

MINUTES OF MEETING
14th May 2024 @ 7.30PM.
Younger Hall Kilmun
Meeting Start -7.30pm

This session was recorded for the minutes.

PRESENT Mark Borland (Acting convenor) shared with Diane Nicholson (Convenor), Janet Holm (Secretary), Graham Revill, Lachlan Macquarie, Mandy Grout, Peter Hunter Douglas, Lyndsey Greer Phillips, and Kerris Bone

Also Present: Councillor Gordon Blair, Councillor William Sinclair (as residents)
Number Residents in hall - 56
Number Residents online on zoom - 6
Total number of residents from out with the KCC catchment area - 9

1 APOLOGIES: Lindsey McKenna (Vice Convenor), Bruce Marshall, Malcolm Bird, Lynne and Des O'Keefe, Caroline Munro and Lorraine Hopkins plus 16 residents who expressed their vote via proxy

As the format of this meeting was to concentrate on the issues about the proposal to build a windfarm at Giant's Burn on the Cowal Hills these minutes will cover the agenda produced for the meeting.

A forestry report and police report has been received but they will be included in our regular meeting in August

2. INTRODUCTION

Diane said that there were some small forms circulating for those who wished to receive the agenda and minutes to be added to the KCC mailing list. Residents can also email the secretary Janet Holm to request to be added.

Daine said that the majority of the meeting would be convened by Mark Borland.

Mark says that the aim of this meeting was to understand the views of the residents of the catchment area of KCC and to give KCC a mandate of what we, as a community council, can do going forward with regard to the Statkraft proposal for scoping and potential planning applications for a windfarm at the Giant's Burn site on the Cowal Hills. This has been on our agenda since we were informed in early March '24 and we are running this session to understand the majority view of the residents in the KCC area. Mark said it will not be a discussion on the merits or issues of windfarm technology, but it is a discussion on the potential location of this proposed windfarm and the battery storage facility.

He said that the Scottish Government want "***Appropriate renewables in appropriate locations***" which is why this would be the focus of the discussion tonight.

Mark said that as we have a lot to discussion there are forms available so that, if you don't get time to ask a question, these can be used to submit a question. In addition, questions can be sent to KCC via the secretary

The views of local residents are prioritised, but the views of other residents from other affected locales can also be given if the speaker identifies where they come from.

The voting is limited only to residents of the KCC area.

3. CODE OF CONDUCT.

Mark then read a code of conduct to which of all participants for the meeting we asked to adhere.

The agenda had been split into specific topics
These are listed below with comments from the residents

4a ENVIRONMENTAL AND WILDLIFE

Each comment has been put into bullet points for ease of reading:

These are comments from individual residents in the room:

As will be seen from the responses, some of the participants are very knowledgeable in their field.

- The issue of raptors in the area and that the peat is a good store of carbon and the resident doesn't consider that it should be destroyed and filled with concrete. She believes that there can be an issue with concrete and peat-based soil which can kill the sphagnum moss and whether this will be able to be recovered later.
- A resident who stays near Glen Masson says she often sees raptors.
- The raptor group have identified an area where there is a least one habitat for the golden eagle. Ospreys have also been noted flying around Bishops Glen and possibly over the proposed site There are also harriers. It is a perfect setting for lots of bird life as you have the open peat land and the forest. The marginal environments are what birds really like as they can shelter in the woodland and hunt in the open
- Red squirrels (and pine martins) can easily be displaced with a development of this size. It is not just that we have them, but they can be displaced. This is a special eco system for a lot of wildlife.
- There is evidence given to the Energy Consents Unit (ECU) from Nature Scotland with reference back to golden eagles and that have used the same terms which they used in previous objections to a previous windfarm proposal in this area which was refused.
- From a history of the oil industry, we know that work is not allowed to start if cetaceans e.g. dolphins, whales and porpoises are anywhere within the area of an oil rig. These animals are very susceptible to ultrasound and long wave lengths which is exactly the kind of sounds that come off a windfarm. This resident would not be surprised that the cetaceans were chased away from the whole of the Upper Clyde area by the noise from the windfarm.
- A question was asked about whether there was a radius for this sound. A resident said that because it is a long wave sound the sound will travel 10 times than if it was an atmospheric sound especially in water.
- A concern was raised about building on peat and that it is not good practice to put turbines on class 1 and class 2 peat. However, in this proposal, this is not being considered.
- A resident, who had previously lived near a windfarm in the Highlands when it was being constructed said that for the higher the turbines, there is not only is a large amount of concrete used but massive amounts of steel The taller the turbines get, the base of the turbine has to be expanded massively and they have to be much bigger at the bottom which is increasing the concrete footprint needed.
- A resident said that this would mean that the soil and root structure of the area would be interfered with, and this would be increased, if, in addition, trees were removed. She said that was what we saw happen in October when we had a massive amount of rain and had landslips and flooding. We would see with that kind of interference to the soil and root structure. She says that Statkraft actually states in their submission that there could be a lot more water running down the hill, a lot more flooding. This isn't a disclaimer and the company have stated this. She thinks that anyone staying in Sandbank would need to be aware that this is a possibility, and they may have to inform their insurance company that this has been stated. There will also be environmental run off and pollution.
- A question was asked whether Statkraft are going to clear trees. This is a question that will have to be asked of Statkraft.
- A resident said that she understood that they would have to make access roads and having seen a windfarm being built in Aberdeen she thought it was a real mess. In addition, it is not just the turbine base that needs concrete but also for the hardstanding for cranes. They will need to dig up the land to make connections between the turbines to lay the cables and it is not a narrow path but will be very large. There has been a peat slide in Shetland recently and one in Ireland and this area would be a high-risk for this.

In summary, Mark Borland said that it would appear that concern was being raised not just about the turbines but the impact of the whole building and construction process.

A question was asked about who owns the land. KCC do not know who the landowner of the proposed area in question is.

4b LOCAL ECONOMY AND TOURISM

- A resident observed that this would be the first thing tourists would see when they visit the area.
- 2 cruise ships have visited the area in the last couple of weeks and this has helped the economy of the area.
- A question was posed about whether the length of time that the possible construction of the windfarm would feed into the living and working in the area. It could have a massive impact over a large time period.
- A resident said that Inverclyde Council have estimated that from the cruise ships coming into Greenock for this season they are expecting 150,000 visitors. They have put 26 million pounds aside for investment to encourage tourism and he expects that these visitors do not want to see a big windfarm on the hills.
- A resident said that we are on the border of the National Park (KCC is within the National Park) and the entire area of the proposed location of the windfarm is popular with hikers and walkers. All the tourism that is based on walking hiking running and biking would be affected by, not only the sight of the windfarm, but also what would be involved with their construction and that entire area will be out of bounds for some time.
- A resident said that the windfarm would have a negative impact of the visual appearance of the landscape from the National Park and the Gateway to the Highlands. As a person who travels around a lot of Scotland, in her opinion, there is nothing more heartbreaking than seeing hills with turbines on them
- A representative of Historic Kilmun said that it does depend on the location and that it was been decided on a previous windfarm planning application that this was not a suitable site. The difference from before is that these proposed turbines would be even higher.
- A resident said that because of the height of the proposed turbines, at night they would have lights
- A resident said that he didn't understand yet what the impact would be on the local economy. We understand there will be an impact of the tourism economy but are they going to provide long term or short-term jobs in the area, are they going to be using local people to help with construction or is it going to farm our jobs out with the area? Mark Borland said that this is an aspect that we need to question Statkraft about.
- A question was asked how this fits in with the Dunoon Project. Mark says that there is a number of groups that we need to consult to provide cohesion with, however action on this would be dependent on the outcome of this meeting.
- It was observed that there could be an impact if local manpower was used it which could affect the availability for local users.
- The Strone area is a destination which has a number of holiday homes and self-catering properties. The main reason it is a destination is because it has natural beauty and walks. What effect would the proposed wind farm have on these businesses? It could be that people won't come to these properties and this affects the businesses, and the properties may be abandoned. He observed that Statkraft is coming here for their financial benefit and our community's financial loss.
- A concern was raised about the feasibility of transporting large turbines via the road network to the proposed location. The increased use and slow traffic on roads which are not wide, could affect both tourism and the accessibility for the emergency services.
- A question was asked about the process of it going through planning. It was confirmed that it is a section 36 the application would go straight to the Scottish Government.
- A resident who runs a holiday let says that the main reason people come to visit is because it is so peaceful, and they enjoy looking over the views. From talking to a couple of visitors who have visited since we knew about this proposal they are horrified on the potential impact on the hillside. In his opinion is this could seriously affect tourism in the area.

- He also said that although there will be jobs during construction but after the windfarm would be up and running there would be little work as there may not be specialities in the local area and so people will be brought in to do the work. This would have to be confirmed with Statkraft.
- A resident said that scoping comments are already on the Energy Consents Unit.

JH responded that although KCC is a statutory consultee the deadline to comment was missed. However, after contacting the ECU, Kilmun Community Council can put in a response to the scoping documents. The discussion we are doing tonight will be used to inform the submission which is positive as we are involved right at the beginning of this process and do not have to wait until a planning application is logged.

4c. LIVING AND WORKING IN THE AFFECTED AREA.

- The effect of traffic and construction work which has already been discussed.
- What will the noise be like? Are we likely to hear the sound over here (in Kilmun) in Sandbank? What will it be like at night? Sound travels more at night when the temperatures are colder.
- There are going to be 3 red lights on each turbine and when the sun goes down they will be seen.
- On the previous application for a windfarm in this area there were comments about 2 different kinds of noise. This resident talked about the impact that noise can have households.
- Another concern is about the flicker effect not only for here but from Gourock looking across. This has been an issue in other areas. It can be affected by certain times of the year when the sun is going down and can be seen from several miles away. There could be health issues arising from this effect from Greenock Esplanade perhaps almost to Largs.
- A resident said that he moved here from Gourock, but one aspect that would have prevented him from moving would have been the turbines. They had spent 30 years looking at Polaris and the resulting depreciation in the house prices. He would hope not to see history repeat itself. A lot of people have moved here because of the beauty that has been recovered and we would not want a foreign incomer to produce electricity which Scotland already produces enough for Scotland's domestic market. This is, in his opinion, a proposal to be able to export electricity out of Scotland and the revenue generated going to Norway
- A resident said that her understanding was that the electricity produced here would stay here and not be exported to Norway. An audience member said that this is about exporting electricity, it is not for Scotland's use for both to England and to Europe and currently the cables are being laid in the North Sea to enable that to happen. The cables are going to The Wash in England to a convergence station to go to England and to go across to Europe. Another resident said that he had seen an article in the paper which said that 420GB of power is currently generated, thus we have enough electric power for Scotland's needs.
- A resident said that if these turbines were put up then they will need to be connected to the grid which may mean that Sandbank mains station will need to be upgraded but there could be a 10-year lag to do that work. However, there is already an approved planning application for battery storage on the hill.
- A resident had asked Statkraft at their presentation meeting about how many properties would be within 2 kilometres of the site. She didn't get an answer but asked Dunoon Community Council to ask. They got a reply that it was early stages and had not decided how many properties would be assessed. but did not get the answer to her question.

4d. HEALTH AND WELLBEING

- A comment from a resident. Last year it was a campaign about the pylons, this year it is the windfarm. What else is going to be thrown at us at this beautiful pristine countryside, the Sea Gateway to the Highlands. She says Just Keep fighting
- A resident spoke about the problem of low frequency sounds and how this can affect the body. This is something that we can't sense but your body can react.
- Flickering lights and a low booming
- A resident said that the theory is out on infra sound which is lower than human hearing which possibly could be possibly quite injurious. This needs to be an issue that is investigated

4e. ANY OTHER COMMENTS

- A resident asked how they had decided that they would want to bring the windfarms here. It was commented that when Statkraft did their presentation several people asked the same question, and all got different answers.
- A comment was made that they needed to connect to the national grid.
- Why did they think this application would succeed when other 3 did not and they quoted NPF4 a change in Scottish planning
- A question was asked if the wind speed had been assessed. It was thought that the wind speeds across the country were known.
- “Can I just say that I was at Dunoon Community Council meeting last night and they had the results from their survey and the majority of the people in Dunoon are against it, but they are going to keep it open and try and engage more with young people. They (DCC) are going to have Statkraft come in again in September to give a presentation so I asked if possibility if we could have a meeting, an open meeting for us but they said no because it wouldn't be fair, it wouldn't give a balanced view because most of the people would be against it.”
- “Statkraft have refused to have a public meeting. They are prepared to do a presentation to your community council, but they won't do face to face with the public.”
- “One of the things I want to draw attention to is Statkraft offer of a bribe to the community because it is part of their requirement in the national planning framework, In other words, the Scottish government has said to them, “If you are going to do this you have to give the community(s) some kind of compensation,” so they are not doing it out of the goodness of their heart. The second thing is to say they will present it in such a way that they give you the value of money over a number of years to inflate the belief in the worth of it. And lastly, I want to say that it has been discovered that in fact this community benefit fund is accessible to all communities who are in sight of the turbines. So, if you look at the population of Cowal or even just this part of Cowal, the whole population of Inverclyde, Largs, Skelmorlie, Wemyss Bay and Kilcreggan, then is probably works out a couple of pounds a head a year. **This is a bribe.**”

Mark asked “Anyone who had attended the Stratkraft Presentation. How did they felt their response was and did you get the answers you wanted”

Responses given

- “I felt they wouldn't or couldn't answer the questions, if it wasn't on their spreadsheet they weren't going to answer it. They told me that people in Dunoon were much in favour of it. They told me it was a good pull for tourism especially for mountain bikers and hill walkers because they love using the tracks up there with the turbines. When I pointed out that we have tracks already and as a hill walker I don't want to see a windfarm. I felt I didn't get any answers whatsoever.”
- Councillor Gordon Blair said he is chair of the Area Committee and as part of the new set up they are looking to engage with community which might be an opportunity for community councils who are concerned about major infrastructure developments in their area that they might want to approach the area committee because not only from a planning perspective but which covers other councillors who are not on planning so that it is a much wider, broader of the elected representatives within Bute and Cowal. To put forward in essence a committee assessment of it, a committee support or rejection of the application and that would then go into further up the council so you could always have a definitive statement coming from Argyll and Bute Council as a whole and not just the planning committee of whether or not something should be accepted or rejected. KCC may want to bring that to your local Area Committee through public questions and that would allow you to have a different approach in taking or supporting the windfarm.
- “Since I found out about this windfarm proposal, I have done a little bit of research myself to understand it more and am going to visit some windfarms. What I have noticed is that the number of places that get a windfarm and then it is extended. It happens time and time again and communities are saying “No More” but they just keep expanding because it is easy and they already have the infrastructure. Statkraft's reputation is not very good, and I have had communication with another community council where they were meant to grass seed the area the turbines were put on but they are not honouring what they said they would do. Also, often you see that the wind turbines are stationary.”

- “I asked them (Statkraft) that very question. You have got 9 turbines (in this plan) where is it going to stop? And they were fuzzy in their reply. They wouldn’t answer.”
- “What you are saying about extending. They call them different phases.”
- “Are Vale of Leven fighting a windfarm application and perhaps you (KCC) need to get in touch with them? You could help them, and they could help us.”
- Councillor Sinclair said that the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park have objected to the proposal at the Vale of Leven because the turbines are very visible from many areas of the National Park
- We were first to arrive at the Statkraft presentation and they said ‘Have you got any objections, Put them on the form. Have you any forms No, we don’t have any.
- “People have mentioned the height of the blades. Has anyone contacted Civil Aviation Authority?”
- (This information is on the scoping documents) There are negative comments from aviation on the scoping documents about this as this is a route for small service planes, air ambulance, police.
- What we need is an accurate montage of what the turbines or going to look like or even a 3D model. I have seen pictures, but they are not accurate, and we need to see them from different perspectives.
- Councillor Gordon Blair described how a photomontage of a windfarm in Kintyre was a lever arch file A3 size which folded out and was a marvellous piece of work which showed the drawings of the wind turbines in the geography, topography and photographs of the area. It also showed the aspect of infill, and you could see 10 years later that turbines had been placed in areas where spaces had been left. It also showed photographs with forestry in place but as the forest was to be taken down and they asked for a montage with the forest taken down to see what that looked like. Gordon says that we are all worried about climate change, but it was a different situation there to here and it does come down to the appropriateness of the location

5 Community Vote on holding a further Statkraft Question and Answer Session

This section is only for residents of KCC catchment area

Mark Borland said that we are aware that the presentations by Statkraft were not well received, and many thought them to be evasive and did not answer many of the questions that people asked. Many residents were not happy with the response of Statkraft to questions asked and KCC would like to find out whether we should invite Statkraft along.

We would like to propose to invite Statkraft along to a community council session at which residents would be free to attend but rather than a presentation where Statkraft can drive the narrative, we want to be able to give them a set of questions and ask them to come and address the concerns of our residents. Whether it is in support or opposition, whatever it happens to be. We want to get some information from Statkraft.

A vote was taken by a show of hands

Do you want Kilmun Community Council to invite Statkraft to a Question-and-Answer session?

The votes were:

In Hall - For -35

Online - For -6

In Hall - Against - 5

Online Against – 0

We are aware there may have a few some abstentions in the hall, but 9 attendees were not eligible to vote.

Thus, the majority vote was to invite Statkraft to a Question and Answer session with Kilmun Community Council and residents

6. A Community Vote to support or object to the location of Giant's Burn Windfarm proposal

This section is only for residents of KCC catchment area

- In Hall – Objection to Statkraft Proposal – 42
- Online votes – 6
- Proxy votes - 16
- Support for the windfarm 0

We are aware there may have a few some abstentions in the hall, but 9 attendees were not eligible to vote.

A vote was taken of the Kilmun Community Councillors present and all objected to the proposal from Statskraft to build a windfarm at Giant's Burn

Thus, we confirm that **Kilmun Community Council has a mandate** from our residents **to object** to the proposal from Statkraft to build a windfarm at Giant's Burn on the Cowal Hills.

Kilmun Community Council's next steps:

- We need to consolidate
- Linking with other community Groups.
- The windfarm proposal will be running item on agenda
- Also, we will look at how are we reaching out to people who are not on the social media etc.

Meeting end: 9.15 pm.

Next Meeting:

Tuesday August 13th @ Blairmore Hall @ 7.30pm.

Meetings held Second Tuesday each month alternating between Younger & Blairmore Halls.

Kilmun Hall – January, March, May, July (Recess) September, November

Blairmore Hall – February, April, June, August, October, December