

Scottish Water Gairloch Stakeholder Group

Meeting Minutes

Date of Meeting: Wednesday 4 September 2019

Location: Site Offices, Gairloch Waste Water Treatment Works

Present:

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| Gairloch Community Representatives | Alex Gray (AG) Ian McWhinney (IM) John Port (JP) |
| SEPA | Dr Paul Griffiths (PG) |
| Scottish Water | Kevin Clifton (KC) Mark Maclaren (MM) Gavin Steel (GS) |

Apologies:

Karen Buchanan, Alan Thomson, James Wiseman

Minutes

1. Welcome

Gavin Steel welcomed everyone to the meeting and hoped members had found the visit to the site useful despite the weather.

2. Minutes of meeting held on 27th May 2019

GS noted that the minutes of the previous meeting had been circulated by email and asked if there were any further comments or amendments. The members present indicated they were content with the minutes.

3. Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

4. SEPA Update

PG noted that the Bathing Season was due to finish in mid-September. The last samples at Gairloch and Sand beaches as part of SEPA's routine bathing water monitoring had been taken on 2 September.

In summary, both bathing waters were designated as excellent in 2019 and both were expected to remain excellent. PG explained that water quality results in the previous years of sampling had been exceptionally good, but were not so good this year. He thought this was most likely to be weather related change.

PG explained the vast bulk of samples collected were still found to be consistent with excellent status. There had been one sample in June at Gairloch Beach which was 340 cfu/100ml for E Coli, but also a number of much better samples.

The classification of bathing waters was based on the 95th percentile over a 3 year rolling average.

PG felt the results in 2019 were consistent with expectations for a year of less good summer weather.

PG also noted that additional sampling at Sand Beach had picked up more bugs coming down the watercourse. SEPA would do microbial source tracing to investigate the DNA origin. Samples had been retained for this purpose, but were in a queue for processing at SEPA's laboratories. Findings would be shared with the group once available.

SEPA had also sampled further to the East than its routine sampling point, which is central. There was awareness that there is a private discharge from

the Youth Hostel. Samples at the eastern side of the beach were found to be as good as at the normal sampling point. Even so, SEPA was checking what the Youth Hostel has in the way of treatment.

Questions

AG asked if sampling takes account of weather and tide conditions.

PG explained that sampling schedules are largely dictated by the demands on SEPA's samplers. The dates and times of each sample were known and it was expected that tidal conditions would vary over the year. SEPA was also keen to cross-reference its results with Scottish Water's data on the operation of Combined Sewer Overflows.

JP asked if the membrane plant was working.

KC indicated that the plant was generally operating well. A critical element in achieving this was a pre-season clean which involved reducing the plant to half capacity before the bathing season began, as had previously been discussed. Over the summer, there had been times when the storm tanks at Lonemore were full due to heavy rainfall.

IMcW asked why rainwater should be going into the sewer network.

KC explained that there can be varying situations, some historic. Roof water from older houses and some road drains were likely to be connected. The creation of the Gairloch network had 'collected' flows from a number of historic drainage networks which provided surface water and foul drainage. KC noted that SW had now appointed a contractor to carry out a repair at the pier to address an identified source of saline ingress.

AG expressed unease about the 'spot' nature of sampling. He explained that he would have been keen to see what impact tidal and wind variations have on water quality.

PG explained that this would be difficult for SEPA to justify with the resources it had to fulfil a wide remit. It was expected that sampling would be representative of a range of different conditions over time.

JP asked if specific problems were identified in the future whether more intensive sampling was possible.

PG indicated that this could be kept under review if there was a specific need – and that SEPA was already doing additional sampling at Sand to investigate potential risks to water quality.

IMcW noted that the fishing season is year-round and that tourism and recreational use of the beaches extended beyond the May-September period covered by the bathing season. He also noted that the prevailing wind presented a concern that pollution could be blown onshore on the wind.

KC explained that the depth of the outfall meant there would be good dilution of effluent before it reached the sea surface. Equally the sea and the wider environment was not sterile and hygiene was therefore important too.

5. Scottish Water Project Update

MM indicated that most infrastructure was now installed for the new treatment process, as members of the group had been able to see for themselves. In 4 weeks' time, there would be a big difference as onshore construction work scaled down.

The remaining key additional piece of work was the extension to the outfall, which was planned for October subject to the granting of a Marine Scotland Licence and suitable weather conditions.

AG asked about progress at Lonemore pumping station.

MM indicated that a power connection was still to be completed for the new pumps. In the course of the switch-over, it may be necessary to use road tankers for a short period but efforts would be made to minimise this.

MM explained that Scottish Water was working to commission the new treatment process before the end of the year. In the event that the outfall extension wasn't able to go ahead in October, it would discuss the options for commissioning with SEPA and keep the group updated.

KC explained that it was felt to be desirable to commission the new plant before the end of the year in order to have it fully tested well before the 2020 bathing season. While desirable to have the outfall extension in place, it was not an element of the treatment process that was in need of commissioning and the part it would play was understood.

IMcW asked if the outfall extension would make a major difference.

KC explained that modelling work had been carried out and the extension of the outfall provided a benefit in the dispersion of the treated effluent, via greater depth and distance from the shore.

GS summed up that it was hoped the outfall work would be able to go ahead in October, as planned. If this wasn't possible, Scottish Water's preference was to commission the new treatment process and extend the outfall at the next time of favourable tides / weather conditions. This would be discussed with SEPA and the Stakeholder Group would be informed via email if the need arose. GS indicated that he would also inform the Group if plans to go ahead with the outfall extension in the autumn were confirmed; and if / when commissioning of the plant was beginning.

AG asked if there would be a high risk of spills if it was necessary to continue running the old plant through the winter months. KC indicated that he would check with the local operational team. He thought it was likely they would

want to carry out a further membrane clean after the bathing season if the plant was to remain operational for a significant period.

6. Questions, feedback and next steps

GS asked if members felt a wider update to the community was required at this stage.

The consensus was that it was best to update members of the group, who would continue to share information with the Community Council and the wider community. This would be kept under review at future meetings.

7. Any other business

KC indicated that there was some additional work planned to replace the telemetry system for the 8 pumping stations on the Gairloch drainage system. An existing radio-based system which was no longer supported for repair / renewal would be replaced with combined use of mobile phone and landline-based telecoms. It was hoped this work could take place before the end of the year, subject to confirmation of dates by Openreach.

8. Date of next meeting

As previously planned, the next meeting would take place on Tuesday 10 December at 7pm.

GS thanked members for attending and for braving the weather to see the progress that had been made on site.