

Minutes of the Gifford Community Council Annual General Meeting held on 7th October 2024 at Gifford Bowling Club

- Participating** Adam White (Chair), Richard Austin, Wendy Ferguson, Eleanor Hulme, Dave Griffiths and Jill Hyslop
- In Attendance** Cllr John McMillan, PC Kiera Edmond, Seb Callander, John Fry, Ian Macphail, Lesley Macphail, Paul Hurd, Lou Hurd, Pam Trout, Sally Young, Julie, Alec Renton, Alan Fortune, Joanna Purves-Hume, Elaine Austin and Lesley Kerr
- Apologies** Nev Kilkenny, Cllr Shamin Akhtar, Cllr George McGuire, Cllr Tom Trotter and Mandy Harrington (VCEL)

1 Appointment of Officer Bearers

Adam welcomed everyone to the meeting and then asked Councillor McMillan to oversee the annual appointment of the Gifford CC Chair. Adam White was re-appointed (proposed by Richard and seconded by Eleanor). The remaining office bearers were appointed as follows:

- Jill Hyslop, Secretary (proposed by Wendy and seconded by Dave)
- Wendy Ferguson, Treasurer (proposed by Eleanor and seconded by Jill)
- Richard Austin, Vice-Chair (proposed by Dave and seconded by Wendy)

2 Chair's Report

Adam reported that we have had another very busy year with challenges such as keeping views about the wind farms impartial, the opening and shutting of the Goblin Ha Hotel, the issues around the Hopes Car Park, anti-social behaviour in the village and the local store to name but a few. However, we have a brilliant team who undertake a great deal of work and respond individually to the business of the Community Council. Administrative duties, Finance, Planning and all the work involved in Roads, Paths and Lighting takes up a great deal of time and the work is much appreciated.

Two of our team have stood down this year: Rita Buchan and Hugh Broad. I would like to say a big thank you to them both for the work they have done for us over the years.

We have put a lot of work into such things as:

- Improving our communications with a summary of the minutes and listing what has been achieved each month.
- Getting the new noticeboard installed
- Wheelie bins being moved from Main St and getting overgrown hedges cut back
- Making sure we have proper coverage of defibrillators and appropriate training
- Park benches have been repaired and painted
- Nature Networks consultation and ensuring the Pound is properly maintained
- A variety of Resilience work including securing funding for another year of Soup & Smile
- Also the work that goes into our very successful Christmas events

Finally I would like to thank our four councillors for the support that they give us. We are exceptionally lucky to have such supportive councillors.

3 2023/2024 Accounts

Wendy shared copies of the accounts and highlighted the main expenses and sources of income up to the end of March 2024. CC's reserves are held in a 'General Fund' and a 'Restoration Fund'. Wendy proposed using money from the Restoration Fund to cover the cost of the new noticeboard and this was approved by the meeting. Wendy confirmed that the accounts have been independently checked. There were no questions about the accounts.

4 Matters Arising

4.1 Renewable Energy Projects

A consultation event was held in the Village Hall on 4th October on behalf of SP Energy Networks regarding the grid connection that would be needed if the Scottish Government were to give consent for the Newlands Hill Wind Farm. This would be a 132kV connection from Newlands Hill to the

Fallago Rig substation over approximately 6km (3km underground, 3km overground), supported on 'double H' wood poles. Not many people attended the event in person, but the poster boards can be viewed online at <https://www.spenergynetworks.co.uk/userfiles/file/Newlands-Hill-Wind-Energy-Hub-132kV-Connection-Project-I-Consultation-Board.pdf>

See the attached planning report for the current status of the other renewable energy projects.

4.2 Smart Meter Connectivity

The Data Communications Company (DCC) intends to trial the use of cellular connections in areas with poor connectivity and hopefully Gifford could be used as a trial area. Craig Hoy MSP is discussing the matter with the DCC. Cellular hubs have been supplied to some local residents already, but at the moment this has to be approved by the DCC on a case-by-case basis.

4.3 Defibrillators and Defibrillator Training

Eleanor summarised the availability and maintenance of defibrillators in the village. CC does 6-weekly checks on the garage defib. The Bowling Club committee look after the one at the Bowling Club. The school defib is currently only available during school hours, but Eleanor is speaking to the school about widening access. There is a defibrillator inside Gifford Golf Club and the Circuit (the nationwide directory for defibrillators) also shows defibrillators available at the Chippendale Furniture School and Castle Park Golf Club.

Eleanor was disappointed to report that British Cycling won't support her suggestion for them to produce an advisory 'healthcheck' poster for cyclists. Councillor McMillan suggested passing the idea to the council's Cycling Forum who might be able to help.

Eleanor and Jill are scoping out interest for defibrillator training. There are posters in the village and on Facebook asking people to register interest by 8th November. So far 12 people have responded.

4.4 Airfield Memorial Plaque

Wendy will catch up with Nev about this. **ACTION: WF/NK**

4.5 Graveyard extension

Nothing to report, but Wendy thought an update would be due soon.

4.6 Resurfacing lane between Station Road/Tweeddale Crescent

Councillor McMillan emailed the Roads Team during the meeting to ask about this.

5. External Reports

5.1 Police

Between 1st – 30th September there were 30 calls to the area, which resulted in the police recording 4 crimes: 2 x breach of ASBO, 1 x vandalism and 1 x assault. There was a discussion about the ongoing case of antisocial behaviour in the village. Councillor McMillan and PC Edmond spoke about the case. A number of local residents shared their experiences and Councillor McMillan agreed to pass on some new relevant information to the other teams involved.

PC Edmond intends to do more speed checks in the village. The timing will depend on the availability of a corroborating officer. It was confirmed that speed checks do not cover cyclists.

5.2 Yester Estate

Seb outlined tree safety work that he has been contracted to do for the estate. The Lime Trees on the Avenue will be hazard assessed and dead wood will be removed. Some of the trees could be taken out completely and replaced. In the old nursery bordering the Bleachfield some trees with ash dieback need to be removed and some mature lime trees will be reduced. Seb is liaising with the council and the proposed work will probably need to be approved by ELC's planning committee.

5.3 Gifford Community Woodland

The woods held a very successful AGM and Graeme Davies has taken over from Roo as chair.

5.4 East Lothian Council

Councillor McMillan updated the meeting on recent council business. He encouraged people to read the Planning Committee's detailed report about the Newlands Hill Wind Farm proposal.

6 Internal Reports

6.1 Roads and Footpaths.

The yellow lines that are due to be painted outside the Goblin have not been done yet. Councillor McMillan will look into this.

6.2 Lighting, Drains and Signs.

There are still 2 lights out on Tweeddale Crescent. Glen Kane has been asked to look again at the adequacy of lighting in the Square/Main Street. This issue was raised a while ago, but money wasn't available. Dave asked if we could look at getting at least one extra light by the new bus stop.

6.3 Planning

Please see attached report for planning applications within and outwith GCC Area.

6.4 Finance

Covered under Accounts section above.

6.5 Resilience

Soup & Smile re-started on Wednesday 2nd October with 24 deliveries. Fish and chips were delivered on the last Friday of September. Wendy reminded everyone about the background to these initiatives, which started during the pandemic as a way of keeping an eye on elderly residents, particularly those who live alone. Lunch club is scheduled for Monday 14th October.

7 Correspondence

7.1 Closure of Goblin Ha'

Adam expressed his sadness that the Goblin had shut again. Several local residents said that the Goblin will only be viable if it can be sold to a new owner. They do not feel that a new tenant will be able to run a viable business. One resident has already written to the owner Iona Inns about this and he encouraged others to do the same. Adam asked Councillor McMillan what should be done to remove asbestos from the beer garden and also from a damaged roof. Councillor McMillan emailed the relevant council officials during the meeting and also plans to contact Iona Inns.

7.2 Fly tipping

Tyres dumped at Snawden have been removed. Rubbish was also dumped on the roadside between the thatched cottage and the Humble junction. Fly tipping on public ground should be reported to the council, not the police. If rubbish is dumped onto private land, it's the landowner's responsibility to remove it.

8 AOB

Concern was expressed that the village store is unlikely to survive in its current state. There is no alcohol licence and limited stock. As with the village store Goblin Ha, the separate ownership of the building could frustrate the viability of running a store. Any concerns about hygiene can be reported to Trading Standards. Concerns about viability are harder for the council to do anything about.

A resident spoke about an ongoing neighbour dispute. PC Edmond and Councillor McMillan are both aware of the case and are liaising with the resident. Councillor McMillan will update Adam.

CC has 2 vacancies to fill. The vacancies will be formally advertised on Facebook with a deadline of Tuesday 29th October.

Paul circulated a photograph of an electric bike charging rack that he spotted on holiday in France. Councillor McMillan agreed to forward it to the Cycle Forum.

CC needs to appoint a member to join the East Lothian Community Benefit SCIO. Richard agreed to do this.

Adam asked for a volunteer to attend the next Area Partnership meeting on Thursday 24th October.

Seb will speak to Wendy about supplying a Christmas Tree for the village. He also raised a concern about drainage. Trees in the Yester Estate nursery are failing due to flooding when there's heavy rain. Seb to raise the matter with ELC when he's discussing the tree safety work.

Date of next meeting (AGM): Monday 7th October.

APPLICATIONS WITHIN GCC AREA

	Date Validated	GCC first discussed	Comments	Status
24/00676/P Installation of solar panels (Retrospective) 26 And 27 Walden Place Gifford East Lothian EH41 4RA	17/09/24	Oct 2024	Retrospective application. Panels were installed at same time as neighbouring properties, before this application was made.	Awaiting decision
24/00857/P Extension to house Westlatchfields Yester Gifford Haddington EH41 4JN	15/08/24	Sept 2024	Existing glazed conservatory to be replaced by block extension, rendered and painted to match existing house, with slate roof.	Approved
24/00727/P Alterations to house and erection of porch (Part Retrospective) Ardgay The Wynd Gifford East Lothian EH41 4QT	14/08/24	Sept 2024	Internal alterations to link Tron Cottage to adjoining Ardgay Cottage. New porch to front. Retrospective application for replacement of kitchen window/door to rear.	Approved
24/00517/P Erection of agricultural building (Retrospective) Land North Of Existing Stables Yester Estate The Avenue Gifford East Lothian EH41 4JF	10/06/24	Aug 2024	Retrospective application for erection of a feed store on existing hardstanding adjacent to the stable building.	Approved
24/00499/P Alterations and extension to house, erection of new gates, infilling of ditch and pond, formation of steps and hardstanding, alteration and reroofing of garage and associated works 16 Old Mill Lane Gifford Haddington EH41 4QQ	14/06/24	Aug 2024	Modernisation of the C listed Old Mill including upgrading and reconfiguring of windows and doors. Landscape alterations to garden, connection to mains drainage and removal of septic tank.	Refused, for reasons that the proposed alu clad windows and doors would not be in keeping with the listed building.

APPLICATIONS OUTWITH GCC AREA

None

OTHER PLANNING MATTERS

Newlands Hill Wind Energy Hub (Belltown Power)

The S36 application for the Newlands Hill project is under consideration by the Energy Consents Unit (ECU). The full application is available on the Scottish Government's Energy Consents Unit website www.energyconsents.scot, reference ECU00004603.

On 3rd September the East Lothian Planning Committee met to discuss the report prepared by their Planning Department into the proposals. This report recommended that East Lothian Council should object to the granting of consent for reasons of adverse landscape and visual impact, adverse impact on the historic environment, adverse impact on the mountain hare population, impact on core paths and unacceptable access route for exceptional loads during construction. The Planning Committee voted to accept the report in full as East Lothian Council's consultation response to the ECU. Given the fundamental conclusions of the report, it seems unlikely that any modifications to the development scheme would be sufficient to cause ELC to withdraw its objection. In the event that the ECU wishes to grant consent against the recommendation of ELC, then the matter may be determined by a Public Inquiry.

The earliest Belltown expect a decision from ECU is mid 2025 and this would slip considerably if a Public Inquiry were to be called. As previously advised, GCC have been told by the ECU that public representations, either for or against the development, will be considered right up until the point at which a decision is made.

A consultation event was held in the Village Hall on 4th October on behalf of SP Energy Networks regarding the grid connection from Newlands Hill to the Fallago Rig substation. This would be a 132kV connection over approximately 6km, supported on 'double H' wood poles. The poster boards from this event can be viewed at <https://www.spenergynetworks.co.uk/userfiles/file/Newlands-Hill-Wind-Energy-Hub-132kV-Connection-Project-I-Consultation-Board.pdf> Presumably, the grid connection would not be required were the Newlands Hill Wind Energy Hub not consented.

Dunside Wind Farm (EDF)

Proposals were submitted to Scottish Government in July 2023 and are being considered. The full application is available on the Scottish Government's Energy Consents Unit website, reference ECU00003436. On 7th August, EDF submitted supplementary environmental information based upon feedback from consultees. This information can be viewed on the ECU website and the EDF project site.

Crystal Rig Wind Farm (Fred Olsen Renewables)

Crystal Rig Solar. Plans for this solar array within the existing Crystal Rig windfarm have now been submitted to the Energy Consents unit and can be viewed under application reference ECU00004759. All information is also available on the project website at www.crystalrigwindfarm.com

Crystal Rig I Repower. The earliest phase of Crystal Rig has been operational for over 20 years and the operator is now exploring the opportunity to repower the site and use better, more modern technology. The existing Crystal Rig I wind farm comprises 25 turbines with a maximum blade tip height of 100m and the proposed repowering would involve replacing them with up to 10 much larger turbines each with a tip height of up to 250m. An Environmental Impact Assessment Scoping Report has been submitted to ECU (application ECU00005089) and public consultation events will be held in the near future.

Crystal Rig IV Construction. In 2021 the developer was granted consent for an 11 turbine extension to Crystal Rig. Construction of this extension will start soon.

Longcroft Wind Farm (Renewable Energy Systems)

This proposed development of 24 turbines would be approximately 9km north of Lauder in the Scottish Borders, lying to the south west of the existing Fallago Rig Wind Farm and to the west of the proposed Dunside Wind Farm. The northern edge of the development is some 15km south of Gifford. Project website is www.longcroft-windfarm.co.uk. The full application is available on the Scottish Government's Energy Consents Unit website, reference ECU00004774.