

Ness Castle stakeholder group meeting minutes

Microsoft Teams

7 December 2022 at 6:30pm

In attendance	Initials
Councillors Cllr Alasdair Christie Cllr Jackie Hendry Cllr Andrew MacKintosh	AC JH AMK
Parent Council Representatives Andrew Martin, Holm Parent Council William Porter, Ness Castle Parent Council	AM WP
Community Representatives Gail Beveridge, Holm Community Council Murray McCheyne, Holm Community Council	GB MMC
Ness Castle Primary Craig Conon, Head Teacher	CC
Highland Council Representatives Robert Campbell, Service Lead – Capital Planning & Estate Strategy Dorothy Gibb, Principal Estates Officer Finlay MacDonald, Head of Property Services Evelyn Miller, Cleaning & FM Manager Alan Paul, Education Officer Liz Scott, ELC Commissioner Fiona Shearer, Area Education Manager South Gordon Stewart, Education Adviser	RC DMG FMD EM AP LS FS GS
Kier Construction Philip MacDowall, Regional Director Steven MacRoberts, Operations Manager	PMD SMR
Apologies Fiona Sangster, Estates Co-ordinator	

Item	Discussion and comment	Action
1.	Recording of meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none">DMG informed the group that the meeting would be recorded for the purpose of the minutes.	
2.	Introduction and apologies	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FMD explained that THC had invited PMD of Kier to attend the meeting to give an overview of current status and share a presentation and video of how the building currently looks. • FMD noted that we are close to completion with handover likely early in January and gave Stakeholders assurance that all is still on track for February school opening. 	
3.	<p>Minutes of previous meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Previous minutes were not discussed. 	
4.	<p>Progress update - Phil McDowell, Regional Director, Kier Construction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SMR shared a presentation showing the current status of the building and demonstrated how to use the Matterport link to take a virtual tour of the building. • Kier to issue link to Stakeholders by email after the meeting. • PMD suggested that a Kier representative could visit the current school to allow the children to have a virtual tour of the new school. • CC asked if the Matterport could be shared with the children before the Christmas break and this was agreed. • SMR gave List of Principal Outstanding or Ongoing works. • SMR noted that Building Control had identified enhanced cavity barriers must be installed and this had been the biggest hurdle in the last few weeks causing slight handover delay. • THC's snagging list is uploaded and Kier are working on it. • SMR noted that seeding of the external area needs to be carried out in the Spring. • SMR shared a remaining works programme. • The agreed handover date is now 20 January 2023. • This stills allow THC time for furniture install, ICT and other move management to be completed for 27 February opening. • AC asked how confident is Kier that they will achieve the works noted to be done before the Christmas shut down. • SMR stated that Kier do believe they can achieve this by Christmas and that the two weeks allowed 	PMD/S MR

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	<p>for defects in January will provide a buffer zone if items are not completed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> AC requested that Stakeholders are updated on 22 December on whether these works are completed. JH enquired about security measures for the period of shut down over Christmas. SMR noted that this will be agreed with THC but confirmed that existing external security including CCTV will remain in place. The school CCTV is operational and can also be used as a security measure. Kier will also arrange for drop in visits to allow checks and to protect the building. AC asked if it would be possible to increase Building Control visits rather than them arriving at the end of the works. SMR noted that Building Control currently attend the site on a weekly basis and compile a list that Kier works through. The final programmed visit is when they confirm that everything has been done, and they would issue the Building completion certificate. WP noted disappointment that the “absolutely achievable date of 7 December” had now passed. Stakeholders are now being told there is a further six weeks delay and asked what the Parent Council could tell parents? PMD replied that the scope of work known at the time of the last meeting allowed for completion on 7 December. Additional work was then identified collectively by Kier, Building Standards and the Design team and as a result additional time was required. PMD noted that the high level of building scrutiny is considered a good thing and the additional time required will not impact on the occupation date. AC agreed that Parent Councils needed a strong level of assurance that there will be no further delays to the handover date and final occupation date. AC suggested that the presentation is shared with the Parent Councils. PMD agreed that sharing the Matterport survey will give them visual access to most areas of the building to see for themselves what stage it is at. PMD continued that Building Control’s list was being worked through and there was nothing on it of concern. He further confirmed it is unlikely anything else will arise that will cause further delay. 	RC

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WP agreed that the Matterport will build confidence with parents. AMK asked for further clarity on the “manifestations”. SMR explained that these were safety markings required by Building Control on glass doors/windows to stop people walking into them. AMK also enquired if the play area would be sufficient for the children whilst we wait for the grass area to be seeded and also if extra cleaning had been considered for this period due to the potential mud being brought in on shoes. DMG noted that this is a situation at all new schools regardless of time of year when they open and agreed that it is a challenge but added that it is worth remembering that the school will not be opening at capacity so there won't be as many pupils at this point. Careful management will be required by the school. CC commented that although he is aware that the situation will be temporary he has already raised concerns and asked if it will be possible to lay turf down on some areas to begin with. DMG noted that it was originally hoped to have the school open in August and if this had been the case some seeding would have been done during the summer but unfortunately that wasn't possible. DMG agreed to look at fencing off particular areas to stop pupils from getting covered in mud. AM noted that the Matterport would also be a positive thing to show Holm parents. AM asked how confident Kier is that works will be completed before Christmas, despite them including a two week buffer in January. SMR explained that the Snagmaster tool is used for snagging and everything noted is included on that. Kier are working through it and the list is reducing every day so he is confident that they will get through everything of significance before Christmas with any minor items addressed in January if necessary. AM asked if the handover date of 20 January would give THC enough time for furniture install etc. RC reminded the group that THC had previously said 16 December was the last date possible for handover to allow for February opening. However, allowing for the additional two weeks in January, the date of 27 February still gives us five weeks and although ideally we would like six, it may be 	

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	<p>possible for us to start the process earlier even with Kier still working on the building in January.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> RC reiterated that THC will not accept a building with a long list of snagging items regardless of how minor they are. RC noted that as long as everything is delivered by Kier as noted, we are capable of having the building open as planned. AM asked what the implications were for Holm in terms of having the temporary classrooms removed once Ness Castle had moved into the new building. RC explained that the temporary classrooms will be moving to Beauly Primary School and that a parallel project is currently going through the Planning process to allow the units to be up and running at Beauly after Easter. Once vacated by the Ness Castle pupils there will be the need for a quick turnaround but this will be arranged with minimal disruption to Holm. MMC noted that although disappointing to hear of a further delay it was good to hear that the opening date of 27 February remains on target. MMC asked if it would be normal practice for a project of this size to have a two week buffer zone like the one programmed for January and asked what will happen if things slip and we lose the two weeks. SMR replied that it was not normal practice to have a two week buffer however in this case it would provide an opportunity to provide some flexibility for the betterment of the building. FMD explained that we are dealing with a unique one-off building so it is not a case of having a prototype where we know exactly how it functions. A school building would normally be handed over before the summer holidays with the holiday period to address any issues before it was operational but that is not the case with Ness Castle. FMD gave assurance that THC will have personnel on site and have a chance to allow the building to run until 27 February to address any issues which is a positive for winter issues with heating etc. FMD added that it is standard procedure for us to have a twelve month defect period where we can recall Kier contractors and designers etc. to address or rectify any issues that might arise. WP noted that some parents had noted the lack of contractor resources on the site and asked if that is a concern. 	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SMR replied that they are not concerned at this stage. The building is down to a snagging resource level so the volume of workers on site is what is required at this stage but he assured WP that more resources will be sourced if necessary. PMD noted that this was a fair comment as Kier have struggled with resources in the past but he would concur with what SMR has said in that he is confident they have enough resources on site at present. WP raised concerns about traffic management at the Eilean Donan Road/nursery entrance and asked there were any further traffic calming measures planned for that area. DMG noted that the speed limit was already 20 mph and there were traffic calming measures in place but agreed to ask Ian Graham if there were any further plans. WP noted that a zigzag had been removed at the entrance. DMG to look into that too. MMC asked if the bus currently provided from Ness Castle to Holm Primary could be retained after the school opens and be available to pupils from Ness side to Ness Castle. AC noted that this could set a precedent across Highland as the current transport policy does not allow for a bus for such a short distance. FS noted that the bus is currently being paid for out of the Education budget to assist with traffic management at Holm due to the delay with the new school but that there are no plans to continue this after the new school opens. FS also noted that the distance involved would not qualify for transport provision under the THC Transport Policy. DMG reminded the group that David Summers had attended an earlier Stakeholder meeting and asked for the local people to start using the Ness Castle bus service as the current user numbers were very low and may jeopardise continuing the route. DMG to ask David Summers if there has been any change to this situation and to get feedback on the possibility of a bus to coincide with school times. AC agreed as a user of the bus service that it was not very busy and carried few passengers. Post Meeting Note – DMG contacted David Summers who confirmed that there is currently no possibility of securing a peak hour bus service for Ness Castle. 	DMG DMG DMG RC

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AM noted that showing the Matterport to parents will give reassurance but asked that weekly updates continue to keep parents informed. • AC agreed that continuing communication is essential. • RC agreed to continue with a short update that included the completion dates. • RC suggested that the schools put the presentation from this evening on their websites. 	
5.	<p>Date of next meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be agreed. 	