

HELDON COMMUNITY COUNCIL
Minutes of the meeting held on 18 February 2025
at Mosstowie School at 7.00 pm

Chairman	Mr J Mountford – Dallas	
Treasurer	Mr S Williams – Roseisle	
Secretary		
	Mrs M Evans – Duffus	Mr N Sutherland - Dallas
	Ms Jo Kirby - Miltonduff	Mr W Duncan – Fogwatt & Birnie
	Mr A Lyons – Roseisle	Mr A Wallis – Birnie
	Mr K Milne – Miltonduff	Mr W Mustard – Fogwatt & Birnie
	Mr C Souter - Miltonduff	
Attendees	Councillor Bridget Mustard	David Barrett - Loanhead
	Councillor Neil Cameron	Christine Barrett - Loanhead
	Simon Betts – Planning Consultant	Norma Beaton- Ardgilzean
	Stephen Donnan – Land & water Consultant	Peter Bayliss - Ardgilzean
	José Manuel - OPDENERGY	David Evans - Duffus
	Alejandro Lague Cantó - OPDENERGY	Peter Green - Loanhead
		Peter Rix - Loanhead
		Donald Miller - Quarrywood
Apologies	Ms H Stewart – Roseisle	Ms S Hodder – Pluscarden
	Mrs D Kelly – Alves	Mr C McCarthy – Birnie
	Mrs L Smailes – Pluscarden	

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies had been received from Mrs H Stewart, Mrs S Hodder, Mrs L Smailes, Mrs D Kelly and Mr C McCarthy

2. SPYNIE BATTERY STORAGE PLANS

OPDENERGY gave a presentation outlining the plans for this project and giving details of the current situation.

Questions followed:

- This is for storing excess energy so why is it being built in this spot. It is not near any of the wind farms?
 - It is for serving the grid and needs to be near the substation in Elgin.
- So why is it not nearer to the substation?
 - There has to be a suitable site and a willing landowner. No other such suitable location has been found.

- Noise considerations – have potential background noises near residential locations been assessed? It is important to get the noise level established.
 - The assessed levels are considered to be below the established guidelines. As the scheme develops it will be necessary to have agreement from bodies such as the Environmental and Health experts. The applicant agent noted that they would consider taking levels adjacent to the existing houses.

- Fire risk – considerable concern was expressed on a number of fronts. How can sufficient water power be guaranteed when there is a maximum of 3 bars from a 9” pipe according to Scottish Water? Also water cannot be used to extinguish battery fires.
 - Discussions will take place with Scottish Water re suitability of local supply. Onsite-water storage to be provided if necessary with 21 hours of firefighting cover.

- DP5 and DP9 will need to be reviewed?
 - This will be covered.

- Will the trees planted for screening be of a good size so that they will not take years to grow to a suitable size?
 - Ready-grown trees can be bought.

- The recent fire at a Liverpool battery storage took firefighters 59 hours to extinguish. How can an initial 2 hours and a total of 21 hours be guaranteed to be sufficient?
 - An emergency plan would need to be agreed but the initial 2 hours would give time for this.

- Will pumping facilities be organised?
 - Yes and there will be heat sensors and alarms.

- Does OPDENERGY have public liability insurance?
 - Yes.

- The literature says that there will be 49 megawatts of storage capacity but 56 storage units of the size given suggest far greater storage than this?
 - The Council can insist on the maximum capacity. If this is to be increased then a fresh planning application would have to be made.

- What are the risks of contaminants if there is a fire?
 - The consequences can be severe but OPDENERGY can only respond to current controls. The Planning Department will impose restrictions. Technology can change very quickly.

- The number one concern is fire. Will this be included as part of the plan and not left until it comes before the Council?
 - Site design to conform with NFCC guidance.

- Transport – the local roads are not designed for heavy transport. Will there be upgrades to roads?
 - Traffic impact needs to be determined. A new widened access point to the site is included but not the widening of the road.

- What kind of noise will be produced – a whine, a hum?
 - There will be a refrigeration fan on each unit. The noise will be comparable to an electricity substation and will be within the permitted limit.
- Why not create the likely noise and noise level and record and measure it rather than rely on computer-generated information?
 - The next step will have to be a consultation on the noise level.
- The route connection to and from the site has not been agreed. Why not?
 - SSEN will require to purchase the land through which the connection route will pass and the route has not been established
- Is the installation at Keith a similar battery storage? If so, should we be taking similar safety measures such as the glass wall?
 - The Keith site has houses next to it.

It was agreed that RAF Lossie should be consulted and we should seek that they are a statutory consultant of the application.

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting of 10 December 2024 were approved.

Proposed: Mr S Sutherland Seconded: Mr W Duncan

4. MATTERS ARISING

a) Roseisle transport: nothing further to report until the final two houses have been completed.

b) Moray Learning Estate: no HCC members had attended the meeting.

c) Speeding in the Cloddach area: the police are keeping a presence in the area and the number of incidents has reduced.

5. ADDITIONAL CORRESPONDENCE

a) Kellas Drum Wind Farm: a letter of application has been referred to the Council and we have been asked if we can make a submission on their behalf. We have two issues:

- access road
- power line routes

Should we make a submission? It was decided that we should not do so. The Council will dictate access and we might as well wait to see their decision. SSEN is ready to submit a final application for lines. The Chairman will write to say that we have no real objection.

b) Proposed Speed Limit Changes (consultation): this is available online and individuals can complete it.

c) Outfit Moray – job opportunities: two posts are available for anyone interested:

- Youth Co-ordinator
- Trainee Youth Co-ordinator

d) JCC meeting: the proposed date of the first meeting of the new HCC is Tuesday 28 October 2025. Debra Duke would like to attend an HCC meeting before that to discuss any issues. We are a large rural area with several small communities.

e) Blackhills Wind Farm: this is a re-hash of the previous application which had been turned down as it was proposing too many windmills. The new application by another firm has reduced the number but increased the height of each windmill. The location is the same. The issue is the visibility of the taller structures.

f) Housing in Moray: an online consultation looking at how many houses are needed and of what type as the population changes. Individuals should complete this rather than the HCC.

6. FINANCE REPORT

The accounts have been signed off by Moira Duncan. We will show our appreciation – the Treasurer will take care of this.

Applicants for Wind Farm funding should be aware that this is currently slow in being approved which might have an impact on estimates received for the jobs.

The largest amount outstanding at the moment is the finance for the Fisheries Trust. This has now commenced with the classroom side completed. The outdoor part will begin when the weather improves.

There are two applications for the next round of funding:

- Dallas Hall roof
- Pluscarden Hall – the government requires both the building and the land to be owned together.

The date of the next Finance Meeting was agreed for Tuesday 25 February 2025 at 7.30 pm in Mosstowie School.

Finance since the last meeting:

Income	£31,914.02
Expenditure	£11,067.41

Balances:

HCC	£ 2,518.71
Roths 1	£35,604.40
Roths 2	£ 7,328.33
TOTAL	£45,451.44

6. PLANNING ISSUES

There were no issues.

7. A.O.C.B. to include area reports

a) Cloddach Bridge: we have still not received confirmation that the money will be available from the UK Government. Even if we do receive confirmation the project would not go ahead this year. It has not been cancelled – just re-allocated and de-prioritised. But £100,000 has been taken away from the local community to fund the business plan. When we get confirmation it will re-open the debate. Councillor Mustard will pursue this again.

The Military Aid to the Civil Authority is being approached to see if it could commit to the required repairs.

b) Councillor Mustard listed items that are due for review:

- Libraries
- The Budget
- Leisure facilities

There will be a consultation on all the above.

c) More work is being done on the issue of speeding through Thomshill. Speed signs such as 'you are entering a 30mph zone' are being considered.

d) Will the Cloddach Bridge barriers be removed? No – this would be costly.

e) Concern was expressed about the fact that a person who had been sentenced to Community Service had turned up but completed just 1½ hours yet was recorded as having completed seven hours. A complaint could be made to the Community Service or the Council. Councillor Mustard will follow this up.

Date, time and venue of the next meeting:

Finance meeting: Tuesday 25 February 2025 at 7.30pm at Mosstowie School

HCC meeting: Tuesday 25 March 2025 at 7.30 pm at Mosstowie School.