

ESKDALEMUIR COMMUNITY COUNCIL MEETING
THURSDAY MARCH 16th at 7pm MARCH 16th 2023
ESKDALEMUIR HUB

PRESENT: Nick Jennings, John Furlonger, Beatrice Furlonger, Bernard Provost, Barry Young,
Stuart Green, Liz McQueen, Dennis Male (D/G Council), Darren Bean

IN ATTENDANCE: 10 members of the Public

APOLOGIES: Archie Dryburgh (D/G Council)

MINUTES: These were read and agreed nem con.

MATTERS ARISING: They will all be dealt with under the Agenda.

QUESTION and ANSWERS - OVER CASSOCK .5 calibre RIFLE RANGE:

A number of local residents attended this part of the meeting and asked questions of their own in addition to those already submitted via the Chairman.

Chairman's Questions

How many days a month will there be firing?

One Saturday a month. During summer there will be competitions; how many dependent upon popularity. These will normally be on Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

Will there be shooting on weekdays?

Possible but unlikely.

Will an advance programme of firing be issued to the Community?

Possibly, but not if there are vexatious complaints.

If the range goes ahead will they use local facilities for Meetings and catering?

That will not be necessary.

Will flags and beacons be checked during poor visibility to ensure safety?

If we can't see flags we won't shoot. We don't use beacons because we don't shoot at night.

Is there a limit on shots per hour?

We don't use automatic weapons, only bolt action. Only one shooting at a time, hence about one shot

Can anyone view your safety plan and your risk assessment?

Yes. We fire only from fixed points at fixed targets so it is very simple. You can put them on your C.C. website.

You say that noise can only be heard at the nearest farm. Has account been taken of wind taking sound in different directions?

Yes. Following concern from Environmental Authority we added acoustic tile cladding to firing point and repeated tests in adverse wind conditions. I am prepared to hold further 'unofficial' noise tests if required.

Will Risk Assessments and Safety Method statements be made available for public scrutiny?

These will be automatically be available as required in the setting up of a range. Moreover there is a range briefing at every meeting and all members have an NRA Certificate - if not they can only shoot under one to one supervision. We don't have prospective members turning up to have a go.

Who is responsible for safety and how often and by whom will an external audit be carried out?

I am responsible. We have to submit our documentation every year for Insurance purposes but the problem is to find somebody competent to carry out such an audit.

Why in Eskdalemuir and not in Carlisle or Longtown?

When the range opened in 2017 we booked it as a club. In 2019 when Gardner's Guns were ejected for a safety violation, we applied for the lease. I.e we are here because the range exists and is ideal for our purpose. We had been informed that an application had been made for planning permission.

How does our community benefit?

Increased footfall, increased spending, requirement for accommodation (e.g. Air B and B). Many Americans want to come over and compete.

How can you guarantee that competitors are competent and is expansion planned?

All shooting is supervised by NRA qualified personnel. There are no plans for expansion of our activities. .5 calibre shooting is a niche activity and we shall stick to that.

How many people likely to attend, and what will be increase in road traffic?

Negligible. 6-8 cars per morning - they will leave at intervals.

There were several questions on potential noise nuisance.

I am prepared to conduct unofficial noise tests to allay any concerns. If necessary he will install further insulation on the firing points.

Is there a risk of stray bullets straying onto walking trails?

100% impossible. The backstop guarantees safety.

Information required on Club Membership.

There are about 500 members of whom 3 are foreign nationals. Overseas competitors may be involved in open competitions. Highly unlikely that other clubs may use the range - only if they were very well known clubs. Non club members may be able to shoot on the range but only under very close expert supervision. Nobody can just turn up to shoot.

Is there a complaint procedure in this club?

We have a disciplinary procedure and we take complaints very seriously.

What are your bullets made of?

Long range ammunition is copper or brass. Smaller calibre is lead, but the traps ensure that none is left in the environment.

The Chairman stressed the importance of keeping the local community well informed and Darren agreed that he would be at the range on March 25th and 26th to answer questions.

The meeting thanked Mr Bean for coming and keeping us informed of the development and answering question.

POLICE REPORT: There is a report of a large section of fencing having been damaged on farmland just North of the village. The enquiries are on going.

Noise of shooting was reported in the area. Enquiries revealed that the shooting was carried out using high calibre weapons at a range on the Scottish Border side.

Drunken man removed by Police from Samye Ling Centre after he refused to leave.

PLANNING ISSUES: A preplanning application has been submitted for the Clerkhill range, and a Public Consultation has been arranged in Langholm. This is clearly an inappropriate location, but Gardner's Guns and Eskdalemuir Forestry claim that they would be unwelcome in the Hub should a meeting be arranged there. This is very much at odds with the truth; both the Hub Management and the Community Council have made it clear that there is no such feeling. A letter has been sent to both making this clear, but there has been no reply.

The application for the duck pond which is within the footprint of the range has been submitted. This pond is part of the scheme for rearing ducks which will be used for shooting. There have been numerous objections raised by local residents. The Council discussed the issue and agreed unanimously that there are numerous technical issues that need to be addressed and a letter will be sent to the relevant Council authority seeking further clarification.

WEBSITE UPDATE: A sub-committee of Stuart, Liz and Barry is working on this. It will determine what the purpose and the scope will be. It will not try to be all embracing. It will cover all activities of the Community Council, including the notices sent to us which are at present merely circulated to Council members and all matters relating to Wind farms and consequent funding. The sub-committee will send its report to the Community Council for consideration.

EMAIL ACCOUNTS: These will cost about £4.50 per month. This will provide a centralised system for receiving information from outside which at present is subject to somewhat arbitrary distribution. Stuart will report back on the matter.

RESILIENCE PLANNING: Rachel's temporary job ends at the end of March. She has done an excellent job in producing a registry of 60 people details of which will be sent out on the Hub distribution list. The parish has been split up into areas with a first Aider in each. Rachel will continue to keep an eye on the scheme on a voluntary basis with the help of Lara. In the past we have paid an honorarium to a Secretary; we could probably do the same in Rachel's case using either the Admin Grant, or money from the Wind farm.

BUS STOPS: The bus stop near the church provides something of a hazard for school children waiting for school transport. Dennis Male will try to arrange through the D/G Council for markings to be painted at the bus stop to discourage the parking of vehicles which make the boarding of the official vehicles more hazardous than should be.

LOCALITY PLANNING: (Place Planning). A new Government scheme which will have to be implemented by Local Government. It is intended to allow all elements of the Community to be included in long term planning; what we would like to see and what we would not want to see. This would enable both the possibility of development, and the retention of what is considered valuable in individual communities.

WIND FARM COMMUNITY BENEFITS: All relevant issues and information will be publicised on the Website through which applications for funding can be made. This will include details of the scheme for making the Hub the resilience centre for the parish.

NEXT MEETING: This will be at 7pm on the 3rd Thursday in May

WEBSITE UPDATE: See minute of Meeting of 14th March