appropriate signage is in place to keep recreational users safe during the construction phase. The current signage advises a 300m separation is maintained between the public and ongoing construction works on what is a defined construction site.

In relation to information-sharing we are now seeking to engage with the community liaison group and the outdoor access forum on how best to engage throughout the construction phase to agree what information would be useful and how it should be shared, beyond providing it to this group and putting it on the project website.

Mr Watt agreed to contact the outdoor access officer about being invited to the next meeting of the forum.

viii. **Will any of the equipment installed for Viking or SSEN use SF6 gas or will it use the more environmentally friendly alternatives such as G3?**

Vestas' turbine switchgear will contain SF6 gas. Vestas, and the wider industry, has ongoing R&D programmes into viable alternatives. The gas is self-contained within sealed units and any related installation and maintenance is undertaken by authorised and trained staff to ensure compliance with stringent handling and storage requirements. The same applies to decommissioning of plant at end of life. The chair requested that Vestas be asked what its timescale is for replacing use of the gas.

Mr James said that, for the first time ever, SSEN Transmission would be using an alternative to SF6 called "clean air" technology by Siemens, which is basically slightly enriched air. There is only one other place in the world where it is currently on trial. They are going to try this because they believe in the reduction of SF6 use and they will keep everybody posted on progress. This will be used at the AC Substation but in other areas such as cable terminations, bearings and switchgear etc, small amounts of SF6 has to be used as the technology and science hasn't caught up yet.

ix. **Given that you can now get COVID tests that give results in 12 minutes, why do you continue to refuse to test? It would reduce the risk of asymptomatic cases being brought to Shetland and so reduce the risk to the local community.**

Additional question submitted on Covid:

I know it's short notice, but I am sure that people would like to know what impact the introduction of the Scottish Covid Local Protection Levels has had on your risk management. I would assume that quite a lot of the guys who are coming up are coming from level 3 areas and so this obviously presents an increased risk to local people. I would be grateful if we could get an update on Tuesday. For people who are not part of the more active anti-Viking lobby, the Covid risk is probably the number one concern.

On behalf of both projects, Greg Clarke said the position had not changed since the previous update to the CLG. SSE was not testing the workforce as standard. The latest government guidance had been reviewed, the tiered approach which came into force on Monday had been taken into consideration and there was nothing that SSE needed to change at this stage. This position was kept under review constantly, it would stay in line with government guidance and SSE would keep the community informed on it.

In response to the chair stating that he hadn't met anybody who didn't think that testing would make things safer, Mr Clarke said robust measures were in place across both projects. He denied a suggestion that the lack of testing was about money. When it was pointed out that testing would help pick up asymptomatic cases, Mr Clarke acknowledged the point but noted that testing in itself is not infallible and the important thing is the right behaviours and mitigation to reduce the risk, reiterating that all works have been fully risk-assessed in line with government guidance and will remain under constant review in line with any changes to guidance.

Ultimately, it was the behaviour of individuals, including those in the workforce, that would help and, to that end, the emphasis needed to continue to be on people taking responsibility for their own conduct, Mr Clarke said. A requirement is in place where

every worker travelling to Shetland has to complete a self-declaration form to say they don't have symptoms and have not been in contact with people with symptoms.

Mr Cooper commented that there were a lot of contractors coming and going from Shetland and none had instituted testing other than the oil companies. Following further debate, the chair said SSE could test if it wanted to but chose not to, which was a position he continued to disagree with.

- x. **Blasting has been taking place close to an SSSI (Sandwater loch). There are five other SSSIs close to planned turbines, including the Burn of Lunklet. Will they blast there as well? What measures will be taken to prevent pollution/disturbance of habitat?**

Mr Priest said there was a particular requirement to blast at the new Sandwater Road to create a road gradient suitable for transporting abnormal loads to Kergord. This was preferable to drilling and rock-breakers, in most people's view. Where blasting was to take place in other parts of the site, mainly borrow pits, there would be suitable environmental protections and pollution prevention measures in place.

Outwith the borrow pits, Mr Maclean said blasting would be required in other areas of the site to create the required road alignments, particularly the vertical alignments. RJ McLeod will make use of permitted micro-siting to ensure that works stayed as far from water courses and SSSIs as possible.

- xi. **The SIC has encouraged the public to monitor the construction and report any perceived breaches of planning consent. However, signs have been put up banning people from within 300 metres of ongoing and completed construction. How is this to be reconciled?**

Mr Priest said people were being asked to observe a 300m separation from ongoing works to help ensure their health and safety. Application of common sense was the approach that SSEER wanted to take. People were at liberty to go to other parts of the site where there were no works. Mr Watt said people would not be banned from coming within 300m of the site but the aim was to try to redirect them.

- xii. **There have been reports of walkers on the Sandwater road feeling intimidated by RJ McLeod vehicles driving by with lights flashing. Is this a deliberate strategy by the developer to keep the public at a distance? If so, why is that need felt?**

Mr Maclean said he would happily switch the beacons off but they are actually a legal requirement under Health and Safety Executive regulations. In response to a follow-up question from the chair about traffic through the Kergord valley, Mr Maclean said the only workers that RJ McLeod allowed to drive through there are its own staff. Others had to go the long way round (A970 and A971) during the earlier works at Scord of Sound. The B road through the valley can be used by wind farm-related vehicles under 3.5 tonnes without restriction. Vehicles over 3.5t can use it subject to the agreed traffic management plan.

- xiii. **Question from Mr Cooper: an independent planning monitoring officer has been visiting the Viking site – will that report be made available in the public domain, which he is keen to see as an independent assessment of what is going on?**

Mr Smith said SSER would issue the report to the council, which would decide what to do with it. These visits would take place once a month.

10. Possible extension of group to act as Construction Liaison Committee – verbal report by Viking/SSER

Andrew Smith proposed that the number of participants in the CLG be expanded twice a year to fulfil SSER’s planning consent requirement to set up a Construction Liaison Committee. The extra participants would be from bodies such as the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency, SIC planning and local ecology interests. This would avoid unnecessary duplication of meetings which cover similar issues. It was agreed that SSER will provide more information on the proposal to allow the community council members to decide.

11. Any other business

Verge damage: The chair witnessed a sub-contractor’s vehicle cause damage to the outer edge of a passing place on the Sandwater road. Mr Maclean undertook to look into it and get it fixed. Mr Priest said RJ McLeod has been trying to stop unnecessary use of the passing places by wind farm-related vehicles. It had also increased the amount of road sweeping to keep the surface clean.

12. Date and time of next meeting

The next meeting of the community liaison group is proposed to be held on **Tuesday 19th January 2021**. The chair asked for there to be more publicity in an effort to elicit more questions from the community regarding the projects.

The chair thanked all for attending. The meeting ended at around 9.20pm.

Actions agreed	Date due
1. SSER to seek information from Vestas on its plans to replace use of SF6 gas in turbines	Not set
2. SSER to arrange to attend next meeting of the SIC Outdoor Access Forum	Not known
3. SSER to circulate information on expanding the CLG membership twice a year to fulfil role of the Construction Liaison Committee	Not set
4. SSER to better publicise CLG dates to help attract questions	5 th -12 th Jan