

DRAFT MINUTES

Date: 18 August 2022

Topic: Extraordinary Meeting to discuss Planning Application made by Comsol Energy Limited for a Photovoltaic Solar Farm August 2022

Present: Alex Harvie (Chair), John McHenry (Vice Chair), Duncan Fraser, Gregor Harvie (Adviser), Graham Wallace (Adviser), Keith Hammond (Secretary), Cllr Eleanor Collier, Cllr Todd Ferguson, Cllr Iain Murdoch, Cllr Alan Hill, Carol Campbell, Lorraine Fraser and Eleanor Brown (Cumbrae Forum), Lesley Stringer, Adam Lyon (Press) + 2 members of the public.

Apologies

Cllr Tom Marshall, Louise Riddex (North Ayrshire Council), Trish Broadley-Clews, Jan Wilkie, Crawford Gillan (Cumbrae Resilience Group), Iain Morrison (Millport Motors)

Welcome	Chair declared the meeting quorate.
Overview of the application by Gregor Harvie	<p>There are issues with the location, size of the proposed panels, length of time the installation would remain – 25 years, so not really temporary; the fact that the electricity generated would feed into the national grid on the mainland.</p> <p>The application itself was incomplete with no elevation drawings showing the height of the panels or the perimeter fence with security cameras. The application has provided no details of the fence or support buildings. There were no details of how the electricity generated would gotten to the mainland and no clarification of the applicant's 'widening roads' for getting equipment to the site. There was scant information given on how the solar farm construction would impact on the infrastructure when major projects like the Flood Prevention Scheme were being built at the very same time.</p> <p>Missing information from application was listed as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'How' the proposed farm would be built? • By 'what means' would the power be linked to the mainland? • What 'studies' have not been done on the environmental etc implications? • 'What impact' would the actual construction have on the island - given to possibly be as long as eight months? • How the project would affect visitors coming to the island to experience its views? • Many other 'details' necessary for a full understanding of the project's consequences for Cumbrae? <p>Summary of CCC view</p> <p>The Cumbrae Community Council (CCC) view was that such a significant installation would have a negative impact on the island, and while the Council supports the move to a carbon neutral position, it was felt that a proposal on this scale should be made by the island population for the island on a site which was appropriate for the sensitive nature of the local environment and economy.</p>

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	<p>The chair explained the purpose of the meeting was to get different views of the island and the views of the Councillors representing the island.</p> <p>The chair asked first for clear expressions of for or against plans proposed solar farm so that the overall opinion of the island might be clarified. The meeting was then opened to the public and those present each stated they were against the project. One individual stated they had already made a detailed submission to that effect.</p> <p>One attendee gave the opinion that the application was fundamentally incomplete and was surprised that it was being considered seriously by the Planning Committee. They thought it did not serve the interests of the island as the benefits of clean electricity were going elsewhere, 'certainly not to those living on the island'. The project would bring no jobs or other gains to Cumbrae. It would however bring disruption and damage to the island environment.</p>
Councillors' views	<p>Cllr Murdoch declared his position on the Planning Committee meant he could not participate in the debate.</p> <p>Cllr Hill thought it would be beneficial for to get the Planning Officer's view of the proposal before any moves were made to 'calling out' the application in which case the issue was referred to the Scottish Government for a decision. This he thought would mean some degree of local control would be lost. Cllr Hill thought solar power 'might be' part of the local carbon neutral agenda for the island in the future, but that this would require a study to decide the best location. He made the point that much had moved on in terms of technology since 2016.</p> <p>Cllr Ferguson pointed out that there had been two previous applications in 2016 and 2020 relating to this project. The former was approved and the latter rejected. The 2016 application went to a Planning Committee and was not decided by the Planning Department of NAC. He thought this application should go before a Committee allowing Island representation in the proceedings. It had been deemed a routine Planning Department decision but he thought this wrong.</p> <p>Cllr Collier stated she was against the proposal and her views were in line with those stated by previous councillors.</p> <p>Keith H made the point that the Island had a document in the public realm titled 'Cumbrae – Local Island Plan' which referred to environmental wellbeing around strong local partnerships in carbon neutral transport and building the local economic infrastructure. This was not around in 2016 but nothing in the proposal was in keeping with the island plans.</p> <p>Graham W stated that he had been told by the Planning Dept that the as this was in effect a "repeat" application which had originally been</p>

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	<p>determined by the Planning Committee and not under delegated authority then the policy was for the application to be referred to the Committee again for a decision. This would allow the CCC a slightly longer response period (approx. 2 weeks) up until the report was being written. However as the report has not yet been written it was not known at this stage whether the Planning Officers would be recommending approval or not in either situation. If the matter was to be dealt with under delegated authority then the (earliest) Committee date of 28 September referred to would be irrelevant and the full CCC response (as well as the public responses) would need to be submitted before 31 August.</p> <p>It was noted that there was a problem with North Ayrshire Planning website failing to register online submissions. John McH stated he had sent his objection by email to Ian Davies is the individual planning officer dealing with this case. It was clarified by the Councillors that the Administrator was currently on holiday but that objections would be registered.</p>
Island view and next steps	<p>CCC actions to date So far the CCC has carefully reviewed the documents of the planning application, they have prepared a leaflet which has been distributed to every home on the island. CCC has liaised with Fairlie and Largs Community Councils. CCC has asked the planners for a delay, asking them to seek additional information from the applicant.</p> <p>Island opinion The chair noted the opinion of attendees at this meeting was 100% against the application being approved. The leaflet should allow for a factual and balanced view to be sought.</p> <p>Next steps The next step is for CCC to gather a full community view and to request a representative of the committee attend and present the island's view at the Planning Committee proceedings.</p> <p>For islanders, the next move is to make individual views known by filling in the form and / or writing to the planning team.</p>