

Stornoway Community Council

Minute of Meeting held in the Newton Ward Community Rooms, Stornoway
on Thu 27 Mar 2025 at 7:00 pm

Present	Robert Doig (Chair) Josh Gibbens (Treasurer) Betty Jappy Cameron Thompson Cllr Frances Murray	Kenneth Burns (Vice Chair) Mike Macleod (Secretary) Ian Minty Cllr Angus McCormack
In Attendance	Denise Horan (Consultation & Local Engagement Lead, Northland Power)	Kathleen Milne (Community Liaison Officer, Northland Power)
	6 members of the public attended in person, 1 by Zoom	
Apologies	1 Janet Macdonald Cllr Rae Mackenzie Cllr Gordon Murray Sharon Reid	Cllr Duncan Macinnes Cllr George Murray Cllr Malcolm Macdonald
Spiorad na Mara	2 The Chair welcomed Ms Denise Horan (DH) and Ms Kathleen Milne (KM) of Northland Power to the meeting and invited them to give a brief presentation (accompanied by slides on a computer screen).	
	<p>DH thanked Robert and Mike, she appreciated our allocating time for this project, it was great to see Stornoway Community Council reformed. She explained that she is based in Ireland, whereas KM is based full time here. DH has been trying to broaden engagement in last year or so, meeting with Community Councils. There have been consultations on Community Benefit and with potential supply chain partners. KM has an office in the Stornoway Business Hub.</p> <p>DH explained that Spiorad na Mara is very much just proposed at the moment. The proposal is that a windfarm is to be built 5 to 13 kilometers off the West Side, the site will be 161 square km in area. This development has a potential 900 Megawatts capacity, enough to power 1.2 million Scottish homes, with 1.7 million tonnes of CO2 potentially saved from going into the atmosphere each year. Northland was successful with a bid for the N2 (Havbreday) and N4 (Spiorad na Mara) blocks in the Scotwind licencing round in April 2022. Northland itself is a Canadian company which has partnered with ESB, an Irish utility company.</p> <p>DH explained that they are now at the stage of working on the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). For the offshore elements there will be a planning application to the Marine Directorate and for the onshore, to Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, this will involve a single EIA Report. The project could commence construction in 2028 and become operational in 2031, in line with the SSEN Interconnector which is due to be completed by 2030. There are two options for the West Side – either an offshore substation, or a landfall substation. Then there would have to be a second substation in the Stornoway area, near to the SSEN complex at Arnish.</p>	

- 2 Denise Horan (DH) explained that the potential landfall substation locations on the West Side are being narrowed down to one. They expect to be progressing with Barvas, where there would be a 150m x 150m size of compound area. There will be a one-km corridor of search for the cable across the island to Stornoway. They have been engaging with groups on the West Side. DH said they started to do community drop-ins last year, with further drop-ins in December. They wrote to all community councils last year. They have had a Community Liaison Officer for the last two-and-a-half years, first Eilidh the Kathleen.

DH went on to explain that the Onshore Cable route depends on the findings of the EIA Report. The 25 km cable route will basically follow the Barvas Moor Road, existing utilities also follow that route. With the Grid substation the aim is to be as close as possible to the SSEN HVDC station. The area of search is 300 x 200 metres for the compound as a whole, this is not the size of the substation.

As regards Community Benefit, DH explained that in August 2024, they had committed to payments of £4.5 million annually for the project lifetime, index-linked, ring-fenced for Council Wards 6 and 7. There is an independent consultation on governance of Community Benefit at present. They will be exploring on what fund there could be for the East side of the island. An online survey is open until 31 March. The first PAC1 consultation was Sept/Oct last year, the second step, PAC2, in 2/3 months, will have a refined set of plans. They will be very happy to come back here another time to meet with Stornoway Community Council.

DH said regarding the supply chain opportunity, there will be a three years construction phase, with 700 to 1,000 people, but not all at the same time. Some offshore work will be done from large vessels, where specialised workers will stay on board. They are currently working with HIE to see what match there is with businesses currently operating here.

The Chair then gave the floor the opportunity to ask questions.

Cameron Thompson pointed out that if he wished to change to a renewables tariff, it would cost him more. DH explained that businesses cannot be both a generator and a distributor – this had been decoupled years ago. The question of an island tariff would have to be taken up at Government level – distribution is very tightly regulated.

Cllr Angus McCormack stated that he had been hoping to get an Island Tariff. A member of the public suggested that Community Benefit funding could be used to provide a local energy discount scheme. Cllr McCormack said that every option is supposedly being looked at. DH said the challenge is doing it in a way that is equitable – there are always challenges with these things.

The Treasurer asked why Northland was against Zonal Pricing? DH stated that there were concerns across the industry that Zonal was not the best way – if investors do not want to invest, then the cost of running the system will rise. Zonal Pricing will reduce investment in areas where renewables potential is good.

Ian Minty stated that it seems turbines will not be manufactured at Arnish. DH explained that she, KM and other members of the team have met with Nevantia. Turbine manufacture not done at Arnish, but there are parts of towers which Arnish can try for.

- 2 Ian Minty referred to the adverse feelings on the West Side. Denise Horan (DH) said there was mixed feedback – there were many people opposed to the project. Northland tries to have discussions around their concerns and brought in consultants to address particular matters. She is not going to characterise feedback by numbers. They have also met with many people who are supportive or are conditionally supportive.

A member of the public expressed his concern that the £4.5 million will not materialise if the company that has promised to pay it goes bankrupt. Also that he knows the seas on the West Side and materials such as large rocks move every time there is a storm. He did not think these windmills will last – they will be falling down all over the place. DH explained that if the project goes ahead then the company is legally bound to pay, it is not a s75 Agreement. The Secretary explained that Contracts for Difference are a Westminster matter, and the Scottish Government has no involvement in this, contrary to what the member of the public had suggested. DH said the Contract for Difference is to ensure stability for the first fifteen years, then after that the developer has to sell its electricity for twenty years in the open market.

The Treasurer asked about the possibility of a Lewis Community Benefit Fund. DH explained that there is a second strand of consultation about this. They would like to bring specific developments in – meaningful benefits.

**** Cllr Frances Murray joined the meeting.*

Ian Minty asked if Northland was in contact with UHI? DH confirmed that they had been engaged with UHI for two years now. They are co-funding a co-ordinator for Lewis & Harris, and will be deepening their discussions. They are already in discussions with Nevantia. There are only a few players globally for turbine manufacture – Northland will have a maintenance contract, and will have apprentice schemes. As yet they do not know which turbine manufacturer they will use, the lead times are significant. Here the greatest contribution is promoting awareness amongst students.

Cllr Angus McCormack said there was absolutely no difficulty in finding people to invest in windfarms. On the island there is £2m going into the community each year from community-owned windfarms, but they were not allowed to sell electricity direct. Businesses were constrained by the current regulations – which were set up to suit multinationals. At present pricing makes electricity cheaper in London than it is in the Highlands & Islands.

The Treasurer asked if Northland will use Deep Water Terminal 2. DH replied that they need a maritime base – and are looking at Port options.

The Secretary stated that the Community Council has an open mind on this project. This could mean that we end up strongly supporting it, or alternately end up strongly opposing it and campaigning against it, or anywhere in between.

There being no further questions, the Chair thanked Mr Horan and Mr Milne and they collected their equipment and left the meeting.

- Minute of Meeting of 27 Feb** **3** This was adopted, proposed by Cameron Thompson, seconded by Betty Jappy.
- Matters Arising** **4** None.
- Kenneth Street Traffic/Parking in Town** **5** The Secretary reported that we had written formally to the small C-op and had issued a Press Release which seemed to generate a fair amount of interest. As yet there is no reply from the Co-op. He suggested asking the MP and MSP to write to the Co-op. Cllr Angus McCormack stated that he was flabbergasted where we were with this, when Comhairle officer and the Police were not interested. Tearlach Wilson said there could be dangers for emergency vehicles in the current arrangements. Cllr Frances Murray reported that three representatives of the Community Council, herself and Cllr George Murray had had a very positive meeting with Comhairle officers Calum Mackenzie and John Macleod on 17 February. After further discussion it was agreed to ask the MP and MSP to write to the Co-op and for the Secretary to prepare a brief submission to the Stornoway Area Forum (which will meet late April) and to run it past Frances and Angus.
- AOCB** **6** Parking at Macrae Place – Cllr Frances Murray confirmed that this was owned by HHP. It was agreed the Secretary will write to HHP requesting they renew the parking space marks, which have deteriorated badly over the years.
- Third Sector Hebrides – a member of the public mentioned that they can provide a grant for a voluntary organisation which wishes to employ an expert to look into an issue for them.
- SSEN Planning Application – The Secretary reported that we are a Statutory Consultee, and have been asked to respond to the Comhairle by 12 April. After discussion it was agreed to hold a special meeting to discuss this fully on Thursday 10 April.
- Hebridean Sea without Turbines – The Secretary reported that we had never agreed at any time to become a member of this website – it seems that we had made a posting on it at some point, and whatever algorithm was running this Facebook page treated this action as meaning we had become a member. Once it was pointed out that this website had a number of extreme views on renewables and may in fact be linked to the Reform political party, we had been able to remove our name from what appears to be the list of members.
- Close** **7** The Chair thanked everyone for coming and closed the meeting.