

Meeting Minutes

Doc No	LN000046-COM-CA-MOM-0003 - Viking CLG minutes 09/11/21	
Meeting Title:	Viking Community Liaison Group	
Date/Time/Venue:	09/11/21 at 7pm – Microsoft Teams	
Issue Date:	03/12/21	
Attendees:	Chair Andrew Archer, Tingwall, Whiteness & Weisdale Community CI	Vice-chair James Garrick, Sandsting & Aithsting CC
Willie Simpson, Nesting & Lunnasting CC	John Priest, Sandsting & Aithsting CC	Alistair Laurenson, Nesting & Lunnasting CC
Alastair Cooper, Delting CC	Theo Smith, SIC councillor – West	Ian Scott, SIC councillor - Central
Neil Grant, SIC director of Development Services	Jonathan Swale, NatureScot	Sharon Powell, SSEN Transmission
Craig Park, SSEN Transmission	Chris Finnigan, SSEN Transmission	Aimi Munro, SSE Renewables
Aaron Priest, SSE Renewables (SSER)	Carolyn Wilson, SSE Renewables	Ryan Maclean, RJ McLeod
Jamie Watt, SSE Renewables	Julie Graham, SSER	John Robertson (minutes), SSER
Media – Daniel Bennett, BBC Radio Shetland	Media – Hans Marter, Shetland News	Media – Ryan Nicolson, Shetland Times

Item	Agenda Item	Action	Due						
1.0	Welcome and introductions Group chair Andrew Archer presided.								
2.0	Apologies – James Muir, SSEN Transmission								
3.0	Approval of previous minutes - Formally approved.								
4.0	Matters arising								
	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Previous actions</th> <th>Status</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1. Aaron Priest to provide information on the duration of monitoring of peat restoration areas and areas of disturbed peat. Additionally, to explain how borrow pit reinstatement will be monitored.</td> <td>Verbal update provided at meeting: Long-term peat monitoring will come under the Habitat Management Plan, the HMP officer and the Shetland Windfarm Environmental Advisory Group. Borrow pits will be reprofiled and monitored on a long-term basis.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2. Are the bird scarers being taken away?</td> <td>It was confirmed following the previous meeting that they were being removed.</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Previous actions	Status	1. Aaron Priest to provide information on the duration of monitoring of peat restoration areas and areas of disturbed peat. Additionally, to explain how borrow pit reinstatement will be monitored.	Verbal update provided at meeting: Long-term peat monitoring will come under the Habitat Management Plan, the HMP officer and the Shetland Windfarm Environmental Advisory Group. Borrow pits will be reprofiled and monitored on a long-term basis.	2. Are the bird scarers being taken away?	It was confirmed following the previous meeting that they were being removed.		
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5.0	<p><u>Project update presentations from Viking/SSER and SSEN Transmission</u></p>		
5.1	<p>SSEN Transmission update on construction of the HVDC Convertor Station and the HVDC cable link.</p> <p>Prior to the update, Chris Finnigan answered a question submitted by a community resident:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>Residents of the Cott road have reported that the road is showing signs of damage following the recent truck traffic. What is your assessment of the damage? Was a survey of the road condition performed before the work started? When will the damage be repaired?</i></p> <p>He said a number of assessments were done as part of the project and to comply with council Section 36 requirements. As well as a pre-commencement survey, a survey is done on completion and any damage identified between those two times is made right. It is likely that such works would be done by sub-contractor Tulloch Construction.</p> <p>Mr Archer asked about speed monitoring of works vehicles on the Cott road. Mr Finnigan said speed was a regular topic for team toolbox talks, briefings and procedures. Monitoring equipment is not used but reports of speeding are treated on a case-by-case basis. He was not aware of cases that had been escalated to him but he would look into the matter with main contractor NKT. He said the message was clear to contractors that speeding on the Cott road was not acceptable. ACTION</p> <p>Craig Park updated the group on the convertor station works at Upper Kergord. He said it was Month 15 on site with works continuing very well and ahead of programme. Erecting the steelwork for the main and ancillary buildings has been continuing and cladding fitted in an effort to get them weather-proof by December. With the main platform constructed, there is still cabling and ducting works to do as well as considerable landscaping to help “disappear” the building into the landscape. There have been no pollution incidents due to good management.</p> <p>Principal contractor BAM Nuttall had managed the construction well, with no serious safety incidents so far. Mechanical and electrical fit-out will be the next major stage for the buildings. Material supplies have been a concern but all required steelworks and cladding materials were on site, allowing the contractor to work without disruption. The cement shortage has also not hindered concrete pours on site.</p> <p>Towards spring 2022 the HVDC technology contractor is expected to bring the “clever technology” used to switch power from generation to transmission. Engagement with local suppliers is continuing along with efforts to bring more local people in to work on the site.</p> <p>Mr Finnigan spoke about installation of the cabling link. Over 75 per cent of the land cable duct installation and backfill is complete with 4.7km of ducting between Kergord and Stenswall. Around 1.3km (50%) has been completed along the A971 between Scord of Sound and Stenswall. Site access 1 has been completed on the haul road on Cott road, towards the landfall area at Weisdale Voe and up from the Cott road to the Scord of Sound. The section from Scord of Sound towards the landfall site has started and could be finished by Christmas. Joint construction and pulling the cable will start in the new year until the summer. The land cable is to start arriving in Shetland in December. SSEN Transmission is very pleased with</p>	CF	

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5.2	<p>how the work is going in Shetland, particularly with the reinstatement of backfill and with peat reinstatement, which had been better than hoped for.</p> <p>On the offshore marine works, pre-lay surveys have been completed as well as the potential unexploded ordnance survey, with no ordnance found along the cable route. The landfall horizontal direct drilling works at Caithness have been completed, which was one of the major risks for the entire Shetland HVDC Link project. Boulder-clearing works could start at the end of November or into December to allow successful burial of the subsea cable.</p> <p>Mr Archer asked what disruption could be expected for Cott road residents from laying ducts across the Cott road. Mr Finnigan said it should be minimal but he would check on that. ACTION</p> <p>SSER update on construction of the wind farm</p> <p>Mr Priest discussed a series of slides showing works in progress. He said 59km of road network had been installed to initial construction standard (about 86 per cent) out of total network of 69km. Twelve turbine bases have been poured out of 47 currently excavated or under construction out of 103 and 73 of the crane pads are in place. About 200 people are on site, of which about 80 are local. In addition, Siemens-BAM has about 30 staff on the Viking AC Substation at Upper Kergord and will increase to about 56 in January then 83 in May.</p> <p>Cabling between turbine arrays and a single substation at Upper Kergord is due to begin in spring. Total spend with the local supply chain to date is about £15m with 68 local suppliers, 26 of whom are directly contracted on the construction process.</p> <p>Mr Priest responded to the following question from residents:</p> <p><i>Can you provide more details of what you are proposing under your latest planning application? (2018/335/DCON41) It affects both TWW and Nesting and Lunnasting CCs. It would be useful if you could explain why you need to dig up more ground and why the approaches are different (e.g. number of trenches) at the different locations.</i></p> <p>He said these were not new planning applications but rather about discharging Condition 12 of the existing Section 36 planning consent which sets a default arrangement for cables to be routed to the substation along the route of the road network. The condition also allows for alternative routes to be submitted to the planning authority for approval where appropriate. What is involved is three potentially significantly shorter routes with less excavation, less environmental impact and routes which would be more remote. They would also potentially avoid disturbing already reinstated peat and drainage in some areas and avoid potentially significant traffic management being required on the A970 for one of the routes as well as not having to move existing roadside utilities. Such alterations to cabling arrangements were a common process for any wind farm development to provide a better and more practical approach, he said.</p> <p>Vehicle access to wind farm site roads is soon to be restricted further by installation of five remotely operated security barriers. The site Community Hub is in regular use at the Main Compound for visiting groups and more than 20 groups, including local media, have already had site tours, which are now winding down for the winter.</p> <p>Alastair Cooper said that it was probably not appropriate for some council representatives to tour the site before certain planning conditions had been fulfilled</p>	CF	

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	<p>by SSE Renewables. Mr Priest said hopefully the visit would take place in the spring.</p> <p>An interactive map is online showing the archaeological finds and investigations taking place on site, which can be viewed at https://arcg.is/1nyibD0</p> <p>On community benefit, a slide showed that 87 applications had been approved, worth £216,331 with 22 further applications pending. In engaging with the community, SSE had produced five newsletters with another due around the end of the year. The Lerwick office in Stewart Building is open 10-3 Tues-Thurs each week.</p> <p>Mr Archer received an assurance that the road barriers would not affect people who want to walk into the hills, provided they keep away from construction activity.</p>		
6.0	<p>Borrow pit at Newing, Nesting</p> <p>Willie Simpson explained that this item had been requested for addition to the agenda by a member of Nesting & Lunnasting Community Council, seeking an update.</p> <p>Mr Priest said there had been correspondence with the residents at Newing to explore a meeting date. At the moment, another Nesting borrow pit (NBP05) is producing material of a high-enough grade to provide capping for the roads in the South Nesting area and ongoing concrete work. This had pushed back a decision on NBP06, near Newing, towards the end of the first quarter of 2022. If the results in that existing borrow pit continue to be as positive as they are at the moment then it reduces the potential requirement for the borrow pit at Newing. But the project needed to reserve the right to open the new borrow pit if the material at NBP05 doesn't meet the grade or quantities. He said nothing was going to happen on the new borrow pit without a meeting with residents first. A date was now being</p>		

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	<p>looked at for that meeting in the new year. He said further details should be heard by the residents first along with the community council and SIC ward members.</p> <p>Mr Archer said one of the residents had phoned him with a sense of frustration that the meeting hadn't happened yet. Mr Priest said he had written back to the residents and there had been "to-ing and fro-ing" on dates that suit everybody. In the meantime, the existing borrow pit was producing material of the required quality so the "goal posts" on the dates were pushing out. The important thing was that nothing was going to happen with the borrow pit until that meeting happened.</p>		
7.0	<p>Questions from community council representatives</p> <p>Questions were submitted in advance via Tingwall, Whiteness & Weisdale CC and Sandsting & Aithsting CC while others were added on the night.</p> <p>1. In recent publicity, it has become apparent that SSE/VE are proposing to use grass seed mixes to initiate peatland restoration, in order that species such as sphagnum moss and cotton grass will establish later. Please could the developers confirm this and elaborate on how they hope to achieve such restoration successfully?</p> <p>Mr Priest said peat restoration is a 20-year process. In Plan A, for reinstatement of peat, turves are used wherever possible for initial reinstatement. The actual construction disturbance on the wind farm is 96 hectares and the Habitat Management Plan (HMP) restoration plan is for 260ha. A lot of the areas to be reinstated are heavily eroded. Where turf is not available there is an agreed seed mix. The ecological clerk of works in conjunction with NatureScot has approved a seed mix for rapid generation to provide, along with turves, structure and stability on the surface. It's a seed mix that includes species that occur naturally in the surrounding landscape and are adapted to the climatic conditions in the hills in Shetland. Through additional seeding, the HMP intervention and natural propagation, the surrounding natural species slowly move in to replace the nursery crop and nursery species and provide cover that is more in tune with the wider surroundings.</p> <p>Beyond that, the HMP kicks in with the HMP officer and overseen by the Shetland Windfarm Environmental Advisory Group (SWEAG). One of their jobs is to manage the ongoing propagation of all the different areas and, where needed, there will be additional sowing and transplantation. After a few years, once the restoration areas settle and show signs of generation and the surface area is stabilised, then sphagnum moss will be incorporated. It lends itself well to transplantation and colonisation in these areas. Ultimately, phase 1 of restoration is to move excavated peat material to these eroded areas and areas identified in the HMP; to tie in hags, provide a stable surface, prevent further erosion and emissions of CO2. Phase 2 is a longer process introducing natural grasses or sphagnum moss, gully blocking, hydrological management and reprofiling the area, all in the longer term to encourage blanket bog conditions to re-establish.</p> <p>Mr Cooper asked if sphagnum moss was a better medium for capturing carbon than trees. Mr Priest said he was no expert but he understood sphagnum moss was one of the key mechanisms for forming new peat and ultimately it was a plant that was core to re-establishing healthy living blanket bog.</p> <p>2. We asked last year about how turbine blades would be disposed of. We are aware that there have been some technical developments since then. How many blades do you expect to have to replace during the 25-year licence period? How and where will blades be disposed of at the end of their life?</p>		

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	<p>Mr Priest said it was expected that all Viking's blades would reach the end of their life expectancy without the need for replacement. There is an ongoing inspection and maintenance process. Across SSE's fleet of wind turbines, historically 0.3 per cent of blades have been replaced over the lifetime of the turbines. With 103 turbines on Viking and 309 blades it should be less than one blade needing to be replaced over the whole process of the wind farm but zero blades based on current expectations.</p> <p>SSE is part of a wider industry initiative to minimise waste from blades, looking at methods to recycle blades into high-grade materials that can be used in other manufacturing processes. There is an EU directive in place aiming to prevent landfilling of blade materials, which comes into effect in 2025. That target sets a new impetus on the current research and investment. Everybody is very confident that there will be a solution in place. There needs to be a quick solution but there will be one comfortably in place for the time Viking is ultimately decommissioned.</p> <p>3. There have been several letters to Shetland News recently about the impact of micro plastics shed from wind turbine blades. Please can you answer the questions put to you in the letter from Save Shetland on 3rd November, particularly: What is the estimated quantity of micro plastics that will be shed from the Viking wind farm over its life? What will the impact of this be on our drinking water? Can you give a categorical assurance there will be no health impacts to our community from the particles that are shed from the turbine blades?</p> <p>Mr Priest said letters highlighted a report from The Turbine Group in Norway but he had not been able to find any details on the group or establish whether they had any expertise or credentials in the field or whether the paper was an academic one or peer-reviewed. All SSE's turbine blades – and Viking's ones would be no exception to that – are inspected and maintained to ensure that the integrity of the blades is maintained. Essentially, it means it is part of the ongoing maintenance programme to ensure that the turbines operate safely with maximum efficiency and don't need to be replaced over their lifetime. All SSE's and VEFW's blades will come with leading edge protection as standard. SSE has a long-standing and proven track record of minimising and negating blade damage, as borne out by the blade replacement statistics he quoted earlier. The quantities of eroded material are absolutely minimal and as a consequence there is no expectation to measure what are relatively minute quantities.</p> <p>Asked if he thought the figures quoted in the Norwegian report were wrong, Mr Priest said the authors would need to be asked that but they bore no relation to SSE's fleet of wind turbines or to the long-standing protections that SSE has in place to protect blades from erosion. It was in SSE's commercial interest to make sure the blades are not eroding to that kind of level and don't need to be replaced.</p> <p>Asked about possible contamination of Shetland's water supply, Mr Priest said the effects on the supply would be nil. Mr Cooper said he understood the drinking water supply for the north and west Mainland came from the hills around Ronas Hill and Eela Water and such like, which were well out of the wind turbine zone. However, there could be one or two properties with private water supplies.</p>		
8.0	Any other business – no items raised		
9.0	Date and time of next meeting – members agreed to meet on Tues 18 th Jan 2022 at 7pm. Due to Covid-19 considerations, a decision will be made closer to	JR send invitations	

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	<p>the time as to whether the meeting will be in a public venue or on Teams once more.</p> <p>The chair thanked everyone for attending and the meeting closed at 8.14pm.</p>		