

**MINUTE OF MEETING**  
**BALUSS FARM LIAISON GROUP**

**Mintlaw Academy, Mintlaw**  
**28 November 2016**

**Present:** Councillor Jim Ingram (Chair), Councillor Norman Smith, Louis Cruickshank, Bill Doverty, Sandra Duncan, Bob Nye, Alex Laird, David Steele, Eric Richardson, Donna Lindsay, Kenneth Lindsay, John Godzman, Sandy Howie, Marion Howie, Michael Howie, David Cooper (Environmental Health), John Grant (Environmental Health)

**1. Apologies**

Councillor Chapman, Councillor Pirie, Alison McGruther, Elaine Campbell, Mary Bowie-Wallace, Pam Hepburn, Margaret Grant.

**2. Minute of Last Meeting (20 July 216)**

Minutes proposed by Sandra Duncan, seconded by Alex Laird.  
Accepted as true minute.

**3. Matters Arising**

David Cooper referred to the actions noted in item 4 of the previous minutes.

All items have been actioned.

Mr Howie made reference to the new pump that has been installed to enable more regular flushing of slurry from buildings to the slurry tank. Pump cost £11,000. He said that there had been limited time in which to gauge its effectiveness in reducing odour emissions, since the tank was emptied in September.

**4. Current Position**

*Baluss Farm:*

The slurry pump had been installed after the tank was emptied in September and used twice since then. Mr Howie indicated there were limitations on adapting the ventilation system and had received comments from ventilation suppliers and manufacturer. He said that he is regularly audited and said that he is one of only 2 farms in Scotland to be awarded Gold Standard by the Co-operative. He is also part of a benchmarking group and has been discussing the complaints and possible solutions with fellow piggery owners.

Mr Howie indicated the financial implications in undertaking potentially costly adaptations with no guarantee of success. He also asked what would be considered to be an acceptable level of odour. Mr Lindsay indicated that there is an acceptance that there will be odour from time to time but the general feeling is that the frequency with which some residents are affected needs to reduce.

Mr Howie indicated that the installation of a fine misting system may have some positive impact in reducing odour but he is not aware of any such system in a piggery in Scotland. Estimated costs are in excess of £25K. There may be implications on the health of the pigs in using such a system and there is no guarantee it would work. Mr Howie indicated that financially he is not in a position to purchase such a system and asked if the Council would be prepared to fund/provide grants; if the system was proven to be successful then he would repay the costs. David Cooper indicated he would seek advice on availability of any grants that could assist adaptations to the ventilation system.

*Residents:*

Mr Nye said he notices a pungent odour in the evening and asked if any activities would cause this. Mr Howie said that it may be calm weather conditions causing the odour in the evening. Mr Nye also made reference to ammonia measurements; Mr Howie indicated ammonia measurements had been carried out some time ago. Bob Nye voiced concern regarding the number of people (70) who said their health had been affected by the odour.

Residents voiced their frustration at the council regarding the lack of progress in identification of improvements.

Mr Doherty asked about SEPA's involvement. Mr Howie indicated there is no requirement for an IPPC permit from SEPA.

*Aberdeenshire Council:*

Councillor Ingram referred to a residents' survey that he recently conducted. He issued questionnaires to 392 properties and received 262 (66.8% response rate) completed forms. He issued a summary of the findings (see Appendix 1), which highlighted the extent and impact of the complaints.

Councillor Ingram confirmed he had visited the area on a number of occasions and witnessed the extent of the odour. He indicated there is a growing feeling within the community that something must be done. David Cooper advised that enforcement action cannot be taken unless possible

improvements are identified. Mr Cruickshank asked Councillor Ingram if he was able to identify the most affected part of the Bain Estate.

Councillor Ingram indicated that correct procedures had been followed prior to the granting of planning approval for the extension to the farm in 2012.

Councillor Ingram made reference to the potential for residents to submit a complaint to the Ombudsman but his view was that the Ombudsman would consider that the Council has followed correct procedures in trying to get a resolution. He also made reference to residents taking their own action under Section 82 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

## **5. Slurry Spreading**

Mrs Duncan referred to slurry spreading conducted on a Saturday, using the traditional method rather than the injector system. Mr Howie agreed that spreading had taken place on the Saturday but that his son was immediately behind ploughing in. Mr Howie indicated that he does try to avoid spreading at weekends but this is not always possible depending upon a number of factors including weather conditions. The injector system is not always available. Mr Howie agreed to let Environmental Health know of proposed spreading dates; EH will then email the liaison group members.

## **6. Actions**

- a. Minutes to be drafted, circulated, and published once finalised.
- b. Mr Howie to make enquiries regarding installation of fine misting system.
- c. EH to make enquiries regarding fine misting system.
- d. EH to make enquiries regarding availability of funding/grants to assist in the installation of a fine misting system.
- e. Mr Howie to advise EH of spreading dates in advance.

## **7. Next Meeting**

Late January/early February. Date to be advised.