



**Windy Edge Wind Farm  
Community Liaison Group Meeting Minutes - Final issued 04/01/2013**

Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> December 2012 at 6.30pm

The Grapes Hotel, 16 Douglas Square, Newcastleton, TD9 0QD

**Present:**

<i>BR - Ben Ridder:</i>	<i>Infinis</i>
<i>MC - Matthew Chapman:</i>	<i>Smithy House Associates</i>
<i>BE - Barbara Elborn:</i>	<i>Newcastleton Business Forum</i>
<i>ST - Shaun Turnbull:</i>	<i>Newcastleton and District Community Council</i>
<i>GS - Gordon Steele:</i>	<i>Newcastleton and District Community Council</i>

**Apologies:**

<i>Bob Francombe:</i>	<i>Upper Teviotdale and Borthwick Water Community Council</i>
<i>Walter Douglas:</i>	<i>Upper Teviotdale and Borthwick Water Community Council</i>
<i>Cliff Griffiths:</i>	<i>Hobkirk Community Council</i>
<i>Chris Levell:</i>	<i>Hobkirk Community Council</i>

*No member from Newcastleton and District Community Council was present specifically to represent Hermitage.*

**Matters Arising**

Newcastleton and District Community Council have offered to co-opt a non-voting member specifically to represent the people of Hermitage and Upper Liddesdale with respect of the wind farm discussions. To date this offer has not been taken up, but it is believed that discussions are underway.

Agreed minutes of these meetings are now displayed on the Infinis web-site and on the Visit Newcastleton.com website. Barbara Elborn also publishes her own notes from the meetings on the Newcastleton site in advance of the agreed minutes being published. Sufficient notification is given that these notes do not constitute an agreed record of discussions.

The Business Forum have canvassed interest amongst the local population for a visit to a working wind farm. To date 16 people have expressed interest. The Whitelee Wind Farm was considered to be the most appropriate for a visit as the visitor centre has excellent facilities. It would have been possible to visit a more local working wind farm, possibly even an Infinis owned site, but there would be no visitor facilities.

*Note subsequent to meeting – Whitelee Wind Farm visitor centre is closed for the winter and re-opens on March 1<sup>st</sup> 2013. Suggest arranging a visit for Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> March?*

Members informed the meeting of having been mis-quoted in a recent article in the Eskdale and Liddesdale Advertiser.



### **Project update.**

The site design and turbine layout has evolved further as follows:

- 17 turbines
- 82m diameter blades
- 80m and 70m hub height used to follow contours on the hillside.
- Turbines in 2 clusters, each of similar layout.
- Turbines far off the main ridgeline
- No views from Hermitage Castle and reduced views from approach to castle
- Reduced lateral spread of turbines – forming two tight distinct clusters.
- Candidate turbine 2.3MW. Total projected output in the region of 39.1MW. At this capacity, the application will be considered by the Local Planning Authority.

Map of draft layout included. Note that this is still under review.

### **Visual Impact Assessment**

The list of viewpoints now includes 26 locations, 20 for landscape and visual assessment and 6 for Cultural Heritage Assessment. Council Landscape officers have requested 2 further viewpoints and they are being considered currently. Visualisations from all these points will be included in the Environmental Statement to accompany the planning application. ZTV with current agreed viewpoints attached.

### **Ecology and Ornithology**

All survey work has now been completed. No specific plants of concern have been identified on site, however there are a number of areas containing significant habitat types – particularly areas of blanket bog.

Other significant habitats include Alkaline Fen and Purple Moor Grass and Rush Pastures, but these are locally abundant.

Fauna on site includes common lizards, there are signs of otter towards the south of the site and no significant bat populations have been identified on the open ground near to proposed turbine locations.

The Windy Edge site is close to the Langholm and Newcastleton Hills designated Special Protection Area (SPA) for black grouse and raptor species. The ornithology assessment has concluded that the two sites are significantly distinct in terms of their populations and there is no significant cross over from one to the other.

Hen harrier, kestrel and black grouse do exist on site, but the assessment indicates that the proposed turbines will not pose a significant threat to them.



## **Cultural Heritage**

Historic Scotland have announced that they have plans to designate the Deer Fence around Hermitage, but this will not take place until the live planning application has been processed.

The current design has no direct impact on the Deer Fence. Historic Scotland's main concern is a viewpoint from Toft Knowes looking over the valley and viewing the turbines above Hermitage Castle. It must be noted though that this viewpoint does not have any access routes to it.

## **Noise**

Preliminary noise assessments have been undertaken. Removing the closest turbines to residential properties has substantially reduced the anticipated noise impact, well below levels that could be at risk of causing a statutory noise nuisance. Further modelling will be undertaken and included in the Environmental Statement.

## **Hydrology, peat and private water supplies**

Details studies of the hydrology of the site and the surrounding area have now been completed. The current layout will not impact on any private water supplies for properties not financially involved in the development. Members were shown a Method Statement used in another Infinis project detailing how Hydrology would typically be protected during construction.

Infinis have committed to batching concrete on site rather than bringing in mix by waggon. This will require on-site water abstraction, to be agreed with SEPA.

## **Site access**

Turbine components will be bought in from Blyth Docks. The preferred access route is now up the A68 to Carter Bar, then through Chesters and Bonchester Bridge to the B6399

Infinis are intending to batch concrete on site rather than bringing truck loads in for the turbine foundations. The majority of the stone for access tracks will be sourced from borrow pits on site. These two actions will significantly reduce the potential number of HGV movements required during construction.

Issues related to the B6399 were raised by members:

- This road suffers significant problems during winter
- Commuting and school run times should be avoided



- Road surveys may be required before and after construction, with the developer held responsible for significant deterioration.
- The bus service to Hawick should not be obstructed
- The bin wagon visits on Thursdays and should not be disrupted.
- Additional passing places may be constructed on smaller roads used for the main access route. The council would determine whether they remain or are removed subsequent to constructing the wind farm.
- There could be concerns about hospital/emergency vehicle access, but turbine components will be accompanied by police outriders so emergency vehicle access should not be obstructed. Also there are multiple routes from the Newcastleton Valley to Borders Hospital and some emergency cases will go south to Carlisle.

CLG meetings would continue throughout the construction period to communicate details of proposed transport movements and to address any issues related to construction or vehicle movements.

Map of proposed access route included. Note that this is still under review.

### **Grid Connection**

The Business Forum, through Community Energy Scotland, have approached Scottish Power Networks about the issue of power cuts in the area. Scottish Power have commissioned a survey to record the statistical baseline for power outages in the area. There is also a plan to refurbish the overhead line network in the Newcastleton valley during 2013.

The connection from Windy Edge to the National Grid will go direct to the transmission network at high voltages so there is unlikely to be significant changes to the local distribution network.

### **Eskdalemuir, MoD and Radar**

A recent public inquiry on a proposed wind farm towards Longtown agreed a suspensive planning condition related to the Spadeadam Air Traffic Control Radar. The precedent has therefore been set to ensure that this is not a reason for refusal for the Windy Edge application.

No further recent developments on Eskdalemuir, but members were signposted towards Scottish Government's Energy Consents Unit website as the source of relevant, impartial information: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Business-Industry/Energy/Infrastructure/Energy-Consents/Guidance>

### **Any Other Business**



Representatives from Newcastleton Business Forum and Newcastleton and District Community Council were keen to point out that they cannot be expected to represent the interests of Bonchester Bridge residents and Hobkirk Community Council with respect to the implications of the preferred route for turbine components coming through Bonchester Bridge.

MC advised that having met with Chris Levell of Hobkirk, distance to the CLG meetings was not considered to be an impediment to their attendance, more the resources that are required by Hobkirk to monitor and engage with three proposed wind farm developments.

Action: MC committed to approaching Hobkirk Community Council to offer to brief them directly at one of their regular meetings about the proposed access route.

BE expressed a desire to resolve the criteria for deciding how the proposed community benefit fund would be allocated amongst neighbouring communities including:

- Population clusters to be included
- Distance from development
- Mitigation for other impacts such as traffic
- Advanced payment to facilitate development of legacy projects versus ongoing annual payments and the degree to which the fund could be split.

BR advised that the Community Benefit Funds are currently the subject of internal review within Infinis.

Infinis are considering issuing a second newsletter prior to submitting the planning application to indicate how the proposed development has been altered subsequent to the public exhibitions.

Opportunities for local businesses during the construction period – Clarification of Infinis policy:

Infinis will issue a Balance of Plant (BoP) contract for the bulk of the work associated with construction

BoP contracts can include requirements for contractors to preference local suppliers in sub-contract tenders.

Infinis will work with the Business Forum to create a database of local businesses interested in tendering for work on the Windy Edge site, including issuing a newsletter to explain requirements and the tendering process if required.

Additional contracts such as snow clearance for example, could be issued by Infinis directly.



Confirmation was received that the Infinis web-site now has a page for the Windy Edge project. The web-page can be found at:

<http://www.infinis.com/windy-edge/>

Supplementary update from MC after the meeting.

In response to request received from the Business Forum, below is a revised outline timetable given the anticipated delay to submitting the planning application to May.

Planning submission – Summer 2013

Planning committee – Winter 2014

Construction start – Early 2016

Operational – Early 2017

It should be pointed out that this allows for ~18 months between submission and determination, which may be overly pessimistic.