

## **Note of meeting**

### **Birnam to Ballinluig A9 Community Group (BBCG)**

**Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> August 2019**

**7:30pm Birnam Arts**

Present: Mike Wolfe (Chair), Sophie Cade, Don Sinclair, Anne Graham, Mike Vaux, Isobel, Beth Ross-Gillies, Sarah Walker, Garth Ponsonby, Adrian Blundell, Ian McCartney, Lindsey Gibb, Will Stockham, Dot Mechan, Simon Yearsley, Lachlan McEwan, Linda Wolfe, Alan Wolfe, Bill Melville, Jackie Cuthbert, Hugh Cuthbert, Rachel Unwin, John Stout, Steve Ponsonby, Steve Lorimer, Michael Silverburn, David Cross, Christine Cross, Norman Grieve, Dorothy Lewin, Dave Roberts, Pam Green, Prof. John Lennon (Moffat Centre for Travel & Tourism) and Ian Martin (Jacobs), Ian Hart, plus two more late arrivals.

Apologies: Alasdair Wylie, Alex Kettles, Hamish Carlton, Sue Atkinson and Stuart Paton.

#### **1. Introductions**

- a) Mike to Chair the meeting in Alasdair's absence.
- b) Round the room introductions.
- c) Background information on what has happened since the end of the Co-Creative process, including the March and May exhibitions from Transport Scotland and BBCG's summer meetings with Transport Scotland and the Cabinet Secretary.

#### **2. Tourism and local economy**

- a) Mike explained the context in which Prof. Lennon has come to be working in Dunkeld and Birnam, as part of Transport Scotland and Jacob's DMRB2 assessment process. Prof. Lennon only started his work here on 27<sup>th</sup> August, meeting some representatives of BBCG and Dunkeld and Birnam Tourism Association to set out the plan for his work.
- b) BBCG would like to use the opportunity of his presence at this meeting to clarify the objectives and intended outcomes for his work, how this will be useful to the community, and how it might affect the design options currently on the table.
- c) Prof. Lennon explains that his remit is to explore impacts of the dualling both during and post construction in the immediate area of Birnam and Dunkeld. Transport Scotland will use the information in his report to inform their assessment of the design options at DMRB2. Transport Scotland recognise the community's concerns in this area which is why they have commissioned this report.
- d) Community members highlighted opportunities the A9 dualling presents to revitalise Birnam village centre through reconnecting Station Road to the Station and enabling tourism development away from Dunkeld centre, which is rather saturated. Prof. Lennon acknowledges that it is difficult to ignore the differences between the two villages, and whilst this cannot solely be attributed to the construction of the A9, it would make sense for future tourism development to focus on Birnam.
- e) Members of the community asked further questions to Prof. Lennon regarding the timing of the work, 'why now?', clarification of the geographical scope, the working definition of what is a tourism business and a broader definition of tourism that includes natural heritage, as well as how the data and information gathered will be used and whether or the community will get to see it.
- f) Prof. Lennon explains that the work was commissioned 2-3 weeks ago as a response to BBCG's concerns about the A9 dualling process. He will be looking at perceived impacts and focusing on businesses of all sizes, mainly within the two villages, but accepts that there are more businesses that will be affected beyond the village centres and is open to expanding geographic scope. He will also be considering the value of our natural heritage in this area and would like to adopt a broad definition of tourism.

- g) Further discussion and questions from community members regarding the scope of the report and methodology, transparency and objectivity. Prof. Lennon explains that as part of Glasgow Caledonian University, his work and recommendations are independent and that all documentation relating to his commission is held by Transport Scotland and Jacobs.

**Actions:**

- 1. BBCG requested Terms of Reference, objectives and any other relevant information for Prof. Lennon's commission, from Transport Scotland.**
- 2. Prof Lennon to meet with BBCG Core Group for a briefing on the background which has led to the current situation.**
- 3. BBCG Core Group to clarify scoping of the report before consultation begins.**
- 4. BBCG to put the following questions from community group members to Transport Scotland:**
  - 4.1. Is there a budget to implement any recommendations that come out of Prof. Lennon's report? If yes, how much?**
  - 4.2. Was a similar study done for the Luncarty to Pass of Birnam section? If yes, where is the report published? Note updated post-meeting: No, a study was not done for that section.**
  - 4.3. Is no the right time to be doing this study?**

**3. Cabinet Secretary Visit**

- a) Note from the meeting between representatives of BBCG and the Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity, Michael Matheson, was displayed on the projector screen for the group.
- b) Mike summarised the main points of the meeting and explained the background behind it. Notably that, Cab Sec wishes to avoid a confrontational planning situation, and would rather a design be built around consensus. He used the phrase 'closing the gap' and 'creating space' to describe the ways of working required to arrive at a mutually agreeable solution.
- c) Question from community member regarding electrification of the railway line: Yes, this was discussed briefly but unlikely to happen in our area in the foreseeable future, although significant investment is going to be made into public transport and active travel.
- d) Question from community member regarding cost, was this discussed with the Cab Sec? Mike explains that yes it was discussed, and it could be a major inhibitor to the Community's Preferred Route design, but the Cab Sec does not want to lose the many positive opportunities that this design presents. Further discussion within the group around the many costs and benefits relating to opportunities for development in our area versus the potential costs of a lengthy Public Local Inquiry, and the fact that during the Co-Creative Process cost did come in to some people's decision making even though there were very weak parameters set for this.
- e) Question from community member: Did those who met with Cab Sec highlight that the Community Preferred Route option selected was not the most expensive of the options available for selection? No, this was not discussed. Discussion focused on the route option selected at the conclusion of the Co-Creative process.
- f) Question from community member: Is the recent commissioning of Prof Lennon Transport Scotland's response to the need for 'closing the gap'? BBCG to ask this question.
- g) What next? – following our meeting with Cab Sec, BBCG representative have met with Transport Scotland to discuss the need to 'close the gap' between the community and this current design/assessment process, and how we can create time and space to do this. Both parties agreed to consider how to do this (action from 6<sup>th</sup> August meeting between BBCG and Transport Scotland).

**Actions:**

5. **BBCG to ask Transport Scotland if the commissioning of Prof. Lennon is their response to the need to 'close the gap'.**
6. **BBCG to make it clear in upcoming correspondence with Cab Sec that the community did not totally disregard cost implications in the decision making during the Co-Creative.**

**4. 'Closing the Gap' draft paper**

- a) Draft paper is displayed via projector screen to the group. Mike talks through key points and explains the background behind it. BBCG Core Group welcomes further inputs to the paper from community members.
- b) Question from community member regarding BBCG getting impartial technical advice. Mike explains that we are looking into funding and possible experts that could help us but that this is a last resort and would like to try and work in partnership with Transport Scotland first.
- c) Group discusses the possible risks in getting this wrong and not achieving a mutually agreeable solution, i.e. impact on future generations, costs borne by everyone if there is a PLI, risk to Transport Scotland of PLI, as well as the huge opportunities that the *right* solution could offer the community in terms of redressing the 'road engineering technical debt' imposed on us from the 1970s A9 road construction.
- d) Question from community member: 'What else can we do?' – Keep coming to BBCG meetings and engaging with the work we are doing, support from the community, sharing of ideas, concerns and expertise is key, as well as spreading the word to other people who may not yet be engaged.

**Actions:**

7. **BBCG to request to see Transport Scotland's Risk Register relating to this section.**

Meeting concludes at 10pm.