

UPDATE NOTE

IN LIEU OF FIELD HOUSE COMMUNITY LIAISON COMMITTEE (CLC) SCHEDULED FOR THURSDAY 4 JUNE 2020

Circulation:

Denise Harland – Chair and representative of STOPWR
Steve MacQuarrie (SMQ) – Hargreaves Surface Mining Limited (Hargreaves)
Paul Davies (PD) – Hargreaves Surface Mining Limited
Trevor Meek (TM) – Field House Site Manager
Councillor Bill Kellett – Durham County Council (DCC)
Councillor David Hall – Durham County Council (DCC)
Claire Teasdale (CT) (Planning Officer) – DCC Planning Department
Mike Tweddle (MT) (Monitoring Officer) – DCC Planning Department
Gillian Patton (GP) – Pittington Parish Council
Peter Morson (PM) – West Rainton and Leamside Parish Council
Michael Hopper - Hetton Town Council
Jon Steer – Pittington Community Association
Arthur Dornan – West Rainton and Leamside Village Partnership
Jacky Worthington (JW) – Moorsley and District Community Association
Danielle Pearson (DP) (Planning Officer) – Sunderland City Council

Final note when approved also to be sent to the Clerks of Pittington PC, West Rainton PC and Hetton TC.

Action

1. Preamble

In view of the current Covid-19 pandemic it was agreed between the Chair and representatives of Hargreaves and DCC that it would not be appropriate to convene the usual Field House CLC at the site offices. It was decided to prepare and circulate an Update Note relating to matters addressed at CLC meetings. This Update Note has been prepared and agreed following email consultation with all members of the CLC. Accordingly, it will be sent to the relevant Parish and Town Clerks for immediate public release.

AP30 SMQ

2. Previous Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 5th March 2020 were considered and agreed. SMQ will liaise with the Chair to ensure they are signed as a correct record. SMQ will then forward to CT to upload onto the Council's website following necessary redactions.

3. Matters Arising

It is important to note that the site closed down during the Covid-19 lockdown from 24 March 2020 reopening on 11 May 2020. During this period the site was regularly monitored and security arrangements were in place.

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4. Review of Action Points

AP24 – signed December 2019 minutes emailed to CT 14 March 2020.

AP25 – the three parish/town councils and the three community associations were consulted by email on 15 March 2020. All six organisations have confirmed the same nominations.

AP26 – Project Update emailed to all CLC members on 6 March 2020.

AP27 – No questions have been received from Cllr Hall. Prior to lockdown TM/PD/MT met, an agreed response awaits final approval of the restoration and aftercare details for the site as referred to in Item 7 below. Hargreaves advise that it is important that any delay in investigation does not affect the commencement of the forthcoming restoration works.

AP28 – When the Restoration and Aftercare Scheme has been approved the details will be presented to the Committee at the next meeting or in an agreed statement format.

AP29 – See Item 7.

5. Community Fund Committee (CFC)

SMQ reported that the CFC held its fifth meeting on 5 March 2020.

Five new applications were considered from St Lawrence Church, Pittington; St Mary's Church, West Rainton; East Rainton Cricket Club Ltd; Houghton Area Youth Band; and Pittington Parish Council.

The CFC noted that the scale of the application requests for awards far exceeded the monies available. Given the nature of the various worthy causes the CFC faced some difficult decisions.

Partial awards were made to each of the five applicants. In the case of the Pittington Parish Council request for funds to refurbish and renew a play area this is a substantial project and the award was made subject to confirmation being demonstrated that sufficient additional funds had been secured to allow the project to proceed.

A total of £78,188 has been awarded and all awards have now been paid with the exception of the award to Pittington Parish Council for the play area. The distribution of the funds is 40.64% (£31,780) West Rainton and Leamside; 40.63% (£31,768) Pittington; 18.72% (£14,640) Hetton.

The 5 March 2020 CFC meeting exhausted the funds available from coal production up to 1st March 2020. The site was closed from 24th March 2020 until reopening on 11th May 2020. Including coal production to end May 2020 there is currently a fund surplus of £7,955.80 available. Coal production is expected to be completed by the end of June 2020.

There are no new CFC applications pending at this time and in consultation with the CFC Chair it has been decided not to hold a CFC meeting until 3rd September 2020.

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6. Hargreaves – Project Update

An update was noted from TM explaining work carried out on site to date:

- Operations on site were suspended due to Corvid-19 from 24th March to 11th May 2020;
- Noise and dust monitoring. No noise or dust complaints received in the last period;
- Coal sales from site continue, 430,825t to end of May 2020;
- Site is progressing with excavated overburden now being placed at or below restoration contours. Excavations of overburden in the working area should be completed early June 2020;
- There has been a minor instability adjacent to subsoil mound SSM A, suspect it was due to water trapped in a sand lens that was released due to excavations. A buttress has been formed to stabilise the area;
- The ground around Lady Seaham Pit was excavated to the coal seam, no significant findings were observed. The archaeological consultant decided it was not necessary to monitor this work;
- Excavation of the overburden mound to backfill void to restoration contours has started and will continue until early Autumn 2020.

Information from TM outlining upcoming work in the future was noted:

- Continue to excavate the overburden mound to restore the site;
- Excavation of coal and coal sales estimated to be completed end of June 2020.

TM also reported a matter raised by the general public:

On 12th May a member of the public reported a section of fence had been cut adjacent to the Field House Site and Bridleway 25 (West Rainton) approximately 100m North from where the bridleway joins Moorsley Road. The person reporting the damaged fence was concerned that it allowed direct access to the opencast operations. On inspection the damaged fence was not the Field House boundary fence but a fence outside the Field House site, the site boundary fence was secure. Although not Hargreaves responsibility the gap in the fence was closed so that activity in that area could be monitored. Another member of the public reported they had seen a man in a hoody the previous Saturday night at about 20:30 in that area but could not see what he was doing. The same member of the public confirmed that the farmer had had fencing timber stolen from a field in that area around that time.

7. DCC Officer Update

Following the liaison meeting on 3 March 2020 MT visited the site on 16 March 2020. Due to Covid-19 the next site visit took place on 18 May 2020 by MT following both Durham County Council and Hargreaves Covid-19 protocols and Council Monitoring Report has been

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produced. The site is not raising operational difficulties and is presently working in accordance with approved documents (as amended). The site operator has been reminded that coal stock heights should not be higher than 4m and that there are requirements for reviews of the noise and dust action plans to be undertaken and submitted to the Council by 20 June 2020. Applications for the approval of restoration and aftercare details have not yet been determined. Following concerns raised regarding flooding off site CT asked the Council's Drainage and Coastal Protection Officers to look again at the matter. Drainage officers have now been to the site and are carrying out a detailed review of the restoration details. There have been no recent complaints made to DCC.

8. Issues / Complaints

A number of matters have arisen since the previous CLC meeting on 5 March 2020. Those matters not already covered earlier in this Update Note are addressed below.

Concerns were raised via the Chair by some local residents in early May regarding a soil slip on the perimeter mound parallel with Pittington Road. TM advised the Chair that he was aware of the slip which had occurred a few weeks earlier and was being monitored with little movement following the initial slump.

Cllr Hall sought clarification regarding contact details should anyone wish to complain and was advised regarding the established procedures to notify the Site Manager or DCC officers.

9. Any Other Business

In response to a query regarding a recent Hargreaves announcement the company confirmed that coal extraction will cease by the end of July across its operating sites, beyond which the sites will be restored in line with the planning conditions.

In response to a question raised SMQ confirmed that no changes had been made to the CFC criteria to take account of the Covid-19 crisis and any requirement for emergency funding.

West Rainton and Leamside Village Partnership has asked for information regarding CFC awards made to groups in West Rainton and Leamside. The CLC considered this to be a matter for the CFC to decide as the CFC has been established as the decision-making group of the CLC for the purposes of determining and managing the distribution of the funding. SMQ will liaise separately with CFC members regarding the level of detail, beyond Item 5 in this Update Note, that should be made publicly available.

10. Date of Next Meeting

Subject to Covid-19 restrictions, the next CLC meeting will be held on Thursday 3rd September 2020 at 6pm at the Field House Surface Mine site office. If required a meeting of the CFC will follow the CLC meeting. Should a meeting not be possible then Hargreaves will advise the Committee in advance and alternative provisions will be put in place.

It was also agreed that a CLC meeting could be called at short notice, at the Chairperson's discretion, should circumstances arise which merit this.

Signed

Chairperson

Date:

Circulation: All CLC members, Clerks of West Rainton PC, Pittington PC and Hetton TC.