

Ness Castle Stakeholder Group Meeting Minutes

Inverness Royal Academy

15 January 2020 at 6:30 pm

PRESENT	
Councillor Callum Smith (chair)	The Highland Council
Councillor Ron MacWilliam	The Highland Council
Kenneth Murray	Interim Education Quality Improvement Manager
Robert Campbell	Estates Strategy Manager, THC
Dorothy Gibb	Principal Estates Officer, THC
Fiona Sangster	Project Co-ordinator, THC
Evelyn Miller	Cleaning & FM Manager, THC
John Martin	Dores & Essich Community Council
Murray McCheyne	Holm Community Council
Alison Jamieson	Holm Community Council
Evelyn Grant	Holm Community Council
Maria De La Torre	Lochardil & Drummond Community Council
Ruth MacKay	Head Teacher, Holm Primary School
Nigel Engstrand	Rector, Inverness Royal Academy
Robin Fyfe	Acting Rector, Inverness Royal Academy
Scott McRoberts	Holm Primary Parent Council & Church of Scotland St Columba Minister
Craig Paton	WSP
Keri Monaghan	Stallan Brand
Peter Smith	Stallan Brand
Neil Armstrong	Kier Construction
Dan Perris	Kier Construction
Martin Bissell	Ramboll
APOLOGIES	
Audrey Kellacher	HT Lochardil PS
Councillor Alastair Christie	The Highland Council
Ian Soden	Lochardil Parent Council

<p>1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cllr Callum Smith opened the meeting as Chair and welcomed all those in attendance. Apologies were received from Audrey Kellacher and Cllr Alastair Christie. 	ACTION
<p>2. TERMS OF REFERENCE AND STAKEHOLDER ATTENDEES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> DG explained the purpose of the draft Terms of Reference and the importance of ensuring that all Stake Holders were represented at the meetings to pass information on to their relevant groups. She stated that if anyone wanted to suggest groups not represented already that this would be welcomed. She had been made aware of a Residents Facebook Group and asked if anyone of had a contact for this group to let her know. 	

<p>Kenny Murray stated that local people may become particularly valuable when it comes to things like naming the school.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was agreed that the second meeting would take place in March after the Planning Application has been decided and that the regularity of meetings will be agreed then. • It was also agreed that groups would identify their regular representative at the next meeting with a possible second person for back up to ensure that information is passed on. 	
<p>3. DESIGN OVERVIEW</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keri Monaghan gave some background to Stallan Brand and provided a presentation (see attached) illustrating some of the projects and buildings they have worked on and the ideas behind their design. PS then talked the group through slides including the 2007 masterplan, the catchment area for the new school, an illustrated view of what the school will look like when complete along with the internal plans for the building to show the three classroom clusters and the internal layout. He also discussed the shared environment, communal space and the visual connection of the spaces in the building. He explained how Phase 1 will contain the main structure including the dining area, games hall etc. and how Phase 2 will house additional classrooms. He informed the group of the reason behind the position of the school on the site to make the best of natural daylight and showed the landscape plan including the 3G pitch, the road and footpath accesses and the parking area. Following some questions from the group: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was confirmed that there was one lift in the building. • RC informed the group of why it was decided to involve Stallan Brand on the project and of how it had been a very interesting process and the first of it's kind for The Highland Council. • The coloured areas on the exterior of the building are aluminium cladding. • The drop off area is for users of the building, the parking spaces are for staff. Holm CC expressed that their biggest concern is the drop off area and the safety of pupils getting to and from school and that this had to be carefully considered. Concerns were raised that the road by the suds area will become an unofficial drop-off by parents. DG explained that the design including the additional time-limited nursery drop off area was an attempt to avoid this but that the Safer Routes to School document will take this into account and that THC would do everything they could to prevent people using cars and residential streets to drop off. She also stated that we had to be more carbon conscious and would be looking at ways to make walking/cycling and taking the bus more accessible. MMC expressed concern about walking/cycling distance from Ness 	

side. He also suggested a different design for the nursery drop off similar to the loop at the main one. PS suggested that we monitor the use of the drop off during Phase 1 and make any necessary improvements/changes during Phase 2.

- DG confirmed that there will be no fencing around the site boundary but just around the playground and sports areas.
- JM asked if there will be a dedicated cycle route/path and cycle sheds and raised concerns about safety, particularly from the Torbreck direction. KM confirmed that there will be covered cycle sheds at the school and that SB were looking at options for cycle routes. DG confirmed that the speed limit would be 20 mph. It was also queried if there would be a pedestrian and cycle crossing on Brodie Road – it was explained that Planning may decide on this.
- NE asked if the learning environment would be acoustically closed? KM explained that new buildings have an acoustic rating and that acoustic engineers had been consulted and that the new building met their requirements. Teachers had been consulted about the layout of the classrooms and some had visited similar schools to see how it worked in practice and they were now positive supporters of the design. NE also raised concern about ASN pupils who are in mainstream and asked if this had been considered with regard to noise levels and colour schemes. RC confirmed that this had been taken into account.
- Maria De La Torre asked about the capacity of the canteen space. KM explained that at Phase 1 the dining area had capacity to feed 200 pupils at the same time and that the plan was for two sittings. She went on to describe different types of seating that will be used and explained that there would be a second small servery/snack area space to be used during the day as well. The dining area will be expanded during phase 2.
- MMC asked if someone from THC Transport Service could be invited to future meeting. DG explained that the the Road Safety Officer, Lisa MacKellaich came to User Group meetings but agreed to invite her to a Stakeholder meeting.
- MMC asked about the playground layout for the sport pitches and MUGA and mentioned that the Ramboll report shows the pitch surrounded by a 2.5 m structure to reduce noise. PS explained that he was working with Ramboll to avoid this being necessary. MMC commented that the height of site is 2m above the ground surface level of the neighbouring houses and stated that is was not at that level until the current developer came in. His concern is that this will contribute to the noise and also increase floodlight disturbance. KM explained that the position of the building and sports facilities takes into account the height of the houses still to be built being higher than the school. DP confirmed that one of the first jobs on the site will be re-levelling.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AJ expressed concern about the classroom sizes but was reassured that they were the standard size and would be big enough for the school roll. Ruth Mackay explained that the classrooms were a similar design to those at Holm Primary and that teachers there were very impressed with the design. 	
<p>4. PROJECT UPDATE AND PLANNING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dan Perris of Keir Construction explained how they had been working with THC to develop the design of the school and also gave a background of Keir's work to date, particularly delivering school buildings. He gave a brief presentation on how the build will progress – see attached. • Cllr CS expressed how impressed he had been with Kier's work at Alness. • JM asked that the speed limit was emphasised to construction staff. DP agreed to do this and also explained that a large part of the team working on the new school will have worked on the Alness project previously. • MMC commended DP on his excellent presentation and asked if he could be included in the list of Stakeholders. DG explained that DP would not be considered a Stakeholder but would be invited to meetings regularly to give updates. • The planned overflow parking area for construction staff will only be used if essential and DP confirmed that they actively encourage staff to use crew buses to minimise traffic at their sites. • If the Community have any issues throughout the build, they are encouraged to approach the staff at the site office or to contact DG at THC. 	
<p>5. TRANSITION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RC explained that transition would be a recurring item on the agenda covering all that THC needs to do to ensure the school opens in August 2021. Key things will be how we manage school admissions, placing requests etc. School roll forecasts have been taken into account and it is envisaged that Holm and Lochardil rolls will gradually reduce and the new school roll will increase. There will be 12 classes initially and placing requests will be received but THC will need to be mindful of capacity. The plan at present is to let the first year happen and then monitor rolls but we may have to cap it for placing requests at some point. A fine balance will require to be struck between the three schools. Kenny Murray agreed and emphasised that positive engagement and regular meetings were a good approach. It will be important to engage with HTs to ensure that the needs of pupils, curriculum etc are taken on board. The appointment of a HT for the new school will need to be looked at before the end of term in June 2020. Staffing, ASN and ELC needs and resources also needed to be considered. He commented that 	

the flexibility of a two phase project was a good opportunity to bring anything into account at Phase 2. He expressed hope that the end date would hopefully be before August 5 to allow staff to prepare for starting the new term in the new school and also enjoy their summer break.

6. COMMUNITY BENEFITS

- DG explained the community benefits that may be available and asked for any suggestions to be brought to the next meeting. DP suggested that there may be job opportunities at the site and also offered to help in any way they could or to speak to pupils and staff at the local schools if required.
- MMC asked about community use of the new school. Evelyn Miller gave information on school lets and explained that there was more information on THC website. She confirmed that going forward a representative from her team would be at all Stakeholder meetings. She would also welcome feedback on what the Community will demand in terms of lets.
- DG explained that Community Benefits in terms of the Stakeholder meetings were to compensate for any disruptions etc. and were not in relation to community use of the building when complete. She then gave examples of previous community benefits offered during similar school construction projects.
- JM enquired about Planning permission as the Council were in theory their own applicant and asked whether this will mean a delegated decision or Planning Committee decision. RC confirmed that the application would be considered at a Planning Committee meeting.
- RMW asked about the deadline for comments. Planning had agreed to extend this until 20 January in light of the Stakeholder meeting being on 15 January. Although the date has not been officially extended RMW confirmed that they will still take comments right up to date of committee meeting. RMW checked that the CCs were happy that they had all the information they required and explained that any comments they had made at the pre-planning stage would need to be re-submitted for this application if they still wanted them to be considered. He also welcomed any comments directly to him prior to planning meeting.
- Holm CC wished to express that the meeting had been exceptionally helpful and had informed their draft response and thanked the group for their time.

7. AOCB

RC informed the group that the name of the new school had not been decided and would be part of a formal process and that there would be a page on THC website where they could find information and minutes of Stakeholder meetings regarding the school.

8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

18 March 2020 at 6pm in Inverness Royal Academy.