

Minutes of the Gifford Community Council meeting held on 9th September 2024 at Gifford Bowling Club

Participating Adam White (Chair), Richard Austin, Dave Griffiths and Jill Hyslop
In Attendance Cllr Shamin Akhtar, Cllr Tom Trotter, Mandy Harrington (VCEL) and 4 local residents
Apologies Eleanor Hulme, Wendy Ferguson, Nev Kilkenny, Cllr John McMillan and Cllr George McGuire

1 The meeting approved the minutes of 12th August (approved by Richard and Dave).

2 Items completed since the last meeting

2.1 Uncut area of The Pound strimmed

This was done shortly after the last CC meeting.

2.2 Overgrown hedges cut back

Hedges on Bablins Wynd and Park Road have been cut back. Some work has been done to cut back tree branches overhanging the bridge at Station Road, but further work will be needed.

3 Matters Arising

3.1 Renewable Energy Projects

Newlands Hill Wind Energy Hub (Belltown Power)

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 the 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.

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

3.2 Smart Meter Connectivity

Richard has been looking into Smart meter connectivity problems in the area. The Data Communications Company (DCC) is responsible for the rollout of the smart meter network in the UK. Arqiva supplies the DCC with the WAN network that the Smart meters are meant to use. Arqiva has 'verified' that a signal to Gifford is present and viable, and 'can't comment' on why Smart meters in the area are not connecting. Arqiva thinks that individual energy companies and the DCC need to investigate. One energy company, Octopus, thinks that connectivity issues are a matter for the DCC. They said that installing a cellular hub can improve connectivity, but this decision is made by the DCC on a case-by-case basis. At least one local resident has obtained a cellular hub, but only after getting support from an MSP. Using a Facebook survey, Richard has gathered information about the scale of the problem locally. Out of 41 responses, only 8% said their Smart meter connected and provided readings to their energy supplier. The vast majority of respondents said their Smart meter did not work and that they had spoken to their energy providers about it. The next step is for Richard to take the results to Gillian Martin MSP, Acting Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero and Energy, with a view to getting the DCC to take action. **ACTION: RA**

3.2 Defibrillators and Defibrillator Training

Eleanor reported before the meeting that the garage defib had been checked and is working. The bowling club defib is also OK. Eleanor would appreciate administrative help to arrange defibrillator training and she is also still pursuing a self-check poster for cyclists to be displayed in local cafes.

3.3 Airfield Memorial Plaque

Wendy has the memorial plaque and Nev has spoken to the landowner at Townhead. The landowner thought the suggested location was suitable in general terms, but said that precise positioning is important for continued access. He would like to see the wording on the plaque and would like visitors to be discouraged from damaging crops. Next steps to be agreed with Nev and Wendy. Councillor Akhtar suggested letting the school know about the plaque. **ACTION: WF/NK**

3.4 Nature Networks

The Council has said they are unlikely to have funds to support the costs of planting at the Pound this year, so no further CC input is needed. Eleanor has thanked the council for their support.

3.5 Graveyard extension

No update.

3.6 Resurfacing lane between Station Road/Tweeddale Crescent

No update.

4. External Reports

4.1 Police

Between 1st - 31st August 2024 there were 19 calls to the area. No crimes were recorded. A resident present at the meeting asked for help dealing with an ongoing situation of antisocial behaviour. He came to the CC meeting in May, but the situation has not improved. He described the behaviour and the very serious impact it is having on him. Adam said he would raise the matter at the next CAPP meeting. The councillors will also be at that meeting.

4.2 Yester Estate

No update.

4.3 Gifford Community Woodland

The Gifford Community Land Company, which looks after the woods on behalf of the community, held its AGM. Graeme Davies was elected as the new chair. The woods will be advertising for a new administrator and will be publishing a newsletter shortly. The next volunteer days will focus on paths and rhododendron clearance. There was a well-attended fungi foray in September (see www.giffordcommunitywoodland.com/events for details of all events and volunteer days).

4.4 East Lothian Council

Saltoun Primary School has been mothballed. Councillor Trotter said that the council remained committed to rural schools, but the school roll at Saltoun had become too low. Councillor Akhtar outlined some constituency work relating to overgrown hedges, brickwork repairs and fencing. The After School Club at Yester is now up and running.

Dave asked whether anything could be done to improve the pathway that is meant to run alongside the Haddington Road to connect the village to the Bolton walkway. The path is gradually disappearing and it is dangerous for people to walk on the road. It was suggested that the Community Payback Team might be able to help.

5 Internal Reports

5.1 Roads and Footpaths

The white lines have been painted onto the Edinburgh Road, following the resurfacing work. CC wondered why the yellow lines that are due to be painted outside the Goblin were not done at the same time.

5.2 Lighting, Drains and Signs

There are 2 lights out on Tweeddale Crescent, which Dave will report.

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 August and 30 people attended the lunch club. Soup & Smile will re-start on Wednesday 2nd October and will run through to the last Wednesday in March. Adam is arranging a fundraiser for Soup & Smile to take place on Friday 15th November.

6 Correspondence

Nothing to report.

7 AOB

7.1 Goblin signage

The Goblin has been asked to remove new signage from the front of the building, following a complaint. The Goblin has not been given any feedback about what signage they can have. Councillor Akhtar agreed to follow this up. **ACTION: SA**

7.2 Headstone

There is a headstone in Yester churchyard for the children killed in a bus accident in 1970. The headstone is safe, but it would benefit from some maintenance as there is space under the plinth. CC will try to speak to someone about this.

7.3 Building development at The Wynd

A new house is being built on the Wynd on the site of 2 former garages. A container has been placed on the common grass next to the site and this is being used to store building materials. A resident present at the meeting asked whether this had been approved by the council. He had tried to speak to the council's planning department, but had been unable to get the information he wanted. Agreed that details would be emailed to Councillor Trotter, who would follow it up. **ACTION: TT**

6.4 Consultation on council's website

East Lothian Council's website - www.eastlothian.gov.uk - is due for an upgrade. They have launched a consultation to gather feedback on the current site. The survey closes on 30 September.

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

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APPLICATIONS WITHIN GCC AREA

	Date Validated	GCC first discussed	Comments	Status
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.	Awaiting decision
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.	Awaiting decision
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.

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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.