**Minutes of the Gifford Community Council meeting  
held** **on 8th January 2024 at Gifford Bowling Club**

**Participating** Adam White (Chair), Richard Austin, Dave Griffiths, Eleanor Hulme, Wendy Ferguson, Rita Buchan and Jill Hyslop

**In Attendance** Councillor John McMillan, Councillor Tom Trotter, Councillor George McGuire, Councillor Shamin Akhtar, Mandy Harrington (VCEL), Andrew Hamilton, Mike Traynor, Louise Hurd, Paul Hurd and Andrew Dalrymple

**Apologies** Hugh Broad and Nev Kilkenny

**1 Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The meeting approved the minutes of 11th December (approved by Wendy and Dave).

**2 Items completed since last meeting**

**2.1 Gifford’s Christmas Events**

Gifford’s Christmas events (Lights Switch On, Christmas Post and Carols round the Tree) had been very well supported and Adam thanked everyone for their help.

**3 Matters Arising**

**3.1 Renewable Energy Projects**

**Newlands Hill.** Belltown Power have submitted the s36 application to the Scottish Government’s Energy Consents Unit (ECU). The published deadline for public submissions is 24th January, but the Case Officer has confirmed in writing that submissions will be considered until at least the end of March. To raise local awareness, CC will produce a poster to be displayed on noticeboards and businesses. The draft poster asks people whether they are For or Against the wind farm and encourages them to submit their views via the ECU website. The poster sets out some brief facts about the proposal, including the number and height of the turbines, the high visibility of the location, and the community benefit arrangements. To ensure a proper balance between ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ facts, it was agreed that more text will be added to stress the severity of the impact on those living closest to the proposed site. The photomontage on the poster will be changed to show the view from Longyester. Subject to those changes, CC approved the poster. A local resident living close to the site spoke about how big an impact it would have on him. He felt that the impact would generally be much greater for those living outside the village. He asked about the general views of the community. Adam said that the focus of community council had been to get people to submit their views directly to the ECU. It was noted that the proposed route, involving a new road from East Linton to the site, can be viewed on the ECU website. The councillors confirmed that if the planning authority formally objects to the s36 application, that will automatically trigger an additional stage in the process. The Chair informed the meeting that a local resident, who is opposed to the wind farm, is arranging a public debate about it. Community Council wants to raise awareness about the proposed wind farm, but it was agreed that CC cannot formally support the debate as there is no practical way to ensure that both sides are properly represented. The status of the other renewable energy projects is detailed in the attached planning report.

**3.2 Defibrillators**

Planning applications for the school and bowling club defibrillators have been submitted. As there will now be 4 defibrillators (Golf Club, Yester Primary School, Gifford Garage and the bowling club), Eleanor suggested that the village would benefit from more defibrillator training. The meeting agreed with this suggestion. The training is delivered free by the Scottish Ambulance Service. Dave will let Eleanor know when the electrician is booked to fit the bowling club defibrillator, as the cabinet at the Gifford Garage needs some final work. The maintenance agreement for the school defibrillator needs to be signed by a CC member and returned to the school. East Lothian Council does not maintain community defibrillators and therefore the servicing (replacing pads, batteries and carrying out visual checks) will sit with CC. The defibrillator at the school has been registered on the Circuit.

**3.3 Nature Corridors and Grass cutting**

No update.

**3.4 Airfield Memorial Plaque**

No update.

**3.5 Graveyard extension**

Wendy and Hugh will meet council staff on Friday 12th January to discuss this.

**3.6 Gifford Cycle Road Race – Saturday 16th March**

Adam reported on his meeting with the race organiser, Stuart Balfour. Previous issues that have annoyed residents are cyclists toileting in gardens, race officials sitting in cars with engines running and bikes blocking house entrances. Dave will speak to Tom Reid to check that the public toilets will be open. As the Goblin is shut, the race organisers are aware that additional toilet facilities will be needed and are looking at portaloo options. They’re also considering additional fencing/barriers to go in front of properties as well as bike racks. The organisers have not been able to contact anyone at Bolton CC and Councillor McMillan agreed to try to find a contact. There will be a Safety Advisory Group meeting in February and further details about the race marshalling will be confirmed. **ACTION: DG/JM**

**4. Projects awaiting update from East Lothian Council**

**4.1 Wheelie bins on the Main Street pavement**

All but one of the wheelie bins has been moved to Lillies Lane.  If Councillor Akhtar can’t make contact with the remaining owner, she will speak to Ian Lennock. Adam read out a note from a resident of Lillies Lane who is objecting to the new location of the bins. At the time when it was decided to site the bins there, the residents of Lillies Lane gave permission. However, in the intervening period, new residents have moved in and they were not aware of the plans. Councillor Akhtar agreed to speak to the new residents. Adam had also received a note from a resident, complaining that the wheelie bins on Main Street had forced him to walk on the road with a 5-year old child. This illustrated why CC has been trying to move the wheelie bins. It was noted that when council officials visited Gifford, Lillies Lane was the only suitable location there could find. Lillies Lane is thought to be a private road, but details of the ownership are not known. **ACTION: SA**

**4.2 Resurfacing lane between Station Road/Tweeddale Crescent**

The council’s roads budget is very stretched, but Councillor McMillan is going to speak to Ian about this **ACTION: JM**

**5. External Reports**

**5.1 Police**

Between 1st – 31st December 2023 there were 20 calls to the area, which resulted in the police recording 3 crimes (1 sexual offence and 2 fraud). One case of fraud involved an email scam where a person’s email contacts were asked to buy amazon vouchers. Thankfully the money has been recovered. Councillor McMillan also reported a recent scam attempt by people pretending to be from BT OpenReach.

**5.2 Yester Estate**

Wendy noted thanks to Yester Estate for donating a Christmas tree to the church. Local resident Paul Hurd then spoke about the tree surgery work that the estate needs to do to protect the lime trees on the Avenue. He was concerned that any delays to the work could be dangerous for the trees and for local residents and he asked if it was possible in any way to speed up the paperwork that needs to be in place before work can start. Councillor McMillan agreed to follow this up. **ACTION JM**

**5.3 Gifford Community Woodland**

The woods will be running volunteer days to process felled ash, clear the ground for replanting and then plant the remaining trees that were bought last year.

**5.4 East Lothian Council**

Councillor Akhtar thanked CC for organising the village Christmas events and then confirmed that a new After School Club will be starting at Yester Primary School. It will be run by a CIC ‘Thrive East Lothian’ with a provisional start date of 1st February

Councillor McMillan offered his congratulations to Dave for receiving the Lawrence Beveridge award for community service. He then spoke about a recent visit to Denmark which had been organised to look at their local power systems which are operating in rural communities.

It was noted that the village store had lost its licence to sell alcohol shortly before Christmas. The Chair suggested that the other agenda items relating to the store should be considered at this point.

**Shop front signage** – Councillor Akhtar is trying to find the appropriate person to talk to about this and will continue to follow this up. The store is to come under the management of ‘Premier’ (a brand owned by Tesco), but the timing of the transfer is unclear.

**New neon sign** – a local resident has complained about the sign and thinks it is breach of planning regulations. *After the meeting Councillor McMillan confirmed that this matter was reported to the council on 4th January and a site visit will take place shortly.*

**ATM Cash Machine** – after several people complained that the cash machine was not working, Rita contacted the company and was able to get the necessary repairs completed. Rita emphasised how important it was for residents to have access to a cash machine. CC thanked Rita for her work in following up this serious matter.

**6 Internal Reports**

**6.1 Roads and Footpaths**

Due to the heavy rain and frost over the past month, several potholes (some severe) have been reported to the ELC Roads Dept in the village and county roads. The council has temporarily filled in the bad ones. The road is still closed near Longnewton due to flooding which is getting worse each week with the amount of rain. Dave shared a letter from Callum Redpath of the Roads Department outlining the work the council is doing to resolve this problem. There is a blocked drain on a private property that needs to be cleared. Nothing new to report on footpaths. Where the footpath on Park Road was dug up due to an electrical problem, the surface of the pavement has not been completed.

**6.2 Lighting, Drains and Signs**

The street lighting problem which caused half of Park Road, also most of High Street, and the Wynd to be in total darkness was fixed about a week before Xmas. The lights were out for over 3 weeks. There were 2 areas where faults were found, one on High Street near the Tweeddale Hotel and one on Park Road where the pavements were dug up to investigate. Main Street is still fairly dark with only 2 street lights and no light from the Goblin Ha hotel with it being shut. No other faults have been reported.

The high volume of rain over the past couple of months has caused a lot of surface water to come off the ploughed fields bringing brown silty water down Duns Road to Main Street and the Square to Station Road. This will happen every time there is heavy rain because the drain below the surface is no doubt old and can’t cope with the heavy rain. There may also be a drain across the field between Duns Road and Haddington Road which could be silted up or collapsed in places. When there is heavy rain the Roads Department maybe should put die down the drains to see where the water comes out. A new pipe was installed a few years ago at the 30mph limit but did not do any good because the drain down Duns Road can’t cope. Luckily most of the water comes down Duns Road on the churchyard side of the road, if it came down the side the houses are on there could well be flooded properties. The Pirn, at the entrance to the Wynd, used to flood. The Goblin Ha’ and Lewis & Clark will also be in danger of flooding until something is done. Dave was surprised SEPA has not been involved because of the silt going into the Gifford Water.

Dave asked when the mud in the village, which had been caused by the heavy rain, could be cleared. He highlighted a specific problem outside the Goblin, where a dip in the pavement has caused a large amount of mud to be left behind. It is very slippy and needs to be cleared. Councillor McMillan agreed to contact Amenity Services about this.

Nothing to report on signs.

**6.3 Planning**

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

**6.4 Finance**

Wendy reported that CC currently has funds to run Soup & Smile for 10 more weeks, which would mean ending the service in early March. It currently costs £600 per month. Mandy from VCEL will speak to Wendy about possible funding options.

**6.5 Resilience**

29 people attended this month’s Lunch Club. Weekly deliveries of soup and the monthly delivery of fish & chips had carried on throughout the Christmas/New Year holiday.

**7 Correspondence**

**7.1** A number of people contacted CC to thank them for the Christmas Lunch Club and support throughout the year.

**7.2** Paul McLennan MSP will be attending the CC meeting on 13th May as part of his community engagement activities/

**7.3** Insurance guidelines issued by East Lothian Council have been circulated to CC member.

**7.4** Village store sign (discussed at 5.4 above)

**8 AOB**

**8.1 Village Cash Machine** (discussed at 5.4 above)

**8.2 Countdown markers** CC had asked the council about the possibility of installing countdown markers on the Edinburgh Road to warn drivers about the 20 mph speed limit. Ian Lennock did not support the introduction of these in East Lothian. He highlighted that the short 30mph zones are intended to help transition drivers down from 60mph before the start of the 20mph zone. Richard suggested that traffic calming options could be reviewed in the future at a point when funding might be available.

**8.3 Public Debate about the proposed Newlands Wind Farm**

Andrew Hamilton told the meeting that he had booked the Village Hall on 28th February to hold a public debate about the proposed wind farm at Newlands. He intends to invite Belltown Power and he wants people to hear the arguments both for and against the wind farm. Andrew plans to mail drop all residents within 5 miles. He wants to make sure that people fully understand the impact of the proposals, which he is firmly opposed to. Adam confirmed that Community Council cannot publicly endorse the event, as it cannot guarantee that both sides will be properly represented. Community Council is not seeking to canvass local opinion, as it has no reliable way of doing so. Community Council will instead continue to encourage people to engage directly with the planning process so that their views are counted.

Date of next meeting: Monday 12th February.

**APPLICATIONS WITHIN GCC AREA**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Date Validated** | **GCC first discussed** | **Comments** | **Status** |
| 23/01490/EOL | Erection of overhead line of less than 132kv | Land East Of Yester Mains Gifford East Lothian | 18/12/23 | Jan 2024 | Changes to route of replacement electricity poles at Yester Mains | Awaiting decision |
| 23/01445/P | Installation of defibrillator cabinet (Retrospective) | Yester Primary School Walden Terrace Gifford Haddington East Lothian EH41 4QP | 11/12/23 | Dec 2023 | Defibrillator cabinet at Primary School (Retrospective) | Awaiting decision |
| 23/01444/P | Installation of defibrillator cabinet | Gifford Bowling Club Station Road Gifford East Lothian EH41 4QL | 11/12/23 | Dec 2023 | Defibrillator cabinet at Bowling Club | Awaiting decision |
| 23/01236/P | Alterations to house and outbuilding, installation of solar panels, formation of hardstanding areas and erection of raised planters | Whitecroft Tweeddale Avenue Gifford EH41 4QN | 26/10/23 | Nov 2023 | Conversion of garage to domestic office, removal of existing conservatory, replacement uPVC double glazed windows, installation of ASHP, solar panels to roof, internal alterations and external landscaping. | Approved |
| 23/01192/P | Change of use of domestic equestrian building to equestrian business use and associated works | Equestrian Centre South West Of Existing Stables Yester Estate The Avenue Gifford East Lothian EH41 4JF | 18/10/23 | Nov 2023 | Change of use of the existing equestrian centre at Yester Estate to allow public use through the creation of a membership group. No physical changes to the existing facility. Access would be via the existing access from the Longyester road. | Awaiting decision |
| 23/01178/PNT | Erection of telecommunications lattice tower with 3 antennas, 2 dishes and associated works | Land North West Of Killpallet Mayshiel Lammermuir Hills East Lothian | 01/11/23 | Nov 2023 | Erection of a 20m high telecoms mast on a 6m x 6m concrete foundation, south of Longformacus road, approximately 3.5km south of junction with B6355. Part of the ‘Shared Rural Network’ programme to eliminate ‘Rural Not Spots’. | Permission not required |
| 22/01169/P | Alterations, extensions to agricultural buildings to form 7 houses, erection of a shared domestic ancillary building and associated works | Longnewton Farm Steading Yester Gifford East Lothian | 12/12/22 | Jan 2023 | Conversion of stable block to form 2 dwellings, steading block to form four dwellings and granary to form one dwelling. Barn to be converted for shared use. | Awaiting decision |

**APPLICATIONS OUTWITH GCC AREA**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Date Validated** | **GCC first discussed** | **Comments** | **Status** |
| 23/01388/P | Erection of furniture making studio (Class 4) and associated works | Bolton Muir Wood Gifford East Lothian | 21/11/23 | Jan 2024 | Revised proposal for a furniture making studio on land at Bolton Muir Woods. The application replaces 22/01217/P which was withdrawn in early 2023. The new submission is for a studio 40% smaller than previously applied for. | Awaiting decision |

**OTHER PLANNING MATTERS**

**Newlands Hill Wind Energy Hub (Belltown Power)**

Belltown Power have now submitted the S36 application to the Scottish Government’s Energy Consents Unit for the Newlands Hill project. All of the submission documents can be accessed on their project website.

The full application is now available on the Scottish Government's Energy Consents Unit website, referenceECU00004603, where individuals and groups can also submit formal representations. A physical copy of the planning submission will be made available at the East Lothian Council Planning Offices, at Haddington Library and Garvald Church. The application is being advertised in the East Lothian Courier as well as The Edinburgh Gazette and The Herald.

If you have any views, either for or against the development, you are urged to visit the Energy Consents Unit website, register and post comments there. Alternatively, contact one of your local MSPs. Gifford Community Council has heard different views regarding the wind farm. Since the purpose of the Community Council is to represent all residents, we do not feel it is appropriate to comment either for or against the development. Rather, our role is to ensure that members of the public are informed of the plans, so that they can make their own representations.

**Dunside Wind Farm (EDF)**

Proposals were submitted to Scottish Government in July 2023 are being considered. The full application is available on the Scottish Government's Energy Consents Unit website, reference ECU00003436.

**Solar panels at Crystal Rig Wind Farm (Fred Olsen Renewables)**

Consultation events were held on 21st and 22nd November, including at Garvald Village Hall on Tuesday 21st November. Plans can be viewed at [www.crystalrigwindfarm.com](http://www.crystalrigwindfarm.com)

**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