

**The Highland Council**  
**No. 11 2015/2016**

Minutes of the Site Visit and Special Meeting of The Highland Council held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Friday, 9 September 2016 at 9.00 am and 2.15 pm respectively.

**1. Calling of the Roll and Apologies for Absence**  
**A' Gairm a' Chlàir agus Leisgeulan**

**Present:**

Mr R Balfour	Mr A Graham
Mr A Baxter	Mr R Greene
Mrs C Caddick	Mr D Kerr
Mrs I Campbell	Mr B Lobban
Mrs G Coghill	Mr D Mackay
Mr J Crawford (excluding Item 3.2)	Mr G MacKenzie
Mrs M Davidson	Mrs I McCallum
Dr J Davis	Mr J McGillivray
Ms J Douglas	Mrs M Paterson
Mr D Fallows	Mr T Prag
Mr G Farlow	Mr G Rimell
Mr B Fernie	Dr A Sinclair
Mr S Fuller	Mr H Wood
Mr K Gowans	

**In Attendance:**

Team Leader, Development and  
Infrastructure  
Principal Planner, Development and  
Infrastructure  
Principal Solicitor (Planning), Corporate  
Development

**Mrs I McCallum in the Chair**

**Also in Attendance:**

Mrs V MacIver, SSE, for the applicant  
Mr J Wheeler, SSE, for the applicant  
Mr K Reid, SSE, for the applicant  
Mr S Robertson, SSE, for the applicant

Ms D Barley, for the CC

Objectors: Ms L Bishop, Mr B Hendry, Mr D MacPherson, Mr R Dempster, Mrs A Dempster, Mr D MacAskill, Ms C Boniface, Mr K Taylor, Mr C Grant, Mr L Anderson, Mr P Wells, Ms P Wells, Mr P Bennett, Mrs W Bennett, Mr B Mutch and Ms S Flett.

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Dr D Alston, Mrs J Barclay, Mr D Bremner, Mr I Brown, Miss J Campbell, Mrs H Carmichael, Mr A Christie, Mr B Clark, Dr I Cockburn, Mr N Donald, Mr A Duffy, Mr M Finlayson, Mr C Fraser, Mr H Fraser,

Mr L Fraser, Mr J Gordon, Mr B Gormley, Mr J Gray, Mr M Green, Mr A Henderson, Mr R Laird, Mrs L MacDonald, Mr W Mackay, Mr A Mackinnon, Ms A MacLean, Mr T MacLennan, Mr K MacLeod, Mrs B McAllister, Mr D Millar, Mr H Morrison, Ms L Munro, Mr B Murphy, Mr F Parr, Mr G Phillips, Mr M Rattray, Mr M Reiss, Mr A Rhind, Mrs F Robertson, Ms G Ross, Mr G Ross, Mr R Saxon, Mrs G Sinclair, Mrs J Slater, Ms M Smith, Ms K Stephen, Mr J Stone, Mr B Thompson and Mrs C Wilson.

**2. Declarations of Interest**  
**Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt**

There were no declarations of interest.

**3. Applications to be Determined**  
**Dealbhadh rin Dearbhadh**

**3.1 Applicant:** Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission (SHET) PLC (16/00769/FUL) (HC/40/16)

**Location:** Land 900m NW of Asgard, Garbole, Tomatin (Ward 20 – Inverness South)

**Nature of Development:** Development of a 275kv / 132kv substation by Garbole (Tomatin).

**Recommendation:** Grant Planning Permission

There had been circulated Report No HC/40/16 by the Head of Planning and Environment recommending the grant of the planning application subject to the conditions detailed therein.

The Committee held a site inspection in relation to this item. The site inspection viewed the proposed substation development from a number of viewpoints. At each stop Mr K McCorquodale spoke to his Report and pointed out physical features relevant to the application and those representing the Applicant and Objectors were given the opportunity to point out physical features relevant to the application.

On a point of order, Mr J Crawford stated that, although the Council had been on a site visit, members had not actually visited the site, 1.6 km was the nearest the Council had been to the site. Mr Crawford made reference to having emailed the Convenor and Planning Officer in advance of the site visit to specifically request a visit to the site. He also made reference to conflicting information having been offered by the applicants, officers and objectors on the location of the application site. Small mini buses had specifically been requested so that the site could be visited and a larger 32 seater mini bus had arrived and had been accepted. The larger bus was unable to negotiate the Garbole Road.

The Principal Planner responded that key viewpoints had been chosen to allow for an assessment of the impact of the development (and the related overhead line development, item 3.2). There was a plan with a pen and ink drawing on a photograph of the area, showing the positioning of the development on the hillside. The planning of the site visit was a difficult logistical exercise with the possibility of

80 members together with officers, applicants and objectors attending, two mini buses capable of taking the members had therefore been considered the best option.

The Clerk and Planning Officer advised that the site visit route had been circulated with the papers and Members had spent four hours on a site appraisal of the most

significant viewpoints, key interests and likely receptors impacted by the development and the related overhead line development, item 3.2. The site visit had been extended to include an additional location at the Garbole bridge Coignafearn Road. A request had been received to extend the site visit up the Garbole Road but, unfortunately, the road dimensions could not accommodate the bus. .

Members were disappointed that, following emails from several Councillors in advance of the site visit, appropriate vehicles had not been utilised to allow Members to see the actual site.

The Convener, seconded by Mr T Pragg **moved** that the Council hear the presentation and then decide whether they had sufficient information to proceed with the determination.

Mr J Crawford, seconded by Mr K Gowans moved as an **amendment** that this meeting be disbanded and that a further site visit be arranged to look at the actual site of the development.

On a vote being taken, 16 votes were cast in favour of the **motion** and 10 in favour of the **amendment**, with one abstention as follows:

#### **For the motion (16)**

Mrs C Caddick  
Mrs I Campbell  
Mrs G Coghill  
Mrs M Davidson  
Dr J Davis  
Ms J Douglas  
Mr G Farlow  
Mr B Fernie  
Mr A Graham  
Mr R Greene  
Mr D Kerr  
Mr G MacKenzie  
Mrs I McCallum  
Mr J McGillivray  
Mr T Pragg  
Dr A Sinclair

#### **For the amendment (10)**

Mr R Balfour  
Mr A Baxter  
Mr J Crawford  
Mr S Fuller  
Mr K Gowans  
Mr B Lobban  
Mr D Mackay  
Mr M Paterson  
Mr G Rimell  
Mr H Wood

#### **Abstained (1)**

Mr D Fallows

The motion being the finding of the meeting the Members proceeded to hear the presentation and thereafter decide if they had sufficient information to determine the application.

Members raised the following issues:

- clarity on the size of this development in relation to the development at Knocknagael;
- a plan showing the topography of the site would be helpful, showing what would be visible on the site;
- a visualisation giving clarity on the height of the base, the height of the building on the base at its highest point and the height of the pylons at either side of the site;
- this area had no street lights and the glow from Inverness had been reduced, could detail be given of the light pollution at the site once developed; and
- clarity on the visibility of the site from the Garbole Road;

The Planning Officer responded as follows:

- this development would be approximately half the size of the development at Knocknagael;
- the buzz bars, the wires to the pylons and the pylons in and out of the development would be visible but the rest of the equipment would be within the building;
- the highest point of the site was 408 m, the height of the development was limited as the equipment would be unable to function above that height due to wind chill, ice and accumulation of snow;
- the top of the building would be apparent above the tree line, but not the skyline as viewed Dalarossie Church;
- the substation would be operated remotely so for the majority of the time the site would be unlit; and
- you would see a small section of the site from Garbole Road.

Following discussion, Mrs I McCallum, seconded by Mr T Pragg **moved** that there was now sufficient information to continue with the determination of the application.

Mr J Crawford, seconded by Mr K Gowans moved as an **amendment** that the application be deferred for a further site visit to include Garbole Road and the site itself, the site visit to be arranged in consultation with the local members.

On a vote being taken, 11 votes were cast in favour of the **motion** and 16 in favour of the **amendment** as follows:

#### **For the motion (11)**

Mrs I Campbell  
Mrs M Davidson  
Ms J Douglas  
Mr B Fernie  
Mr A Graham  
Mr R Greene

Mr G MacKenzie  
Mrs I McCallum  
Mr J McGillivray  
Mr T Pragg  
Dr A Sinclair

### **For the amendment (16)**

Mr R Balfour  
Mr A Baxter  
Mrs C Caddick  
Mrs G Coghill  
Mr J Crawford  
Dr J Davis  
Mr D Fallows  
Mr G Farlow  
Mr S Fuller  
Mr K Gowans  
Mr D Kerr  
Mr B Lobban  
Mr D Mackay  
Mrs M Paterson  
Mr G Rimell  
Mr H Wood

The amendment therefore became the finding of the meeting and the Council agreed to **CONTINUE** the site visit to include new locations agreed in discussion with the local members (Ward 20) then hold a pre-determination hearing before determining the application.

**3.2 Applicant:** Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission (SHET) PLC. (15/04112/S37) (HC/41/16)

**Location:** Between Knocknagael Substation (by Inverness) and the proposed new substation by Garbole (by Tomatin) (Ward 20 – Inverness South)

**Nature of Development:** Construction of a 275kv grid transmission line between the Knocknagael Substation (by Inverness) and the proposed new substation by Garbole (by Tomatin).

**Recommendation:** Raise No Objection

There had been circulated Report No HC/41/16 by the Head of Planning and Environment recommending the Council raise no objection to the application subject to the conditions detailed therein.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- following the debris left at previous sites in particular beside the A9, a condition should be added to conserve the removal of materials for reinstatement of the sites;
- clarity on the height of the pylons;
- road improvements should be sought “prior to work commencing” to include maintenance of the verges with clarity on the figure for the road bond;
- due to disappointment at the impact on the skyline of previous pylons a liaison group be set up to discuss the final positioning of the pylons;
- had the applicant looked at alternative methods of cabling, not enough effort was given to underground cabling;
- in relation to ornithology in the area, whether raptors and other rare species had

been taken into account, with a tightening of the condition on rare species to include “outwith migratory bird species migration season”;

- improved visibility of the pylons for the birds to prevent bird strike injuries; and
- the addition of an advice note on construction hours.

The Planning Officer responded as follows:

- SSE and SEPA had undertaken work on the restoration of peat areas, Knocknagael was only built six years ago and the ground had been relatively well restored;
- the maximum height of the pylons would be 55 m;
- any condition on road improvements had to be reasonable and proportionate to the impact of the development, good working practices can help and bonds will be put in place calculated on the condition of the road, the age of the road and the impact of the traffic;
- there was considerable engineering input into the positioning of the towers and as a consultee it would be unreasonable to ask for positioning on all towers, but if there were concerns on any specific tower ie Tordarroch Farm , these could be brought to the developer; and
- an advice note on construction hours would be added to the response.

The Council **AGREED** to raise no objection to the application.

The meeting ended at 4.45 pm.