

We were given a presentation by Forth Energy Managing Director, Calum Wilson, supported by Natalie Crooks from Forth Energy and Steven Tucker from Turley Associates.

The meeting was better attended than usual as the topic is certainly high profile if not controversial and the presentation and Q&A session took up practically all the business of the CC meeting.

The key areas of concern and debate to emerge were as follows

1. **Consistency with original Framework Plan;** the Framework Plan stretches out over 40 years and within that the area of the Power Plant is designated for residential build. This is clearly a significant move away from the Framework Plan concept. Whether residential development would sit well in proximity with this plant is a moot point and examples from elsewhere would be useful. Given current market conditions residential development is not imminent and the benefits of such a plant, e.g, employment, might outweigh those of future prospective residential development; viz. work on the first “village“ is a long way from being started.
2. **Transportation of feedstock and waste.** Most of feedstock – wood/wood chip will come by sea from Scandinavia and Canada; although there must clearly be an opportunity to develop vast areas of the highlands to produce timber. Allowance has been made for up to 30% to be trucked in and the Framework Plan does not obviously allow for road access to such a plant. This really need a lot more work and is an area of concern though not overriding. The same applies to the transportation of waste products, mainly ash though again this will mainly be by sea.
3. **Green space.** Concern was expressed over potential loss of green space in the area. However given the protracted pace of development of the Framework Plan there would seem to be ample scope for green area provision
4. **Massing and bulk of power plant.** The size and bulk of the proposed plant was discussed though it was difficult to get a true picture of the size. Illustrations of similar plants elsewhere gave some sense of its size and profile and clearly it would be a landmark. If it were to proceed it might present an opportunity for a creative approach especially to the design of the flue. John Pennycook referred to a flue stack he had encountered on holiday one time which impressed him as an attractive feature on the landscape albeit industrial, and suggested this could follow a similar approach.
5. **Local benefits.** All agreed that local benefits should accrue where possible. This might include CHP for supplying the new “villages” in the Framework Plan. This partially explains the preferred central location for the plan as opposed to Seafield or towards the flourmill. The project will also create a significant amount of employment at construction phase, during the plants operation and potentially through spin off industry feeding off the plants heat generation capability.
6. **Emissions.** Clearly this was a significant and reasonable concern. Although the feedstock is organic – wood - and the emissions will be controlled, this aspect needs to be readily and easily communicated to the entire community though on balance the emissions from the plant if not benign do not seem to be a big issue.

On balance, the tenor of the meeting was to learn and was generally not hostile. Among the residents attending were several qualified people – architects/engineers – who have a professional as well as a resident interest, and generally all were aware of the need for and benefits of sustainable energy including biomass.

While not an endorsement at this stage the meeting was open minded and I would say reasonably positive about the concept at this early scoping stage.