



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
PLANNING COMMITTEE**

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**TUESDAY 5 MAY 2026
VIA HYBRID MEETING FACILITY**

Committee Members Present:

Councillor N Hampshire (Convener)
Councillor L Allan (R)
Councillor C Cassini (R)
Councillor D Collins (R)
Councillor J Findlay
Councillor A Forrest (R)
Councillor N Gilbert (R)
Councillor C McGinn
Councillor S McIntosh (R)
Councillor K McLeod (R)
Councillor C Yorkston

Other Councillors Present:

None

Council Officials Present:

Mr G Marsden, Service Manager – Planning
Mr C Grilli, Service Manager – Governance
Ms E Taylor, Team Manager – Planning Delivery (R)
Ms A Law, Assistant Planner
Ms J Newcombe, Biodiversity Officer (R)
Mr A Robertson, Archaeology and Heritage Officer (R)
Mr R Miller, Transportation Planning Officer (R)
Ms M Haddow, Senior Roads Officer (R)
Ms S Cheyne, Senior Projects Officer – Landscape (R)
Ms P Gray, Communications Adviser (R)
Ms E Barclay, Democratic Services Assistant
* (R) = remote participant

Clerk:

Ms B Crichton

Visitors Present/Addressing the Committee:

Item 3: Mr E Hutchison, Mr C Thacker, Mr C Bruce, and Ms J Bell

Apologies:

Councillor J McMillan

Declarations of Interest:

None

The clerk advised that the meeting was being held as a hybrid meeting; that the meeting would be recorded and live streamed; and that it would be made available via the Council's website as a webcast, in order to allow public access to the democratic process in East Lothian. She noted that the East Lothian Licensing Board was the data controller under the Data Protection Act 2018; that data collected as part of the recording would be retained in accordance with the Council's policy on record retention; and that the webcast of the meeting would be publicly available for five years from the date of the meeting.

The committee clerk recorded the attendance of Planning Committee members by roll call.

Graeme Marsden, Service Manager – Planning and Chief Planning Officer, asked that discussions under Item 3 relate specifically to the Council's response to the proposal for the repower of Crystal Rig 1 Wind Farm, and not to ongoing construction matters relating to Crystal Rig 4 Wind Farm.

**1a. MINUTES FOR APPROVAL
Planning Committee, 31 March 2026**

The minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.

1b. CONTINUED PLANNING APPLICATION NO. 25/00388/P (FOR APPROVAL OF CONDITIONS): ERECTION OF ONE HOUSE AND ASSOCIATED WORKS, LAND NORTH OF SPEEDWELL HOUSE, MAIN ROAD, DIRLETON

Planning Committee members unanimously approved the proposed conditions by roll call vote.

**2. MINUTES FOR NOTING
Local Review Body (Planning), 22 January 2026**

The minutes were noted.

3. ENERGY CONSENTS UNIT (ECU) CONSULTATION 25/00005/SGC: ELECTRICITY ACT 1989 – APPLICATION FOR CONSTRUCTION AND OPERATION OF A REPOWER OF CRYSTAL RIG 1 WIND FARM, CONSISTING OF UP TO 10 WIND TURBINES, INCLUDING SIX TURBINES WITH A MAXIMUM OVERALL HEIGHT (TO BLADE TIP) OF UP TO 230M AND THE REMAINING FOUR TURBINES WITH A MAXIMUM OVERALL HEIGHT (TO BLADE TIP) OF UP TO 200M – ECU00005089, CRYSTAL RIG 1 WIND FARM, APPROXIMATELY 10KM SOUTH OF DUNBAR AND 40KM EAST OF EDINBURGH, WITHIN THE LAMMERMUIR HILLS

A report had been submitted in relation to Energy Consents Unit (ECU) consultation 25/00005/SGC. Amy Law, Assistant Planner, presented the report, highlighting the salient points. The report's recommendation was to approve the content of Appendix 1 as the Council's consultation response to the ECU.

Officers responded to questions from Committee members. Ms Law clarified the process should the applicant, Fred Olsen Renewables (FOR), submit further information in response to the Council's objection to the ECU. Mr Marsden confirmed that the Council did not wish for its objection to trigger a public inquiry if the applicant sought further time to submit additional information, but this position could be reviewed if the information was not forthcoming. Ms Law gave commentary on the process whereby the Council's concerns on landscape and visual impact had been resolved, but said concerns about the construction route remained outstanding.

In response to questions about the policy basis for the Council's concerns over landscape capability, Sarah Cheyne, Senior Projects Officer – Landscape, confirmed that site-specific assessments were carried out to determine the suitability of the landscape to accommodate proposals; she considered that blade heights of 220m would have a significant visual impact, whereas the reduction to 200m would be contained by the landscape.

Euan Hutchison spoke to the application on behalf of FOR. He gave background information on the company, and on local economic benefits associated with the proposals. He discussed FOR's positive relationships with the various host communities and welcomed their support for the application. He explained that the current Crystal Rig 1 site was nearing the end of its design life and would be decommissioned; delays in the process meant there would be a gap before the new turbines would be energised. He described the Council's recommended objection as representing a further delay in the process, particularly if it resulted in a public inquiry. He welcomed the officers' support in principle, and acknowledged their requests for additional information. He pointed to evidence that FOR's work to improve biodiversity on the site had been fruitful, and discussed significant efforts to protect birds' nesting activities. He described Council officers' requests for additional information as wanting to predict every eventuality, and suggested that, instead, a process which allowed operations to adapt to change, identify and share information, and act in a sensible and proportionate way was needed. He considered that this could be achieved through conditions, by adoption or modification of conditions imposed on other parts of the project. As there was agreement in principle, he asked that the Council adopt a position of no objection, subject to conditions which would allow the points raised by officers to be taken forward at a more appropriate time in the process.

Committee members asked questions to: enquire about the process of decommissioning the current turbines and what would be left in the ground; ask about the possibility of upgrading the access road to benefit the community; seek reassurance that work would be completed by contractors responsible for maintaining pinch points on the road; and raise concern about the lack of reference to habitats or biodiversity enhancements along the access route, lack of information on protection and mitigation for European Protected Species, and FOR's failure to provide the Tree Survey requested by Council officers.

Following comment from Mr Hutchison that some of this information had been provided as part of the application for Crystal Rig 4, Mr Marsden explained that the worst-case scenario in terms of blade transportation had to be considered, and highlighted that the context of the road had changed significantly in recent years; he advised that a simple Swept Path Analysis was sought.

Committee members asked a number of further questions on the possible use of blade lifting technology to minimise impact on biodiversity, and about FOR's reticence to provide the information required by officers. Mr Marsden considered that the limited number of blade lifters in the UK meant that conditioning for use of this technology would be impractical.

In response to questions, Mr Hutchison explained that FOR's position was that the contractor delivering the blades would evolve its equipment to suit the site's requirements, but advised that FOR did not currently know the specifics. He took issue with the notion of basing surveys on the worst-case scenario, as this approach ignored technological innovations. He gave assurance that FOR was confident that the blades could be delivered without the significant effects flagged in the report. He also discussed FOR's frustration at the road's deterioration after its reinstatement at the completion of Crystal Rig 3 in 2019. He advised that FOR had committed to paying to have the road reinstated to an appropriate standard following the proposed works. He said that FOR had focused on that which would be impacted by its activities, and used the position of Thurston Manor as an example of a structure within the red line boundary which would never be impacted due to its position 80-100m back from the road.

Chris Bruce made representation on behalf of East Lammermuir Community Council (ELCC). He welcomed the officers' scrutiny and assessments on matters of access requirements, biodiversity, and traffic management. He added ELCC's support to the Council's Sustainability and Climate Change Officer's request to see an estimate of the emissions arising from the construction and maintenance of the project, as well as support for the Access Officer's recommendation that a Public Access Management Plan be produced. He discussed numerous energy projects which meant that the access road functioned as a permanent feature which was not fit for purpose, while also having to continue to function as an appropriate rural road. He noted that neither of the community councils responding to the proposals had objected outright, but suggested that it should be possible to devise a process whereby all relevant voices were heard in the cumulative planning approach to the permanent access road, making each individual application more straightforward and productive for all parties. He asked Planning Committee members to call on officers to facilitate this process, working with community councils, the Energy Partnership, and other bodies as appropriate, and highlighted the time-sensitive nature of this ask. He voiced the community's desire for a robust road which did not encourage an increase in vehicle speed, with safe segregation for cyclists, access issues addressed according to the right to responsible access, and hedgerows which were protected and enhanced.

Responding to a question from the Convener, Mr Bruce discussed the Biodiversity Liaison Group's 'Summit to Sea' approach, which considered the wider impact of proposals beyond red line boundaries; this was meant to balance up damage inevitably caused by projects by doing good works elsewhere, using National Planning Framework 4's principle of enhancing biodiversity offsite. It was felt that this shift could achieve something more imaginative and ambitious.

Jacquie Bell made representation on behalf of Dunbar Community Council (DCC). She noted a number of the application's key principles and the changes made, including FOR's good track record of working with the community. On behalf of DCC, she sought information on the management of the turbine bases to be left in situ, and on disposal of the current turbines. She raised concerns about road safety during the construction phase, noting issues with drivers trying to overtake the slow convoys transporting turbines, and about safety at Innerwick Junction in particular. She raised the cumulative impact of traffic movements from the various projects, and suggested that FOR might be asked to contribute to improving safety at Innerwick Junction and on rural roads. DCC also called for a demonstration of net biodiversity gain. It was felt that current documents lacked clarity on protection of wildlife. She also raised concern about the cumulative visual impact on the Lammermuirs from green energy developments, and expected that these taller replacement turbines would be more dominant and may increase bird strikes. She suggested that the choice of paint colour may help to reduce the visual impact on the landscape; DCC asked that measures be taken to ensure the safety of the of the higher turbines, while balancing the impact of light pollution. Ms Bell also noted that some

Scottish community councils had called on the Scottish Government to pause all major applications for renewables until a clear National Energy Strategy was in place regarding the siting of energy developments. DCC asked that FOR continue to work as part of the Green Energy Development Network, that further community benefits be offered, and that a shared community ownership element of the windfarm be considered.

Committee members made various comments on the application, including: their concerns about the changing approach to the foundations being left behind, and the risk of leaving a landscape littered with potholes and concrete; the need for a roundtable discussion with developers using the access road and to secure funding for its upkeep; the need for more robust information on biodiversity mitigations; and the very thorough work of officers in responding to the ECU. Some members expressed surprise over FOR's unwillingness to provide the requested information; and an attempt by the Council to streamline discussions around the access road was endorsed. Comment was also made on: issues of balance and carbon calculation, with particular concern that a reduction in blade height would impact the energy generation of the site, while the construction period would still have the same significant impact on the community; a desire for the new Landscape Survey to be open minded about visual impact; differences of opinion on whether past infrastructure projects had had an acceptable visual impact; the need to balance the urgency and need for renewable energy projects with the clear duty to protect and preserve the natural environment; and that robust environmental protection and application of biodiversity net gain principles were not optional.

The Convener discussed the evolution of public opinion around renewable energy infrastructure, as well as the duty of the Senior Projects Officer – Landscape to satisfy herself that all had been done to ensure mitigations were in place to protect against damage to the environment. He asserted that the Council's position was to object to the application until such time as the required information had been provided by FOR.

The Convener moved to a roll call vote on the report's recommendations, and the proposed consultation response was unanimously approved by Committee members.

Decision

The Planning Committee approved the content of report Appendix 1 as the Council's consultation response to the ECU.

Signed

Councillor N Hampshire
Convener of the Planning Committee

The webcast for this meeting will be available at the link below for five years from the date of the meeting:

https://eastlothian.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcast_interactive/1089831

