

## MINUTE

### BALUSS FARM LIAISON GROUP

Mintlaw Academy, Mintlaw  
20 July 2016

**Present:** Councillor Jim Ingram (Chair), Councillor Norman Smith, Louis Cruickshank, Bill Cowie, Kenneth Hutchison, Robert Nye, Alison McGruther, Donna Lindsay, Sandra Duncan, Elaine Campbell, Kenneth Lindsay, Bill Doverty, Alexander Laird (Community Council), David Steele, Mary Bowie-Wallace, John Godsman, Pam Hepburn, Sandy Howie (Baluss), Marion Howie (Baluss), David Cooper (Environmental Health), John Grant (Environmental Health)

#### 1. Apologies

Councillor Chapman, Councillor Pirie, Eric Richardson, Alex Cowie, Joyce Munro.

#### 2. Minute of Last Meeting (12 November 2015) / Matters Arising

Accepted as an accurate Minute.  
All matters arising covered in Agenda.

#### 3. Current Position

David Cooper provided an update on actions the Council has taken since the previous Liaison Group meeting in November 2015.

Aberdeenshire Council commissioned Spectrum to undertake odour analysis at Baluss Farm and to undertake modelling to (a) identify the specific sources of odour at Baluss Farm, and (b) to model the migration of odour from the farm towards Mintlaw.

The report confirmed that the primary source of odour is the buildings, with little or no odour from the slurry store. The report confirmed that residents would likely be affected by odour depending upon wind direction. Wind direction and topography are the main influences on migration.

A second report was commissioned to provide modelling outcomes based on theoretical changes to vent outlets - number, height, velocity, diameter. Some of these changes did indicate potential substantial reduction in odour migration could be achieved, if it were possible to adapt the ventilation system. Spectrum are not engineers and their modelling was purely theoretical.

The reports were passed in mid July to Sandy Howie to enable him to make appropriate investigations to ascertain if such adaptations could be made.

David Cooper advised that the reports would be published on the Council's website once feedback is received from Sandy Howie.

Sandy Howie advised that he had contacted building and ventilation engineers and had received one response earlier today. The reduction in the number of outlets is not a viable option. There are other possible options such as introduction of a fine mist/cooler air within the outlets which may help during warm periods.

Sandy questioned some of the findings within the report, principally the time of year the analysis was undertaken. Results indicated the farrowing unit would have the highest odour level - his view is that he would have expected that to be the lowest. David Cooper advised Environmental Health would speak to Spectrum regarding the date of analysis and their conclusions.

Sandy advised of another option he is considering, which he believes will have a better chance of reducing the odour than undertaking the works suggested in the Spectrum reports. He is to trial a method whereby slurry will be flushed more regularly from the finishing rooms. He is awaiting the arrival of a pump and will then try different time periods in an attempt to reduce the odour levels.

Attendees agreed to Mr Howie's suggested approach. He will advise Environmental Health once the pump is installed. Success of this approach will be judged by the number of complaints, extent and severity of any odour. Environmental Health will also visit the area.

Residents were keen to agree a timetable of action. Mr Howie gave an undertaking to get the pump installed as soon as possible but it would take a number of weeks before it could be determined if there is a positive impact.

A number of comments were made and questions posed, summarised as follows:

- Reference made to the planning application process and the perceived lack of consultation with residents. Mr Howie and Councillor Ingram stated the application had gone through the standard process.
- Mention was made of the letter from Dr Eilidh Whiteford MP, recently submitted to the Council, with reference to a particular planning condition about not causing nuisance. David Cooper pointed out that this is not a planning condition but an informative ie advice to the developer.
- Examples were provided where it was suggested that other piggeries operate without causing nuisance to residents. David Cooper pointed to the SAC report published in 2015 which indicated the farm is adopting best practice in many areas.
- Sandy Howie described the working practices on the farm.

- Reference was made to considering waste to energy solution. Sandy has made enquiries but this is not an option.
- Councillor Ingram referred to diaries being kept by some residents and the question was asked if these diaries, as well as survey monkey, could be used to cross match with the farm record of activities. Sandy Howie advised that this had previously been checked but it did not identify any specific activity that may have been responsible for odour that day.
- Reference made to slurry spreading. Residents accepted that this has to be done and would not complain if this was the only cause of the odour.
- A number of residents made reference to the high number of flies in their houses in recent weeks. David Cooper said advice had been sought from a local pest control company. It is not possible to identify the source of the flies; there may be multiple sources in the general area. Baluss Farm has control measures in place.

#### **4. Actions**

- David Cooper to issue draft Minute, with suggested amendments forwarded to him within a week. The final Minute will be published on the Council website.
- Sandy Howie to arrange for installation of a pump to enable more regular removal of slurry from buildings.
- The two Spectrum reports will be published on the website once the Minute is finalised.
- Environmental Health to continue to monitor complaints and liaise with Sandy Howie.
- Environmental Health to speak to Spectrum to clarify aspects of their reports.

#### **5. Date of Next Meeting**

Late October. Date to be advised in due course.