



Cowal and Trossachs Forest District Wind Farm – Bachan Burn Community Forum Minutes

Date: 18th March 2014

Venue: Royal Marine Hotel, Dunoon

Present: Laura Jeffrey (LJ) (PNE WIND UK), David Pool (DP) (Forestry Commission Scotland), Katherine Newlands (KN) (PNE WIND UK), Kirsty Leiper (KL) (MHP Communications), Alastair Mackinnon (AM) (Dunoon Community Council), Alan Stewart (AS) (South Cowal Community Council), Willie Lynch WL (Dunoon Community Council), Fulton McInnes (FM) (Hunters Quay Community Council), Jim Wilson (JW) (Hunters Quay Community Council), Jordan Ritchie (JR) (Hunters Quay Community Council), Robert Aldam (RA) (Kilmun Community Council), Lynn O’Keefe (LO) (Kilmun Community Council).

1. Welcome and introductions

KL welcomed all those present for attending and for the minute everyone introduced themselves briefly.

LJ – Project Manager, PNE WIND UK

KN – Communications Manager, PNE WIND UK

AM – Dunoon Community Council

LO – Kilmun Community Council

RA – Kilmun Community Council

FM – Hunters Quay Community Council

JW – Hunters Quay Community Council

WL – Dunoon Community Council

JR – Hunters Quay Community Council

AS – South Cowal Community Council

DP - DP – Forestry Liaison Officer (FLO), Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS)

KL – Account Director, MHP Communications, and Chair

2. Apologies

KL advised that unfortunately a number of community councils were unable to attend, including Sandbank Community Council and Bute Community Council.

KL advised that due to the distance, Inverkip and Wemyss Bay Community Council would not be attending. KL also advised that she is yet to gather a response from Gourrock Community Council regarding their participation.



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3. Matters arising from minutes of previous meeting/approval of minutes

KL advised that she had circulated the minutes a number of times to those present. KL advised that she had received comments and that these were reflected in the last version of the minutes circulated. KL moved to approve the minutes, which was seconded by RA.

4. Participation/naming of group

KL outlined that the previous meeting highlighted concern regarding the use of 'liaison' in the name of the group. As such, KL asked if there were any further thoughts or suggestions as to the naming of the group.

RA explained that he would suggest 'Community Information Group', whilst FM also suggested 'Community Forum'. It was agreed by all present that the group would be called a 'Community Forum' going forward.

KL highlighted that the participation of Cowal Marketing Group was discussed at the previous meeting, and that she felt it necessary to raise participation in the group again due to an exchange with Philip Norris that evening.

KL explained that Philip Norris had recently been in touch via email to request he attend the meeting. KL had advised via email that the forum had agreed at the previous meeting that in order to limit numbers in the group, Cowal Marketing Group was not to participate as a full member of the group. However, KL explained that she highlighted that, given Mr Norris's involvement in the community council, Dunoon Community Council were considering using the flexibility offered with the second seat to bring Cowal Marketing to the table. KL also highlighted that PNE had repeatedly offered to meet with Cowal Marketing Group directly to discuss the proposals and their participation in the Bachan Burn Community Forum (BBCF), but that the group were yet to accept this offer.

KL explained that Mr Norris had arrived at the hotel that evening to join the meeting as an observer, and that KL had reiterated the points above. KL also highlighted the opportunities for the Cowal Marketing Group to present to the BBCF on subjects such as tourism.

KL asked Dunoon Community Council if they had discussed allowing Cowal Marketing Group participation through the use of their second seat – as agreed at the previous meeting. WL highlighted that the community council had discussed this issue and felt that it was difficult to bring them on board as there could be a potential conflict.

RA highlighted that he felt there should be participation from them in the group. Whilst AS reiterated that the previous agreement had been made to ensure that the group remained



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manageable in size and highlighted that the forum needed to have boundaries, as this could open up membership to a range of organisations.

RA suggested that Mr Norris be invited back for participation in the meeting, whilst JW explained that having witnessed the exchange, this would not be appropriate.

KL advised that PNE would contact Mr Norris directly to discuss his participation in the group moving forward.

5. Forthcoming public exhibitions (26/27 March)

KL explained that from recent correspondence those present were aware that PNE would be holding public exhibitions on the 26/27th March.

KN explained that leaflets had been delivered locally, and highlighted that they were delivered within a 5km radius from the site, stretched to include Hunters Quay and Toward.

RA explained that not all residents within Kilmun had received leaflets but were aware of their distribution. KL explained that there were leaflets available that evening and that RA was able to take some away to be displayed in a central location for residents to pick up.

LO asked KN why PNE had chosen a 5km radius. KN explained that PNE used the leaflets to target those living closest to the site.

LO highlighted that she felt there would be less of a turnout if the exhibitions were not well advertised, to which KN also explained that the leaflets were not the only means of communicating the proposals. KN highlighted that there would be advertisements in the Dunoon Advertiser and the Buteman ahead of the events. KN also explained that posters were available that evening for the community councils to display in their own noticeboards, should they wish.

KN also highlighted that PNE would consider feedback on the areas for distribution ahead of the second round of exhibitions.

WL highlighted that he felt the distribution area should focus on Cowal and AS added that if it was to be stretched further the boundaries would have to be clearly defined, as he questioned where the information sharing would stop.

LO asked if the distribution area would impact upon the community benefit area. KN advised that the two were not linked.



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KN provided an overview to what members of the public are likely to see at the public exhibition. KN advised that in addition to the panels, there would be an interactive 3D computer generated model available. KN explained that this is used at this stage instead of photomontages and allows visitors to the exhibition to see the proposals from different viewpoints.

LO requested clarification from KN as to how far the computer model would allow visitors to see the plans from, i.e. would you be able to use a location on the Clyde Coast to try and see the plans from on the model.

KN explained that she would check and, if possible, ensure that the boundary was increased for the exhibition. JW highlighted that he would also like this to happen.

6. AOB

LJ provided a short overview of the proposals, explaining that the met mast would be erected in April.

RA asked how old the wind data for the site will be upon submission of the application. LJ explained that the met mast would provide a significant amount of data, LJ also highlighted that this would be supplemented with recent NOABL wind data purchased by PNE.

LO stated she understood NOABL data had been collected between the mid 1970s & 80s and was 30-40 years out of date.

WL highlighted that if the data includes the recent November wind speeds then it should be weighted, as he believed that the weather had been particularly extreme.

LJ explained that DECC released data on a regular basis and that the data used by PNE to support their proposals would be recent.

WL asked if PNE will provide a photomontage of the proposals. LJ explained that they would be produced for the second round of exhibitions and at the first exhibitions the computer generated model would be available.

WL highlighted that he thought they were always provided. LJ explained that they are often not produced until the studies are complete and the company is confident as to where the turbines will be sited. LJ reiterated that the first round of exhibitions is intended to communicate to the community that PNE intends to bring forward detailed proposals, whilst the second round of exhibitions will display the intended detailed proposals. LJ explained that they want to involve the community in the development of the proposals, but appreciate that there would be a certain level of frustration at not being able to view the finalised plans at this early stage.



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RA highlighted that he believed there was a European law which stopped PNE from submitting a planning application without 12 months of detailed wind speed data. LJ requested clarification from RA on the law that he referred to. RA replied that was for PNE to investigate. LO highlighted that there was a previous application which had been submitted on old data and it resulted in an unviable project and a loss of public money.

LJ highlighted that PNE was a commercial company, and as such the company had to be confident in the wind speeds prior to submitting an application. LJ explained that once erected, the wind speeds at the mast will be constantly monitored and recorded.

JW highlighted that once the met mast was erected it would only be monitoring the summer months data. LJ confirmed that PNE would not submit an application on external data alone. JW highlighted that the application would only have six months of monitoring and RA added that PNE is wasting money if they don't have the right wind speeds. LJ reiterated that PNE would not submit their application until it was confident in the wind data. KL confirmed with RA that PNE was also not using any public money for the application and is a commercial venture.

AS highlighted that this topic was discussed at length at the previous meeting. RA responded that he had learnt that the wind speeds were constantly checked and recorded and that he presumed that if the wind speeds were not correct they will reassess. LJ confirmed that this was correct. AS also confirmed that no public money was being spent on the application or the mast.

JW asked why PNE would be applying for a 25 year consent and highlighted that he felt Argyll and Bute Council could not object to the plans. LJ confirmed that the timeframe was determined by planning authorities and that Argyll and Bute Council could object.

FM highlighted that the application would be decided by the Scottish Government and JW added that Argyll and Bute Council would be a statutory consultee. LJ also confirmed that if Argyll and Bute Council did object this would automatically trigger a public local inquiry.

FM asked what input FCS had in the decision making process and LO asked how much had been paid to the FCS for the land option. LO outlined that she felt that since Scottish Ministers owned the land it was technically 'our' land.

DP explained that he understood that the FCS did not receive anything until the wind farm was operational. LJ highlighted that FCS had specific targets in terms of developing renewable energy on the National Forest Estate. LO asked how much money the FCS was receiving in total from developers. DP explained that he was not aware of this figure, and KL referred LO to the Audit Scotland report into the rationale for Forestry Commission Scotland



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appointing their energy developers for the renewables development opportunities. LJ explained that it may be possible to get general statistics from FCS, however it was unlikely that the amounts for land options per developer would be available at this stage. DP highlighted that if anyone had specific questions they are free to ask him directly and he will find out if the information is available.

FM asked what the attraction is of putting a wind farm in a forest. LJ highlighted that there would be a supporting forest strategy to accompany the plans. LJ also explained the process behind the FCS Lot tenders.

FM asked why this forest had been chosen, and LJ explained that PNE considered a significant number of forests and this one had been selected because there are very high wind speeds, there are no statutory planning or environmental designations that would prevent development, there is potential to connect to the grid, access is deemed feasible and there are no obvious aviation constraints, amongst other things. DP also explained that it will be a small percentage of FCS estate that wind farms will sit on. DP also highlighted that there would be compensatory planting works, and that the developer needs to identify land elsewhere for this to happen. LJ added that, as a company, PNE was looking for land across Scotland for this to take place on.

AS asked whether it was possible to put in natural hardwood, and DP explained that the FCS would be exploring a range of options, and it is unlikely that the forest would be replaced exactly like for like due to a number of factors.

RA asked what the council had zoned the area for. LJ said she didn't have that information to hand and explained that she would come back to RA on this point. AS asked if the council would zone a forest. RA explained that all areas are listed in the local plan and AS clarified that the local plan is currently being redrawn.

LJ highlighted that she will come back to the forum with clarification on the sites current zoning in the Local Development Plan (LDP), noting that the site is located within a 'potentially constrained' area for large scale (>20MW) development but that this neither supports or resists development, as they are judged on their merits against the criteria referred to in the LDP, as well as other material considerations.

LO commented that the application did not appear to comply with SNH "Landscape Wind Energy Capacity Study" and LJ said she did not have that information to hand.

LO commented on FCS residual land options highlighting that Kilmun was exploring the possibilities of a hydro scheme. LO also identified what she described as a 'worrying table' on the FCS website which outlined that Corlarach was earmarked for 57 turbines. LO



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continued to highlight concerns regarding the residual offering and AS highlighted that this was for hydro only.

LJ also confirmed that it was not possible to get 57 turbines onto the PNE site and KL requested LO send her the link to allow further investigation. LO explained that she was concerned this was just the tip of the iceberg.

KL asked LJ to confirm how many turbines PNE can fit on the site. LJ confirmed that it was no more than 20. LO stated the concerns were regarding the larger boundary area.

WL outlined that the main question he felt the community councils would be faced with was whether people could see the development. He also outlined that Inverkip will become involved if they can see it. WL requested that the exhibition demonstrate how close it will be and if people will see it.

FM also confirmed that he felt it wasn't just the visual impact, it was the potential noise, health effects and more.

JW asked if anyone had produced any research on the health effects. He explained that there were various studies overseas. RA highlighted that this had been a topic for concern in the UK too and previously a developer had bought a house because of health concerns. LJ explained that a developer may sometimes buy a house if it sits particularly close to a site and purchasing the property would allow the development of a larger scheme (for noise purposes etc).

AS highlighted that if the concerns are not quantifiable then he was unlikely to believe it. RA explained that some studies had been written by medics, to which AS asked if it was quantifiable. AS also highlighted that a medic had written a study on the MMR vaccination which said that it was deadly.

AS asked about the amount per MW for community benefit. It was confirmed that this is £5,000 per MW. AS highlighted that the community councils needed to consider setting up a company to take advantage of this. WR said that this was a good idea but that there are risky parts also.

AM highlighted that before any community vehicle is established, he felt they needed to consult the local community, and then if they get a yes vote they could move forward.

AS highlighted that there was the potential to set up a community vehicle separate to the PNE proposals, allowing the community councils to work on wider ventures together. WL asked what revenue it would manage. AS explained that it would be the communities working together to use the company and apply pressure on wider issues also.



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WL explained that he needed to find out what the constituents want and that he felt they couldn't do anything until it was clear what is being proposed. RA agreed with WL's point.

LO said that on PNE's website it claims that it is "preferable" that a community vehicle is set up prior to receiving planning approval, therefore this would indicate that it could also be set up afterwards if planning permission was granted. KL explained that there was a document available on community benefit options, and that this had been circulated to all community councils. KL also distributed further documents and advised that the community councils contact Local Energy Scotland should they wish to find out more about the deadlines for registering an interest in the community buy in options.

LJ confirmed that the timetable is dictated to PNE by FCS and is an element of all proposals on FCS land. LO explained that she felt the scheme CARES, run by Local Energy Scotland, is a masquerade for the Scottish Government as it is a Government grant.

RA highlighted that he felt at this point in time he was unable to present the full facts to the community and WL highlighted that he didn't have enough information. LJ explained that the groups had all the information available at this point.

The conversation moved on to gathering the views of the community and RA asked if PNE would finance an independent local ballot of opinion on the plans. WL explained that there is funding for the groups to do this from elsewhere and AM explained that CARES could likely provide funding.

LO expressed a view that the groups should also meet separately to discuss the application out-with the meeting.