Langhope Rig Wind Farm Community Council Liaison Group (CCLG)
Minutes from 29th August 2013
7pm, Tower Mill, Hawick

Attendees:
Bob Francombe, Upper Teviotdale and Borthwick Water Community Council (BF)
Ian Robson, Upper Teviotdale and Borthwick Water Community Council (IR)
Cllr Cranston, Scottish Borders Council (CC)
Cllr Elliot, Scottish Borders Council (CE)
Gwen Crew, Denholm and District Community Council (GC)
Michael Van Beinum, Lilliesleaf, Ashkirk and Midlem Community Council (MVB)
Marion Livingston, Lilliesleaf, Ashkirk and Midlem Community Council (ML)
Cameron Knox, Hawick Community Council (CK)
French Wight, Hawick Community Council (FW)
S Beck, Denholm and District Community Council (SB)
Barbara Harrison, Ettrick and Yarrow Community Council (BH)
Gordon Harisson, Ettrick and Yarrow Community Council (GH)
Matt Hunter, Project Manager, SSE Renewables (MH)
Kirstanne McDowall, Community Liaison Manager, SSE (KM)
Ciara Wilson, Community Investment Manager, SSE (CW)

Minutes:

i) Terms of Reference
All attendees introduced themselves to the group and KM explained the aims of the CCLG as described in the Terms of Reference which was drafted and circulated to attendees before the meeting. KM stated that she was pleased that representatives from each impacted community council were able to attend the meeting and share their views on the development. KM asked attendees if they had any comments on the Terms including the proposed meeting schedule and meeting topics. MVB stated that there were concerns about meeting on the Langhope Rig site during February 2014 when the weather could be potentially bad. KM stated that this had been noted and a decision on location would be taken closer to the time depending on weather. The Terms of Reference were accepted by the group.

ii) Project Update
MH from SSE Renewables (SSER) provided a project update:

- Project consented in 2008. Situated near Roberton. 16MW site (10 x 1.6MW GE turbines).
- Pre construction works including road improvement works to the B711 and Martins Bridge carried out between June and August 2013. Compound will be removed from Martins Bridge within the next three weeks.
- Enabling works on site began in August 2013 and will continue until October when the main works will start and will last for 12 months. Concreting to take place in Feb / March 2014 and an on site batching plant has been requested and is awaiting final sign off from Borders Council.
- Turbine deliveries to site will begin in Summer 2014 after the Hawick Common Riding Celebrations and Commonwealth Baton – deliveries expected to begin on 16th June 2014. The schedule had been pushed back by a few weeks following community feedback from Hawick and Denholm. FW stated that the change in schedule was appreciated by the community.
- A Trial run is planned for November 2013 as BEAR Scotland are resurfacing part of SSER’s route in October 2013. Final date of trial run is TBC. Discussions have begun with police in Hawick to manage traffic during deliveries and trial run. SSER will keep the community updated once a schedule for both is confirmed. Trial run Q&A on project website: www.sse.com/langhoperig.

- Turbine components will be delivered by road using abnormal load delivery vehicles under the supervision of a Police escort with every effort being made to keep any disruption to a minimum. The vehicles will travel from the A68 on the A698 passing through Denholm and Hawick before joining the A7 to its junction with the B711. They then join the B711 passing through Roberton to the site.

- It is projected that there will be up to 35 escorted convoys travelling to the site over a three month period.

- Construction of the grid connection is to begin in Autumn 2013 (ground investigations) however main grid route construction will begin in 2014. Consultation will begin with local residents shortly.

- The community investment fund will be opened once main construction works begin - expected to open in October 2013 with CW providing an update on this later on at the meeting.

- We will use local contractors, suppliers and businesses wherever possible during construction. We have held two “Meet the Supplier” events for local businesses and have a growing business register. MH stated that a disappointing turnout was received at both business events and would welcome more details of local businesses, especially local accommodation providers. Members of the group suggested a few local accommodation providers that may be interested and said they would mention to contacts that they know.

iii) Project Update: Questions and Answers
BF stated that the Upper Teviotdale and Borthwick Water Community Council had requested a footbridge be laid across Martin’s Bridge as part of the works but this had not been acted upon by Scottish Borders Council (SBC).

MH said he had not been aware of this request but concrete trenches have been created across the bridge to avoid future closures to the bridge. Eight ducts for eight possible fibre connections have been created should broadband providers wish to use these.

IR asked if the Scottish Water valves have been moved too and MH confirmed that they have – these are now situated at Martin’s House, again to avoid lengthy closures of the bridge in future.

IR stated that he is happy with the way the bridge has been completed but has concerns about traffic on the B711 during construction. There are boulders on the road that have caused punctures. MH stated that SSE did not place the boulders on the road - they are part of SBC draining works but this would be raised with the council.

IR asked if imported stone will be used on the access tracks to the site as stated in SSE’s traffic management plan. MH stated that the traffic management plan was based on SSE’s worst case scenario and that as the site is progressed and other options are being explored the plan could change. Imported stone will no longer be used – stone from the site will be used instead. An updated traffic management plan is currently being drafted and will be circulated / placed on the Langhope Rig website once complete.

GC asked if SSER were experiencing issues with the site entrance since a new planning application had been submitted. MH explained that turbines were never planned for delivery through the existing site entrance and that another access track was being sought. This is currently awaiting a decision from Scottish Borders Council.
CK and GC expressed concern towards any works taking place at the A698 at Knowesouth. CK stated that a wall there had collapsed about a year ago and was still waiting to be fixed by Scottish Borders Council – concerns about road safety. GC asked if the road was strong enough to withstand turbine deliveries. MH stated that the turbines could get through safely and that weight would be spread evenly over several axels, meaning the vehicles would be no heavier than standard trucks. CK asked if the A698 could be raised as an issue with SBC by SSER.

SB asked if any infrastructure in Denholm would be removed during turbine deliveries. MH stated that no infrastructure is to be removed in Denholm however filleting would be put in place to protect the verge on the left hand side of the village as you leave towards Hawick. GC asked if trees would be removed from the verge. MH stated that the filleting will not go as far back as the crash barrier so no trees will be removed.

FW asked where the water would come from for the concrete batching. MH stated that this would come from the site. MH said that water would not be sourced from Akermoor Loch. MH stated that all necessary steps would be taken to prevent any run-off of water from the concrete mixing in order to protect the loch and surrounding land and water.

BH asked what time deliveries would take place to the site. MH stated that no deliveries would run before 9am over Martins Bridge to avoid the local school bus. Deliveries would also be held between 3.30pm and 4pm for the school bus return journey.

FW asked if deliveries would be avoided during rush hour. MH stated that the schedule for turbine deliveries would be worked out by police with safety as first priority.

GC asked if turbine deliveries would go through Hawick High Street. MH confirmed this and stated that plans to remove the islands and replace them with removable islands were being investigated. This would mean that the islands could be removed quickly when deliveries were coming through the town and then put back immediately.

GC asked if deliveries would happen everyday. MH stated that deliveries wouldn't happen everyday and a schedule would be communicated to the community in advance once confirmed.

GC stated that she can't believe that turbine deliveries will fit safely round the butchers corner in Denholm. MH stated that people are surprised at how small a space turbine trucks can navigate. MH added an action to show the video of the trial run for Calliacher at the next CCLG meeting.

IR said there was some concern about trees and shrubbery on the B711 road to the site. MH stated that some pruning will be done in advance of the turbine deliveries in 2014. Pruning was likely to take place in Spring 2014. MvB expressed concern about nesting birds. MH stated that a survey of nesting birds would be undertaken prior to any proposed pruning.

GH asked where the turbines were being built. MH stated that the towers were being procured from Wind Towers in Machrihanish, the only Scottish Company that builds wind tower sections – SSE is heavily invested in the plant. Other parts would have to be procured from other countries including China, Scandinavia and USA as unfortunately it was not possible to order within the UK market.

KM asked for feedback on the best way to keep the community updated during construction and deliveries. KM pointed out that the Langhope Rig website would be regularly updated, a twitter page had been established and a growing mailing list is in use. KM explained that other methods explored were community notice boards and mail outs in local free magazines. Hawick Life was recently used - delivered to 9000 houses and businesses in the area. KM explained that electronic sources of information delivery were preferred as it meant that any last minute changes to schedules could be communicated quickly but understood that some people may not have access to email, internet etc.
Other methods for keeping locals updated were suggested such as road signs on the delivery route, local newspapers, local mail drops, bespoke mailing and local radio. 1 page A4 newsletters were requested that could be placed on community noticeboards and in community magazines. An advert in Border Events magazine was suggested as this covered a wide area. Tailored messaging was requested if possible.

iv) Community Investment Update
CW provided an update on plans for the Langhope Rig Community Investment Fund:

- Total community benefit package of £80,000 based on £5,000 per MW (16MW site).
- Fund split between a Local Fund (Upper Teviotdale and Borthwick Water, Lilliesleaf, Ashkirk and Midlem and Ettrick and Yarrow) and Regional Fund (Borders Wide).
  - Local Fund: £40,000 per year for lifetime of the wind farm
  - Regional Fund: £40,000 per year for lifetime of the wind farm
- A Launch event is planned on 24th October 2013 to provide information to those interested in applying – details to be publicised once confirmed. Fund open for applications on 28th October.

CW stated that another representative was required for each of the three host community councils to sit on the Community Investment Panel. MVB stated that this would be raised at the next meeting of the Lilliesleaf, Ashkirk and Midlem Community Council next week. BF and BH stated they would look into this for their area.

BF asked if community councils would still get micro grants for local projects. CW confirmed this was the case and would be available once the fund had launched.

CK stated that he was unhappy that Hawick Community Council is not eligible for funding since the town would be disrupted during deliveries. CW explained that while Hawick and Denholm are not eligible for the local fund, both would be eligible to apply for the regional fund which is also worth £40,000 per annum.

KM closed the meeting and asked if anyone would like to add anything to the agenda for the next meeting. It was proposed that decommissioning should also be discussed. KM stated that if anyone had any other questions in the meantime to get in touch.

It was agreed that the next meeting would be held in Hawick again at the Tower Mill centre as this is a central point for all members. The next meeting will be held at the end of October and a date will be agreed by members via email.

ACTIONS FOR NEXT MEETING:
- Circulate new traffic management plan once complete and place on project website – MH / KM
- Raise issue of A698 Knowesouth and boulders on B711 with Borders Council – MH
- Group to feedback on potential accommodation providers / local businesses – ALL
- Show video of trial run at next meeting – MH / KM
- Feedback to CW on potential new panel members for community fund – BH / BF / MVB