

**Meeting of Shawbost Community Council
7.30pm on Tuesday 12 March 2024
Grinneabhat, Bragar**

Present:

Community Council Members: Peigi Ann Shields, Euan MacLeod, Donald Mackinnon, Kathleen Macrae, Donna MacLennan, Tarmod Campbell, Alicia Matthews.

From the community: Matthew Hebditch, Lynn Hebditch, Lindsay Bradley, Mark Bradley, Jon MacLeod, Frances Simmons, Helga Grewe, Anne Campbell, Catriona Campbell, Donna Smith, Joni Dee Morrison, Catherine Morrison, Wendy Gorman, John Smith, Angus Smith, Murdo Maclean, Christine MacLeod, Tricia Earons, Pam Green, Charlie Green, Cllr. Kenny MacLeod, Laura McEwan, Alex Hackett, Murdo H MacInnes, Christina MacInnes, Ally Williamson, Tracy Watson, Alan Watson, Sarah McDonald, Donald Stewart, Catriona Stewart, David MacMillan, Ivan Brown, Marion Mackay, Colin Miller, Richard Greenslade, Mike Andrews, Lesley Wiseman, Alisdair Wiseman, Peter Borthwick, Jared Stewart, Garry Campbell, John Angus Graham, Michael Harrop, Gemma Morrison, Dina Murray, Catherine Ann Campbell, Robbie Strathdee, Roddy Morrison, Donald Murray, Kirsty MacGillivray.

From Northland Power: Denise Horan, Elidh Whiteford.

Apologies: Effie Macdonald, Donna Morrison, Kaleigh Macleod,

Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting:

Minutes of the 12 March Meeting were proposed for approval by Peigi Ann and seconded by Tarmod.

Matters arising:

- Road issues

Following the discussion at the last meeting, comments by residents were passed on to CNES roads team. The issues related to the bridge near Ionad na Seann Sgoil/ The Old School (North Shawbost, the bridge providing access to the shore at North Shawbost, and the verges on the top road in Arnol. CNES advised that monitoring is ongoing for both bridges and nothing was actioned following the most recent inspections.

- Coastal Walk route – North Shawbost to Arnol

Our full assessment of the route has now been carried out. Upgrading the existing infrastructure (way markers, stiles, and bridge) will require a substantial amount of funding. We have made contact with local stakeholder organisations to inform them of our intention to fundraise for the upgrade work.

Richard Greenslade (Crofter and Bridge Engineer) carried out an inspection of the bridge at Loch Ordais (South Bragar). This work was free of charge. The detailed report made several recommendations based on the condition of the bridge. These identify repair work and proposed timescales. One of the recommendations is that the bridge should be closed to

the public due to the risk of injury to users. We agreed to discuss the closure with South Bragar Grazings and Urras Sgìre Oighreachd Bharabhais. If a consensus is reached, we will take responsibility for closing the bridge.

- Local Place Plan CNES
We have till September to submit a local place plan to CNES. We will discuss this further over the coming months.

Financial Matters:

The new bank account is up and running. Invoices for meeting room hires have been paid to date. The bank balance is £4,970.69 – this is mostly the amount transferred from the former CC bank account. We are still awaiting payment of an admin grant from CNES.

Presentation from Northland Power – Spiorad na Mara project:

We asked for no interruptions during the presentation. Opportunity for questions and comments would come after the presentation.

Northland representatives introduced themselves and thanked the community for the chance to present. One of the representatives, Eilidh, is based in Lewis as a community liaison officer; they will be a point of contact for any questions or other communication. Denise is based off-island and will support Eilidh with community engagement.

[The presentation slides have been made available to the CC. These can be sent to members of the community on request.]

The presentation followed. This covered the development work that Northland has carried out to date. The project has two partners, Northland Power and ESB an Irish utility company (who is the minority partner). Information was given on the potential energy generation capacity, the equivalent of this in terms of the average Scottish home's energy consumption, and the potential amount of CO2 saved.

An overview of project timeline was given. In Apr 22 Northland awarded 2 offshore wind projects. Sites were offered to companies through the Crown Estate. Northland are hoping to submit planning application in the middle of next 2025. Subject to planning approval, Northland hope to start construction work in 2028. The project could be up and running by 2031, with an initial 35-year lifespan.

Information on the community engagement programme was given. The first community consultation is due in Autumn 2024. A comprehensive project update will be available in the next few weeks.

Local consultancy Atlantic 58 has been employed to carry out a Social Impact Assessment. Following the presentation, those present were welcomed to comment or ask questions. An overview of the questions by community members (CM) and responses by Northland Power (NP), along with other notable comments, follows:

CM: Why are visual representations of the development not included in the presentation?

NP: We don't have them yet, but we realise their importance.

CM: How tall will the turbines be?

NP: Around 300 metres.

CM: The scoping report says 380 metres.

NP: That is the maximum height, but we don't yet know.

CM: If the consultation feedback is overwhelmingly against the project, what will happen?

NP: Everything will be considered. Northland has to make the case that the project can progress while meeting any concerns.

CM: Regarding the Environmental Impact Assessment, what about the effects of noise and light? What is being assessed?

NL: Many assessments will be carried out: seascape, landscape and visual impact. Cultural heritage assessment. Noise. Birds. Mammals. Archaeology. We think that the visual impact may be the biggest concern.

CM: Who will assess the conclusions reached in these assessments, in terms of a final decision?

NL: Because the onshore and offshore elements of the project are so connected, it may be that both parts of the project go to a central decision (so possible that CNES may not be involved).

CM: Will Northland follow the Scottish Government guidance on the amount of funding that should go to the local community per MW generated – this guidance relates to onshore generation.

NL: We don't know yet. Offshore developments are a lot bigger, and there is no statutory guidance regarding the amount of community funding per MW. We are consulting with local organisations.

CM: Which organisations?

NL: The local estate groups: Galson, Barvas, Dalmore, Carlway. If the project proceeds, we recognise that the Westside community should benefit most.

CM: Based on the Statutory guidance for onshore generation, the community would receive the same financial benefit from just a handful of smaller, community owned turbines – maybe 4? – as we would from the Northland offshore development. We have also seen reports in the local media that large-scale developments like Northland may be a risk to the future of community owned turbines. If the grid capacity is filled by large, corporate projects there may be no way of extending the life of existing community projects or establishing new projects ones.

NL: Again, there is no mandatory amount for community benefit. But discussions are ongoing. It will be a multi-million-pound fund at the very least.

In relation to the interconnector and grid capacity, Northland does not determine how the capacity is shared out.

CM: The proximity and size of the proposed development seems far beyond what is normal.

NL: Yes, 5km at the closest point is not typical.

CM: How can the impact be evaluated, noise etc., when nothing like this has been done before? Are we the guinea pigs?

NL: No, no community should be guinea pigs. Impacts that can be managed and mitigated in an acceptable way will be followed.

CM: This type of installation is designed to be miles and miles offshore. What was the thinking here, to make a quick buck?

NL: Northland didn't decide on the location of the site. The Scottish Government made the leases available. Northland was successful in applying with a proposal.

CM: Would you accept that in an ideal world the project would be put further out to sea?

NL: It's a fact that many projects are further out to sea.

CM: Was there any connection between the activity of survey ships and the whales washing up on shore in 2023?

NL: Northland does not think so. No conclusive evidence to suggest any connection. Passive acoustic monitoring has been deployed.

CM: What is the range of the passive acoustic monitoring.

NL: Not sure, will find out.

CM: The original information we saw showed the turbines much further out to sea, twelve miles. What changed?

NL: That was the initial Scottish Government scoping.

CM: Did CNES request that the development site was moved closer?

Cllr. Macleod: Don't know.

CM: Northland has publicised information on potential carbon savings. What about the carbon cost of the development?

NL: An assessment will be done to determine the number of years before the carbon cost is offset, but this has not happened yet.

CM: We have read that the local community is positive about the project. I haven't heard from anyone that is supportive.

CM: CNES wrote that the community had been consulted. Does anyone feel they have been consulted?

CM: How will Northland make sure that residents know about forthcoming consultations, as we have not been made aware of events up till now.

NL: No consultations have taken place to date.

CM: There were public information events.

NL: These were not consultations. Consultations will happen in 2024.

CM: Will the consultations be open to all, or focus groups?

NL: There will be open events, public exhibitions in west coast communities. There will also be online consultations. The focus groups are not part of this.

CM: Can respondents say that they do not want the development to go ahead.

NL: If respondents wish to say they, they are entitled to. Nothing final will be decided at this point anyway as we will not be in a position to submit a planning application for some time.

CM: If the estimated lifespan is 35 years, what happens afterwards?

NL: A plan for decommissioning is a requirement for offshore developments. So, a total deconstruction, unless there is an application for a new development, or an extension to the life of the site.

CM: Are Atlantic 58 working independently.

NL: Atlantic 58 has been commissioned by Northland. They are independent and will carry out the assessment to the highest ethical standard.

CM: If it is a 35-year lifespan, how long is the lease from the Scottish Government?

NL: Not sure but probably more than 35 years. Will find out. Typically, leases are for longer timeframes.

CM: Can Northland commit to publicising crucial moments, e.g. submitting planning application?

NL: People will be made aware of these moments.

CM: Could a facility be set up so that residents, and anyone interested, can be send alerts/emails on these moments?

NL: Yes, it can be facilitated. Northland already sends out updates to those on the mailing list.

CM: Regarding the Lidar weather station, the North and New Shawbost common grazings voted unanimously to reject a proposal to put Northland infrastructure on common land. For a more recent application, for a different piece of equipment, Northland are using the land around a holiday home with owners who live on the mainland. Why was a holiday home chosen?

NL: A number of criteria had to be met, e.g. proximity to the shore. Beyond that, it is difficult to say why one site was chosen. A number of properties might have been suitable.

CM: The fact that land at a holiday home was chosen suggests a transparency issue.

CM: Regarding common land. If a grazings committee reject an approach, do Northland have compulsory purchase powers?

NL: Any project like this has compulsory powers, but it is not our intention to make use of them.

CM: Does Northland have compulsory purchasing powers over crofting land?

NL: Unsure, but likely that the powers that come with generation rights do not overrule crofting law and the land court.

CM: A lot of local businesses rely on the local environment and seascape. The project would ruin the seascapes of Lewis, which would result in a significant economic impact. Will there be compensation for businesses that the Northland project will potentially destroy?

NL: It is not our intention to destroy businesses or the environment. If there was to be an adverse effect on the environment the project would not get consent.

CM: Has Northland used compulsory purchase powers on other projects?

NL: Unsure.

CM: What about ESP?

NL: Unsure, will find out.

CM: Many visitors comment on the pristine local environment. The project will ruin the local environment; the effects of industrialisation can be enormous. These turbines will be among the biggest in the world.

NL: It's up to Northland to prove that the project can co-exist with the local people, culture, and environment.

CM: The use of a Gaelic name in 'Spiorad na Mara' is cultural appropriation and incredibly offensive to local people. How was the name chosen?

NL: The names were chosen after consultations. Northland chose two site names, one Gaelic and other Norse, as a way of representing the local cultures. Northland has had positive feedback on the Gaelic name. Projects around the world use titles deriving from the local/indigenous language as a sign of respect..

CM: Has the local fishing office been consulted? There are two conservation areas locally and the industry supports many families. The areas Northland are looking at could adversely affect these fishing boats. What are Northland going to do, if this project goes ahead? Where are the boats going to fish?

NL: The fishing community and the wider marine sector must be consulted with.

CM: The local fishing community has not been consulted. Where will these boats go in the summer months, during construction? Are they going to be allowed to fish in and around these turbines?

NL: During construction, which may be phased over a few seasons, there may be restrictions on fishing – that is typical for offshore wind projects. Post-construction there is no reason that the fishing industry and the offshore wind can't co-exist.

CM: The scoping report states that the number of fish will be impacted by the development. The claim that the Northland project and the environment can co-exist seems false.

NL: Northland will have to demonstrate that the project will not harm the environment. If Northland can't show this, the project won't be approved.

CM: The presentation mentioned that the development could generate electricity to the equivalent of 850k houses. There are probably 100k houses on the west coast of Scotland. Why don't Northland locate the project closer to areas with a greater demand for electricity?

NL: Northland doesn't transmit the electricity. The number of homes is an indicator of the capacity for generation. Northland is not suggesting that the electricity will go to 850k Scottish homes.

CM: This meeting has been beneficial. Will there be more of these meetings? Will you continue to use groups like the Community Council to publicise these events?

NL: Northland hasn't dealt with the community councils until now. This is the second meeting with community councils that responded to the scoping report. There will be another three.

CM: An observation, the Scottish Government enabled Northland to start planning the project, and the Scottish Government will decide on whether the project can proceed. That is very worrying.

CM: Is South Shawbost still one of the sites being looked at for an onshore structure?

NL: No.

Any Other Business:

- A concern was raised over the condition of the road to the cemetery in South Bragar. We will investigate this.
- A member of the community thanked the CC for hosting the meeting with Northland and asked if a further meeting could be arranged with local politicians, community representatives, and other stakeholders. We agreed to explore this possibility.
- We discussed the method of publicising CC meetings. To date, meeting details and minutes have been posted to the Shawbost Community Council facebook page. We agreed to create an e-mailing list for any interested members of the community.

- The issue was raised of public bins overflowing at South Shawbost, South Bragar, and Dail Beag. We agreed to discuss the issue with CNES.

Date of Next Meeting

7.30pm Tuesday 9 July – Venue tbc

Follow up response received from Northland Power

Responses to outstanding questions from Shawbost Community Council

Meeting, May 14th

1. What is the range of the passive acoustic monitoring (PAM) equipment you use?

The PAM deployed at site consists of two parts: sound trap and C-POD. By combining these

two elements a fuller acoustic range (up to 64kHz for sound trap and up to 150kHz for C-PODs) can be recorded, enabling background acoustics as well as marine mammals such

as baleen whales (low frequency vocalising), dolphins (mid frequency vocalising) and harbour porpoise (high frequency vocalising) to be identified.

The spatial range of PAM equipment, on the other hand, depends on a number of factors (including the frequency of the sound emitted, the call source level, signal to noise ratio, and environment). In general terms, the higher the frequency the shorter the distance at which mammals can be detected, in mid-range to deeper waters. In relatively shallow waters (<20m or so), lower frequencies (< a few 100 Hz) are attenuated more. The latter is important for minke whales and other large baleen whales (e.g. humpback and fin whales), whose calls can propagate over considerable distances in deeper waters but might not be picked up at these same ranges by shallow water recorders.

In general, the following are the ranges at which different frequencies of sound can be picked up by the equipment:

- High Frequency (e.g. porpoise 125-140 kHz): 200-400m
- Mid Frequency (e.g. dolphin whistles 10- 40 kHz and above): 5-30km
- Low Frequency (e.g. baleen whales <1 kHz): 10-100km

2. What will the carbon footprint of the project (construction, transportation etc) be and how will this will be recorded etc?

There will be a specific climate-related chapter within the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) dealing with the potential impacts and effects of the project, both positive and negative. The carbon balance of the project will be considered as part of this assessment.

3. How long is the seabed lease for; is it longer than 35 years?

When Spiorad na Mara was successful in the ScotWind Leasing Round 4 in 2022, it entered into an option lease agreement with Crown Estate Scotland for the seabed area identified

as N4. The option lease agreement gives the tenant the right to conduct surveys within the area of the site and the option to enter into a lease agreement of up to 60 years – for the construction, operation and decommissioning of the project – if certain planning milestones are met.

4. Does Northland have CPO powers over crofting land?¹

As part of the development process, all offshore windfarms must obtain a generation licence, in order to be able to generate power and transmit this to the National Grid. The generation licence does grant the licence holder CPO powers, including over crofting land, in relation to the construction and maintenance of that generating station and grid connection.

Northland is motivated to secure all rights for the project voluntarily and will follow guidance and advice to ensure that all steps are taken to avoid the exercise of compulsory rights.

5. Has Northland ever used CPO powers on any other project?

Northland has never used CPO powers, or equivalent processes in other jurisdictions, on any of its energy generation projects.

6. Has ESB ever used CPO powers on any other project?

The Electricity Supply Board (ESB) is a semi-state corporation in the Republic of Ireland.

The parent ESB group has many subsidiary companies:

- o Electric Ireland – electricity supply to consumers

- o ESB Networks – managing the national electricity network

- o ESB Generation and Trading – electricity generation and project development

ESB, the parent statutory entity, has CPO rights under the Electricity Act. These powers have been used on rare occasions for ESB Networks' grid infrastructure projects in Ireland.

These powers do not apply in the UK or anywhere outside the Republic of Ireland.

ESB Generation and Trading, a subsidiary of ESB which is developing a portfolio of renewable energy projects in Ireland and the U.K., is the company which is a shareholder in the Spiorad na Mara project. It does not have CPO powers and has never applied for, or used, them for any project.

1

This question was inadvertently answered incorrectly on the evening of the meeting, May 14th

. The text here is the factual position in

relation to the matter in question.

7. Has the local Marine Scotland office been consulted in relation to the project?

Marine Scotland are a statutory consultee for the project and we have been engaging with them regularly for the last two years. We have also consulted with, and continue to engage regularly with, all relevant fishing industry bodies and other relevant marine organisations. To date, we have not consulted with the Marine Scotland office in Stornoway. However, we are happy to add them to our list of consultees and stakeholders (for wider engagement purposes).

8. What consultation has taken place with local shell fishermen?

Spiorad na Mara recognises the importance of fisheries engagement and has set up a dedicated fisheries team to ensure that consultation with the industry is managed. The team has been set up following the FLOWW guidance (industry best practice guidance on how the offshore renewables industry and fisheries can communicate effectively).

A Company Fisheries Liaison Officer (CFLO), Richard Joseph, and a Fisheries Industry Representative (FIR), Calum Macleod, have been in place for the Spiorad na Mara project since 2022. They engage directly with local fishermen (including those engaged in shell fishing) in the vicinity of both the offshore array and the offshore cable route area of search in relation to all proposed activities (surveys, assessments, equipment placement and replacement etc) on the project. Richard has also attended the Western Isles Fisherman's Association (WIFA) AGM and is in regular contact with their chairman. They also contacted as many local fishermen as possible in relation to our Scoping Report, making them aware of the opportunity to input into the consultation process on how we proposed to approach our environmental impact assessment and what we proposed to cover.

As part of our two phases of public consultation on the project – the first of which will be held this autumn – it is our intention to have dedicated consultation meetings for the fishing community. All local fishermen, as well as representatives of relevant fishing industry bodies and other organisations, will be notified in advance of these events and invited to attend.

Calum, who is based locally, is the point of contact for all fishermen and may be reached by emailing calumsiarach@hotmail.com or calling 07814 447081. Richard is the point of contact for all fishing industry bodies and other organisations; he may be contacted by emailing richard.joseph@erm.com or calling 07944 981839.