

Meeting 19th June 2017 arranged by Shirley Anne Somerville

Myself and Adrian attended on behalf of TCC.

Significantly our immediate neighbours Bellyeoman & Wellwood CC's were represented.

Our three local Elected Councillors were there along with FC Officers Joe Mc Guinness and Callum Farquhar.

NO Developers attended, although expected according to our invitation from Shirley -Anne Somerville's office.

Three Senior Fife Council Planning Officers attended;- Fife Council's Senior Planning Officer and primary speaker was Pam Ewen, Development Planning Manager Bill Lindsay and Mike Barratt the Chief Planning Officer for Fife Council Transport (The NLR is his responsibility)

The e-mailed invitation was addressed to "Community Councillors" and had asked for topics for inclusion on the draft agenda, but upon receipt of the final Agenda only non area specific questions on protocols put forward by the NDGC appeared (nothing remotely applicable to Townhill had been added) - it was noted that not everyone attending represented a local area was a Community Councillor!

It was therefore obvious from the agenda that the meeting itself would mainly be a listening exercise and was unlikely to be conducive to TCC's prepared specific questions in relation to Townhill – this was later proven to be the case given there were no Developers in attendance to put questions to – yet by Government mandate this initiative is Developer led..

NDGC's Gordon Harvey and other individuals only raised issues on protocols but included "what is the expected House build numbers" / why do we not have an NHS ANE dept with further questions on - Gp's - Schools etc. – most of these questions were either non relevant to the panel officiating or the answers were already a matter of public record.

If you are going to ask questions they should be put to those responsible for a service who can answer eg directly to NHS or GP groups or to Developers etc

After overrunning by 20min attempting to cover agenda topics we ran out of time!

There was an obvious sense of frustration by the panel at the quality of questions, often vocal interjections appeared as futile attempts at point scoring which were ably dealt with by the planners in attendance.

It was then suggested by Fife Council's Senior Planning Officer and primary speaker Pam Ewen that updates on developments be provided to all ** 'constituted groups' e.g. Community Councils in future. Chief Transport Planner Mark Barratt also answered questions raised, but there was little heard from any of the panel to indicate from the points raised that would affect the proposed plans as already publicised.

Conclusion: This was not a particularly productive meeting but it did convey the lack of focus on topics Townhill would have an interest in, neither myself nor Adrian had the opportunity to speak before the meeting simply ran out of time, but it did give us an opportunity to witness the standard of representation offered by other community groups and to meet the Planners.

However, after the meeting I spoke to Mike Barratt the Chief Planning Officer for Fife Council Transport re the NLR (his responsibility) specifically only in relation to Townhill and I put forward our own questions.

He was very genuine and helpful in his responses and now have his answers confirmed in writing;-

I stated that much of the information to date has been confusing and I would appreciate a simplified response to the following on behalf of Townhill Residents;-

To the best of our knowledge there were only three options for the NLR routing,

Q:- Can we please be advised specifically- why alternatives (a) & (b) were or will be discounted in favour of (c) as has been suggested?

(a) Wellwood via Lathalmond to Junction 4 of M90 – **TOO FAR FOR PEOPLE TO REALISTICALLY ACCEPT AS A DIRECT ROUTE EAST TO HALBEATH**

(b) The more direct route proposed to run to the North of Townhill village to J3 – **THIS WOULD INVOLVE THIRD PARTY GROUND OWNERSHIP AND THIS WAS NOT FINANCIALLY VIABLE FOR FIFE COUNCIL AS THERE WOULD BE NO DEVELOPER INPUT**

(c) The indicative route skirting past Townhill Loch with a proposed junction in the region of the old Car Park to J3 – **THIS IS THE MOST LIKELY ROUTE AND HE HAS ACCEPTED OUR SUGGESTIONS FOR THE CHANGES WE THOUGHT WOULD PROVIDE MINIMAL CHANGE FOR THE MAJORITY OF OUR RESIDENTS LIVING CLOSEST TO THE ROAD**

Q ;- Has the likelihood of the NLR being routed other than as indicatively suggested now gone beyond the possibility of provision by an alternative routing? - **YES**, albeit no plans have been submitted and the routing will be subject of a future local consultation in order to discuss details or changes – budgets for furthering plans and arranging these meetings are awaited

After recent suggestions by TCC Planners have indicated that if/when the NLR goes ahead as per the proposed indicative routing – these points were confirmed again today;-

(a) The revised route will not affect the existing cycle track (therefore the banking will remain)

(b) The revised route will not see a removal of the old Loch Street stone bridge

(c) The route would not involve Loch Street losing its current cul de sac status

(d) After a very recent re-evaluation by planners the proposed NLR would now be routed to cross the Main Street into Townhill much closer to the existing Water Ski entrance than previously indicated – possibly within the old disused car park area

I asked - could this junction be a roundabout instead of the traffic lights suggested so as not to prioritise East /West NLR traffic unnecessarily and to provide an obligatory traffic slowing feature?

It would be reasonable for a preliminary design of the route to consider both a signal controlled junction and roundabout options.

To be honest roundabouts are not very pedestrian friendly and controlled pedestrian crossings would have to be introduced on the arms of the roundabout. A traffic signal controlled junction would include pedestrian crossings and would be operated by a VA (vehicle actuated) system, which should ensure that during the AM & PM peaks and off-peaks that excessive queues should not build-up on any of the approaches

Q;- Can these latest revisions to the 'Indicative Route' be formally accepted in Principle by both Developers and Planners at this early stage should the NLR take this course?

Opportunity at meeting did not arise as there were no Developers present to agree

(3) With the cycle banking to remain it would minimise any noise impact on Townhill West (being the highest percentage density of local residents along the indicative route), however given the proximity to the Loch environs (including all forms of wildlife)

Q;- can we have an assurance from developers that improvements to the Loch area would be part of any definitive plan in order to not only improve the aesthetics from the proposed new road but importantly to provide a better environment than currently exists to encourage both existing and all new wildlife forms to flourish?

It is a fantastic visitor attraction currently and we would wish to encourage this aspect of the area to prosper through additional developer investment.

Opportunity at meeting did not arise as there were no Developers present to agree

(2) some residents and wildlife enthusiasts were anxious to see an artists impression of the route as it passes the Loch side in order to better appreciate the potential for improvement to the Loch perimeter (currently a mess). Again, it would be reasonable to provide 3D views of the proposed road as it passes the loch. The Council's design team in Transportation do have the ability to develop 3D images from proposed layout plans and sections. Mind you this will be a few years away yet, as they have not yet been appointed to carry out the work.

Conclusion; I will speak quite plainly with none of the flannel we have become used to and you will be told only facts as they become known – not speculative scaremongering nor the opinion of any individuals with a specific vested financial interest – WE ARE ALL RESIDENTS, BUT WE NEED TO BE PRAGMATIC.

This to my mind is how we make the best of what is going to happen -we need to only speak to the correct people in the correct negotiating manner if we are to get the best deal for Townhill residents.

It should also be recognised that our withdrawal causes the NDGC to no longer represent democratically the North of Dunfermline and therefore it weakens their overall standpoint by casting doubt over the legitimacy of their title, which is the only reason why they would like us to return – this was put across again at the meeting by Gordon Harvey – I politely declined on behalf of TCC.

It is quite apparent from the information we now have that an NLR will go ahead – in fact as Cllr Ian Ferguson said at a recent meeting in a few years Townhill will be asking for an NLR due to the increase in through traffic !

The NDGC have now put forward their objection to the housing proposed for Halbeath and the only significance the NLR has in this document is the lack of a planning application for it to date, this creates an anomaly whereby housing provision is subject to the NLR yet the housing planning has already been applied for.

I think logically that until the housing permission is assured (with road and amenity investment covering conditions) neither the Developer nor FC can forward plan the NLR and its cost sharing agreements.

There are concerns by the NDCG for its routing but only so far as how and where it crosses the railway at Halbeath.

Various arguments voiced in opposition to the road route or where it joins the M90 are really a matter for Transport experts and do not make for a good argument if made by those simply applying a scattergun approach to objection.

Wellwood will require the NLR to avoid traffic chaos, and to a degree so will we in Townhill to avoid it becoming a rat run by those avoiding town traffic.

Whilst no one can dispute at this stage the burden on Schools, the NHS etc. these are issues that will be resolved and not by any protest group in an attempt to use these recognised points as a smokescreen by those simply not wanting houses built next to theirs -progress = prosperity and it will happen.

It may not suit everyone but we have to represent the majority of our 1300 residents and we can do this best as a 'constituted' Community Council working directly with the departments able to offer viable changes to any final plan and to encourage Developers to offer additional benefits to our local area.

We will represent Townhill at future meetings as and when required but only if the subject matter is salient to Townhill and its environs.