

COCKENZIE COMMUNITY FORUM

MEETING – Wednesday 31 July 2019, 1900-2045 hrs, Cockenzie House

ACTION NOTE

Present: Ferhan Ashiq, Preston Seton Gosford Area Partnership (Chair)
Susan Smith, Economic Development, East Lothian Council
David Ostler, Coastal Regeneration Forum
Sheila Chambers, Cockenzie & Port Seton in Bloom
Cllr John McMillan, East Lothian Council
Cllr Neil Gilbert, East Lothian Council
Bryan Hickman, Cockenzie & Port Seton Community Council
Cllr Fiona O'Donnell, East Lothian Council
Brian Weddell, Chair, Prestonpans Community Council
Ray Montgomery, Cockenzie Project Manager, East Lothian Council
Iain McFarlane, Service Manager Planning, East Lothian Council
Calum Miller, Prestonpans Community Council
Gillian Stewart, Cockenzie West Tenants' & Residents' Association
Gareth Jones, Coastal Regeneration Forum
Liz Clark, Cockenzie & Port Seton Community Council
Philippa Barber, Longniddry Community Council

1. Apologies

Apologies from Douglas Proudfoot, Sandra King, Philip Wark, Cllr Innes, Cllr Bruce, Isobel Robertson, Arran Johnston

2. Action note of previous meeting

Approved by all.

3. Matters arising

None

4. Planning update

IMF reported that since the last meeting there have been two main Planning updates. Skyrora has applied for temporary use of the coalstore for rocket engine testing. This application is out for consultation, including with Environmental Health, and IMF is awaiting responses. He will consider frequency, noise level and compatibility with Environmental Health legislation before preparing the report. IMF reckons that the application may be called-in for debate at Planning Committee. There have been some objections to the proposal. With regard to RedRock, the company is progressing with its plans for the convertor station and discharging other conditions attached to the Planning Permission. Members will be asked to take a view on this application.

IMF also referred to the National Planning Framework and its considerations with regard to use of the site. The Scottish Parliament passed the Planning Bill in June in amended form with changes to Planning legislation. This means that Scottish Government officials will now be able to review the NPF and thus the requirement to give a wider policy context for the uses on the Cockenzie site. The intention is to have a draft NPF4 by mid-June 2020.

FA asked about Skyrora and community concerns that mainly relate to noise. With regard to the lease and alternative uses longer-term, RM said that Skyrora had initially requested a long lease but that was not of interest to the Council. Skyrora has applied for planning permission for five years but a lease of the land would be for a shorter period.

BW referred to a recent well-attended meeting between Cockenzie & Port Seton Community Council and Skyrora and commented that insufficient detail on noise and frequency was given in response to questions. In addition, the company appears to be unsure about the number of vehicles accessing the site with access arrangements also of concern to the community. IMF said that the assessment will be made on the basis of the application with Planning controls to be applied. BW commented that Prestonpans Community Council has not had the opportunity to discuss the Skyrora application. RedRock has said that they have purchased the site from the Council and RM clarified that the company has purchased an option dependent on funding success in the forthcoming Contract for Difference round. All approvals and evidence of land ownership have to be in place to secure Contract for Difference. GJ asked about the role of the HSE with regard to Skyrora and IMF will check **(ACTION: IMF)**. FOD asked IMF about NPF4 and IMF said that Ministers have rejected SDP2. Regional Spatial Strategies will be introduced and these mean that there will no longer be a need for Ministerial approval and they will feed into the NPF.

5. Site update

Technical work

RM provided an update on site issues. Examples of those shown around the site include a Welsh party interested in the whole site for plastics recycling; a US group interested in part of the site; a Chinese delegation introduced by the Provost. A previous bidder for the site expressed interest in re-visiting the site looking at the port potential but appreciating liabilities and scale of investment. Also of note is the visit by the film studio developer that has selected Midlothian as the location for his new development and interest shown by local companies in relation to their own expansion plans. The magnitude of the investment required, concern about Planning status and the scale of the site are comments received.

RM also mentioned continued vandalism to the jetty gates and urged the community to report any incidents to the relevant authorities. BH asked about the area around the jetty and the wall where additional security during the school holidays has been put in place. CM asked, for example, if more bins could be provided to make the area look less untidy **(ACTION: RM)**.

BW asked about worldwide marketing and RM said that the site will not be marketed formally until cruise/port study work has been concluded. RM added that the Planning position is also a factor and that it would be interesting to see whether there was any greater flexibility introduced for the site in NPF4.

With regard to the port study, RM reported on a meeting with Forth Ports and subsequent engagement, including a site visit. He referred to the Burntisland port study reported in the press, supported by Fife Council, and confirmed ELC had offered to collaborate on a joint study into Cockenzie with Forth Ports. He acknowledged the considerable period of time expended to date until the next meeting with Forth Ports on Monday 5 August. Meantime RM has spoken with a number of consultants and has three proposals to consider the

technical feasibility of a cruise/port development. The Council has determined to undertake an initial technical study progressing to the next stages if feasibility has been demonstrated through this technical work. Ideally, a joint study with Forth Ports would be favoured with an East Lothian Council technical study the other option. The consultants approached consider a desk top study could be completed in around 6-8 weeks. RM will make any information held by ELC to help inform the study and commented that a cruise development would need to cater for the largest vessels with implications for berth capacity and size.

There have been conflicting reports about port feasibility and it was intended that an initial technical study would be an initial step on a stage-by-stage basis in determining the feasibility of a cruise/port related facility. FA said that the study's conclusion has to be accepted, whether for or against a more detailed port study.

DO suggested that the heritage coal industry might be worth exploring to see if relevant records still exist, RM confirmed consultants would be using all information available to them. CM commented on concerns about dredging and coastal erosion (**ACTION: CCF to discuss coastal erosion at future meeting**).

At a meeting on 5th August ELC and Forth Ports agreed to continue to work together in exploring the feasibility of a cruise/port related facility at Cockenzie.

6. Engagement with interested parties

Creative Scotland

SS referred to filming that is expected to take place in and around Cockenzie next week. A note of the meeting with Creative Scotland has been circulated and she asked for comments. CM asked why Midlothian was chosen and SS referred to e-mail stating that the developer is committed to that site but suggested ongoing engagement should further opportunities become available. RM gave as example one of the US groups shown around expressing interest being from the film sector.

NG asked about comments from interested parties if No Deal BREXIT was making a difference to their planning and RM had found no evidence of this.

7. AOB

DO referred to today's Scotsman Director of Edinburgh Festival looking for alternative venues. CM asked about maintenance and the seawall being exposed by damage to the parapet – RM has requested funding to undertake the requisite repairs to the parapet wall.

Next meeting: Wednesday 30 October in Cockenzie House