

Minutes of the Gifford Community Council Meeting held on 9th December 2024 at Gifford Bowling Club

Participating Adam White (Chair), Eleanor Hulme, Wendy Ferguson, Dave Griffiths, Alan Fortune and Jill Hyslop

In Attendance Councillor Shamin Akhtar, Kenneth Black (ELC) and 7 local residents

Apologies Richard Austin, Nev Kilkenny, Paul Smith, Councillor John McMillan, Councillor George McGuire, Councillor Tom Trotter and Mandy Harrington (VCEL)

1 Minutes of last meeting

The meeting approved the minutes of 11th November (approved by Alan and Eleanor).

2 Matters Arising

2.1 Renewable Energy Projects

No update since last month. See the attached planning report for current status.

2.2 Smart Meter Connectivity

Richard, Nev and resident, John Scott, met with Billy Agnew, ELC's lead on Digital & Broadband Installation/Connectivity in Rural Areas. John passed on some advice for residents dealing with connectivity issues, which Jill will publish on Facebook. Before a complaint can be made to the Ombudsman, customers must make a formal complaint to their energy supplier. Energy suppliers have up to 8 weeks to try to resolve the problem. You can contact the Ombudsman if the reported problem is not fixed within 8 weeks or if you receive a 'deadlock letter' from your supplier, stating your problem cannot be fixed. There is already an established solution for connectivity problems in this area, which involves the use of a cellular hub. Residents are advised to request this solution in their correspondence. Cellular hubs need to be approved on a case-by-case basis by the DDC, but Craig Hoy MSP is trying to arrange a wide-scale trial of cellular hubs in this area.

3.3 Defibrillators

3.3.1 Status of AEDs in the village: garage, school and bowling club

All AEDs in the village are operational. Eleanor is preparing a table detailing the location and access hours. The defib at Gifford Golf Club is now registered on the Circuit. As it is housed inside the club house, it's only available during opening hours. Eleanor is speaking to Castle Park Golf Club to confirm details of their defib.

3.3.2 Basic resuscitation and defib use training.

Sam from the Scottish Ambulance Service ran a well-attended training course on 26th November for around 28 people. One of the key points emphasised was the importance of starting chest compressions quickly. CC will look at running a 2nd course, but Sam is fully booked until the end of February. Jill will start work on this once Sam can provide some potential dates **ACTION: JH**

3.3.3 First Aid 1st Responders

Community 1st responders are volunteers who are trained by the Scottish Ambulance Service to attend certain types of emergency calls. Humble village has a 1st responder group who came along to the recent training event. Adam is keen to investigate options for training Gifford residents. Eleanor will pass the details to Jill. **ACTION: EH**

3.4 Graveyard extension

No update.

3.5 Youth Club Activities

Local resident, George Chalmers, would like to organise an informal consultation event for young adults in the Village Hall on Monday 16th December 5pm – 6.30pm. Wendy agreed that CC can cover the cost of the hall and some snacks. George is looking at running a weekly session in the hall from February 2025. The sessions would be run by volunteers, with PVG/Safeguarding provisions in place. George and Councillor Akhtar plan to visit Recharge in Tranent in January to speak to staff and volunteers there. It was agreed that plans should be established first with a discussion on costs/funding to follow. George would like to re-purpose an old canoe to use as a village planter. It

was agreed that CC could not give any general approval for this, as it would depend on the specific location and appearance of the planter.

4. External Reports

4.1 Police

Between 1st – 30th November there were 32 calls to the area, which resulted in the police recording 5 crimes: 2 x bail offences, 1 x Breach of ASBO, 1 x Vandalism and 1 x Fraud. PC Edmond plans to carry out speed checks in Gifford before Christmas. Kenneth Black, Community Protection Manager, was present at the meeting. He provided some background information about antisocial behaviour: initial responsibility rests with the landlord, but when the behaviour becomes persistent it is passed to the council's Community Protection Team who can apply for an ASBO. Responsibility for ASBOs sits with Police Scotland and ASBO breaches are dealt with by the criminal court. There was a discussion about an ongoing case of complex antisocial behaviour in the village. Concern was expressed about a lack of overall control. It was suggested that this was preventing progress. Kenneth said the case was very complex and emphasised that no single agency can make unilateral decisions in these circumstances. Adam said there was real concern and frustration about the lack of visible progress. Kenneth said it was very difficult to give details about the case, as that would breach data protection. However, he assured Adam that all relevant professionals were working together. Kenneth intends to attend future CC meetings to discuss antisocial behaviour. He emphasised the importance of reporting all instances of antisocial behaviour and he circulated contact details so that people could get in touch with him directly.

4.2 Yester Estate

Tree maintenance work was carried out on the lime trees on the Avenue in November.

4.3 Gifford Community Woodland

There was an Open Woods Meeting in November and a new Administrator, Catherine Purves, has been appointed. Details of all the events and volunteer dates can be found at:

www.giffordcommunitywoodland.com/events

4.4 East Lothian Council

Councillor Akhtar reviewed some action points from the last meeting. A new streetlight will be installed in front of the Goblin by the bus stop (schedule tbc). The Acting Head Teacher at Yester will look at a dog fouling campaign in the New Year and he'll also be asking for community volunteers to help with reading groups. The Correspondence item relating to music tuition funding was discussed at this point. CC had been asked to highlight the proposed cuts to funding. Councillor Akhtar explained that the council had been following a charging model and during that time annual costs had risen to c.£1m. The Scottish Government has instructed councils to stop charging. There is currently only £257,000 funding in place, leaving a shortfall of c.£755,000. A review is ongoing to look at how this situation will be managed. Information is available on the council's website (https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/210557/schools_and_learning/12379/instrumental_music_service/2)

The uneven slabs on the path between Walden Terrace and Walden Place will be fixed using money from a Housing Priorities Fund. This fund can only be used for improvements where at least 50% of the housing is social. Adam expressed frustration that the path connecting Tweeddale Crescent and Station Road has still not been re-surfaced. It is due to be re-assessed again in December/January. A number of elderly residents have fallen there.

5 Internal Reports

5.1 Roads and Footpaths.

Nothing to report (re-surfacing issues covered at 4.4 above)

5.2 Lighting, Drains and Signs.

Dave will contact the council about 3 streetlights out on Tweeddale Crescent. A resident has reported a lighting fault at Walden Terrace where none of the lights are working.

The gully sucker hasn't been to the village yet.

5.3 Planning

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

5.4 Finance

Nothing to report.

5.5 Resilience

Fish and chips were delivered on the last Friday of November and weekly deliveries of Soup & Smile continue on Wednesdays. Soup & Smile will take a 2-week break over Christmas, but volunteers will check to see if anyone who is on their own would like a delivery on either of the Tuesdays instead. 40 people attended the Christmas Lunch Club with 1 home delivery. There was a very successful fundraising event for Soup & Smile in November, which should cover the costs of the service for a couple of months. Wendy thanked Paul Hurd for making the reindeer for the silent auction.

The Christmas Lights Switch On was well attended on Friday 6th December. The Christmas post box will be in Lanterne Rouge 9th – 14th December and Carols Round the Tree is on Monday 23rd December with members from the Dalkeith and Monktonhall Brass Band.

6 Correspondence

6.1 Home Energy Scotland – Pension Credit Campaign

There are millions of pounds going unclaimed with Pension Credit and if someone is eligible for this benefit, they will also receive the Winter Fuel Payment and it could be a gateway to Warmer Homes Scotland too. The DWP are running an awareness campaign as they know many households across Scotland are missing out due to a lack of awareness or some misconceptions on eligibility.

People of State Pension age may be entitled to Pension Credit even though they may have modest savings, or a retirement income or own their own home. An award of Pension Credit can provide access to a range of other benefits such as help with housing costs, council tax, heating bills and for those aged 75 or over, a free TV licence.

We would encourage people to use the online calculator to check eligibility and then make their application as soon as possible. The latest date to apply and still be eligible for Pension Credit and a Winter Fuel Payment is Saturday 21 December 2024 (see <https://www.homeenergyscotland.org/changes-winter-fuel-payments>).

The universal winter fuel payment for pensioners recently announced by the Scottish Government doesn't come into force until next year.

6.2 Proposed Cuts to Music Tuition in Schools

Covered at 4.4 above

7 AOB

7.1 Dates for 2025

Jill to circulate the 2025 dates. There will be no July meeting.

7.2 Community Council Elections

Community Council elections are held every 4 years and the next election will be in October 2025. East Lothian Council has not yet set the date.

Date of next meeting: Monday 13th January.

APPLICATIONS WITHIN GCC AREA

	Date Validated	GCC first discussed	Comments	Status
24/01080/P Installation of air source heat pumps 76, 77, 79, 80, 81 Walden Terrace Gifford Haddington EH41 4QP	15/10/24	Nov 2024	Installation of solar panels and air source heat pumps to five terraced houses.	Awaiting decision

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 be 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.