

Ness Castle stakeholder group meeting 6 minutes

Microsoft Teams

21 April 2021 at 6:30 pm

Present	Representing
Fiona Shearer	Area Care & Learning Manager
Kenny Murray	Education Adviser, Capital Estates Projects
Ruth MacKay	Head Teacher, Holm Primary School, THC
Robert Campbell	Estates Strategy Manager, THC
Dorothy Gibb	Principal Estates Officer, THC
Fiona Sangster	Project Co-ordinator, THC
Murray McCheyne	Holm Community Council
Gail Beverage	Holm Community Council
Scott McRoberts	Holm Primary Parent Council, and Minister, Church of Scotland, Inverness St. Columba
Apologies	
Councillor Callum Smith	THC
Councillor Alastair Christie	THC
Nigel Engstrand	Head Teacher, Inverness Royal Academy
Audrey Kellacher	Head Teacher, Lochardil Primary School, THC

Item	Discussion and comment	Action
1.	<p>Welcome and Covid update</p> <p>RC welcomed everyone to the meeting. Meetings will continue to be held on Microsoft teams until it is safe to return to in-person meetings.</p>	
2.	<p>Recommend and confirm stakeholder attendees, terms of reference</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gail Beverage has been added as a resident of Ness Castle. Lochardil PS and Inverness Royal Academy to nominate Parent Council Representative for each. Lochardil Parent Council to confirm if Ian Soden will continue or nominate an alternative person. Recirculate updated terms of reference prior to the next meeting. 	FSangster
3.	<p>Contract update</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The contract has been awarded to Keir Construction. Possible on-site start date of 24 May to be confirmed at pre-start meeting on 22 April. THC staff have continued to work on the project. Press release to be issued after the election period. Plan to open with entire school P1 – 7. Nursery to provide 1140 hours. Discussions regarding staffing for the new school to begin. 	RC FShearer

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4.	<p>Discharge of planning conditions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work continues on discharging planning conditions. • Limited on some conditions until contract was awarded. • To meet the planning condition that requires consultation with Members on parking, a presentation to Members, including the Planning Officer, was conducted in July 2020. Access and parking layouts were presented and discussed with no negative comments received at or after the meeting, and the presentation was repeated for Stakeholders at the August meeting. These access and parking layouts are included in the information for discharge of planning conditions. • MMC expressed concern about the parking proposal. RC gave assurances that planning will be made aware of THC's commitment to close monitoring, and that the scope to increase parking for Phase 2 can be brought forward if required. • MMC noted the large amount of parking at Merkinch PS compared to Ness Castle. Estates noted that Merkinch site includes a Family Centre that has parking requirements, and also Merkinch was processed through Planning in 2017 and prior to THC declaration of a Climate Change Emergency and commitment to carbon reduction. • Area at west of site beyond pitches suggested for community use if the area is freed up after removal of the oak and relocation of the pitches. 	
5.	<p>Pre-development protected species checks for ground clearing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ground clearing work has begun and is being co-ordinated with Planning: ground clearing is not pre-construction work and so is out with planning condition discharge for pre-construction work. • THC Ecologist conducted and co-ordinated field surveys for nesting birds, ground clearing and pre-start bat checks. • Based on field observations of tree health, detailed arboricultural assessments for tree T5328 (oak) and tree 995 (beech) were conducted. The arboricultural report has been forwarded to the THC Forestry Officer, Planning and Environment. • T5328 is a common oak (<i>Quercus robur</i>), not a sessile oak (<i>Quercus petraea</i>) as previously reported and is designated Category U due to low vigour and observed damage and is recommended to be removed. Prior to consulting with Planning on removal, a further bat check of T5328 will be conducted in May. • Beech tree 995 (<i>Fagus sylvatica</i>) is confirmed as having Brittle Cinder fungal (Latin name added post meeting, <i>Kretzschmaria deusta</i>) infection which can result in sudden failure of a tree. Treatment options are limited and structural support may not be feasible or appropriate in this urban location. • All agreed that if a tree is considered a health and safety risk and is recommended for removal, then it should be taken 	

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	<p>down. KM noted that mitigation should be put in place to compensate for losing the trees.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning will review/ approve the tree removal. Removal of the Category U oak will eliminate the large safety exclusion area required for the oak tree and return it to useable soft playground. Once the oak is removed, the original, preferred location for the pitch and MUGA may be revisited. Site comparison drawings showed the area of space that would be freed up at the west of the site allowing possible community use such as allotments, and allowing the pitch to be set back from some of the adjacent housing. Planning permission would be required to re-locate the pitches. Local resident concern was expressed on the height of the pitches overlooking the houses and also pitch floodlighting. DG noted that floodlighting shall meet all relevant regulations and will be under control of the school, not High Life Highland. Use of the pitch and MUGA after school hours will be through the school Lets procedure. MMC requested that if pitches are relocated as a result of removing the oak tree, that the contractor examine lowering the pitch levels to reduce potential disturbance to neighbouring properties. DG noted we will need to re-apply to planning to request moving the pitches and so there will be an opportunity to look at this. 	
6.	<p>Staffing and migration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussions to begin with Workforce Planning this week. Main priority to have a Head Teacher in post ahead of the school opening date of August 2022. Clear target for roll projection required. 	FShearer THC DG/FS
7.	<p>Community benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kier Construction have a designated Community Benefits staff person for the project – details to be circulated when available. Although there is a Ness Castle Residents Facebook Group, there is no formal community group. Holm CC are setting up a garden growing group called Holm Growing who would benefit from some assistance. 	FSangster
8.	<p>AOCB</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MMC raised concerns about the ground levels of the site in relation to the pitch and asked if it could be lowered. DG explained that this would not be possible if we were to leave the pitch in its current location but suggested using vegetation options to try and minimise the impact on neighbours. MMC requested that options to lower the level in that area are looked at if we decide to move the pitch location. 	DG

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreed that this will be explored if we are to re-apply for Planning permission. 	
9.	<p>Date of next meeting</p> <p>9 June 2021 at 6.30 pm on Microsoft Teams</p>	