

**The Highland Council
No. 7 2016/2017**

Minutes of Special Meeting of the Highland Council held on site at Noss Head, Wick and thereafter in the Assembly Rooms, Wick on Tuesday, 7 March 2017 commencing on site at 10.30 am and meeting thereafter at 1.00 pm.

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

Present:

Mr R Balfour	Mr W MacKay
Mrs J Barclay	Mr G MacKenzie
Mr D Bremner	Mr A Mackinnon
Mrs I Campbell	Mrs I McCallum
Mrs G Coghill	Mr H Morrison
Mrs M Davidson	Mrs M Paterson
Mr G Farlow	Mr M Reiss
Mr B Fernie	Mr A Rhind
Mr M Green	Dr A Sinclair
Mr R Greene	Ms M Smith
Mr B Lobban	Mr J Stone
Mr D Mackay	

In Attendance:

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

For the applicant:

Ms M Rigby, Environmental Advisor,
SSE
Mr C Taylor, Project Manager, SSE
Ms C MacLachlan, Associate Town
Planner

Mrs I McCallum in the Chair

1. Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr A Baxter, Mr I Brown, Mrs C Caddick, Miss J Campbell, Mrs H Carmichael, Mr A Christie, Mr B Clark, Dr I Cockburn, Mr J Crawford, Dr J Davis, Ms J Douglas, Mr A Duffy, Mr M Finlayson, Mr H Fraser, Mr L Fraser, Mr S Fuller, Mr B Gormley, Mr K Gowans, Mr A Graham, Mr J Gray, Mr A Henderson, Mr D Kerr, Mr R Laird, Mrs L MacDonald, Mr N MacDonald, Mr J McGillivray, Mrs D Mackay, Ms A MacLean, Mr T MacLennan, Mr K MacLeod, Mrs B McAllister, Mr D Millar, Mr B Murphy, Mr F Parr, Mr G Phillips, Mr I Renwick, Mr G Rimell, Mrs F Robertson, Ms T Robertson, Mr J Rosie, Mr G Ross, Mrs J Slater, Ms K Stephen, Mr B Thompson.

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

There were no declarations of interest.

3. **Application to be Determined** **Dealbhaidh rin Dearbhadh**

3.1 Applicant: Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission Plc (SHET) (16/04505/PIP) (HC/002/17)

Location: Land 810 m SW of Noss Farm, Wick (Ward 03)

Nature of Development: Erection of a high voltage direct current switching station.

Recommendation: Grant.

There had been circulated Report No HC/002/17 by the Head of Planning and Buildings Standards recommending grant of the 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 and on site. 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.

Hearings procedure

The application was subject to a formal Hearings Procedure, which was summarised by the Chair, parties confirmed that they understood the process.

Introduction

The Principal Planner introduced the application and gave a description of the proposed substation development.

Applicant

Speaking on behalf of the applicants, Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission (SHET) PLC, Ms C MacLachlan indicated that the substation would link Shetland to the Scottish mainland for the first time; three underground cables were currently under construction to connect the circuit to Spittal, Shetland and Moray. Extensive pre-application consultations had taken place with the community to discuss six potential sites, these were followed by two exhibitions in April 2016 to propose the preferred site and to gain feedback on that site. Further a number of stakeholder meetings with SEPA and the Highland Council Planning authority and key consultees had taken place in June 2016. Further pre-application exhibitions had then been held in Wick and Staxigoe in August 2016. The applicant had sought to develop in an area that would not affect the sensitive coastline, the areas of historical interest and to minimise construction traffic in sensitive areas. As a result of the work undertaken only three objections had been received. Members' questions to the applicants included the following:

- clarity on the illumination of the substation when it was manned, and the times that the substation would be manned;
- clarity on the colour of the building;
- an indication of the maximum size of the substation;
- concern in relation to the construction traffic management plan with the single track road and the houses on Ackergill Road;
- could the earth mounds around the development be made higher;
- clarification on the groundworks required for this development, as blasting operations in the summer had shaken houses in the area; and
- clarity on the possibility of above ground wirescape.

The applicant responded to Members' questions as follows:

- the substation would not be manned on a regular basis and on the occasions it was manned there would be illumination;
- open to suggestions on the colour of the building;
- this plan is only indicative and a 10% change to the measurements on the plan may be made, but the building would be no higher than 47 m AOD (Above Ordnance Datum);
- following discussion with the community, the Papigoe Road was not considered suitable for access and the Ackergill Road would therefore be utilised. Use during peak times would be avoided;
- lessons had been learned from previous developments about the impact of construction traffic on the roads and every effort would be made to have repairs carried out to the road prior to and following construction;
- the landscaping had not yet been finalised but Members' comments would be taken on board, the gentle slope of the mound had been designed to fit in with the landscape;
- groundworks included excavation of soil and rock with no blasting anticipated at this stage; and
- there would be no above ground wirescape anticipated.

There were no representatives of the Community Council or objectors/supporters present to take part in the hearing. Therefore, the Chair, having ascertained that Members had all the information they required to determine the application, in accordance with the hearings procedure, sought confirmation from the Applicants that they were satisfied with the way the hearing had been conducted.

The Applicants confirmed they were satisfied with the hearings procedure.

Summing-up and Discussion

The Principal Planner summarised the main points of the application, making reference to the pertinent Policies as detailed in the report and the material considerations that had been taken into account in the assessment of the application.

The Chair opened the meeting to discussion, during which, Members raised the following issues:-

- the ruined castle had previously had stabilising work carried out and concern was expressed with any blasting work that would be required on site;
- a community liaison group was really important to allow the community to express any ongoing concerns with the applicants;
- concern in relation to water catchment;
- in relation to the road the possibility of extra laybys with the existing laybys strengthened as this had worked well in the past; and
- could the hours of work for both the development and any permitted development be clearly stated.

The Principal Planner responded to Members comments as follows:

- the cabling forms part of the permitted development;
- the colour of the building would be clarified at the detailed stage of planning and members comments would be taken on board, the paint used on the building

- would be non-reflective;
- within planning conditions a roads wear and tear bond would be secured;
 - blasting had not been assessed but there was confidence that any blasting required would be controlled and managed in consultation with the community, Historic Scotland and planning officers and this could be added to the planning conditions;
 - SEPA still had to confirm details in relation to water although neither SEPA, nor the Flood Unit had any concerns in relation to the water drainage;
 - confidence that the road would be managed under the Construction Management Plan; and
 - a condition could be included in relation to the Community Liaison Group.

The Committee agreed to **APPROVE** the recommendation as detailed in the report subject to additional conditions being added to those in the report to cover (i) any blasting required as part of the development and (ii) the formation of a community liaison group.

The meeting ended at 2.00 pm.