

# AVIEMORE AND VICINITY COMMUNITY COUNCIL

## MINUTES of a MEETING of the COMMUNITY COUNCIL, held in AVIEMORE COMMUNITY CENTRE, on THURSDAY 16th June 2016 at 7.30pm.

**Present:** John Grierson (Chair), Alastair Dargie (Vice Chair), Wilma Grierson (Treasurer), Beth Hay, Kathleen Cameron, Joe Kirby, 8 Members of the Public, Peter Farrer (Scottish Water), Simon Parsons (Scottish Water), Neil Brennan (Scottish Water), Steven Sandilands (Scottish Water) Judy Wakker (Scottish Water), Shona MacLachlan (Minute taker)

**Apologies:** None

**Opening Remarks:** John Grierson welcomed everyone to this special Scottish Water meeting of AVCC and commented that the reasoning behind this meeting was that there has been a lot of talk over the public water supply over the past 4-5 years. Although the Community Council have only received 1 complaint, they are aware of the issues posted online and through social media. The Community Council duties is to ascertain information from the public to pass on to the public authorities who are involved.

### 1. BUSINESS

John Grierson asked Peter Farrer to give some background into what's been happening prior to and after the change. Peter Farrer thanked the AVCC for their invitation to this meeting and continued to explain that in 2012 the water supply was changed from Loch Einich to a new treatment works in Aviemore. It was built to firstly deliver high quality safe drinking water and believed that they were not in a position with the old treatment works to guarantee this. Second objective was to meet the growth demands for the area. Loch Einich was not sufficient enough to meet the growing demands of Aviemore and the surrounding areas. This is the reasoning why bore holes were put in to give an abundant supply of quality water which will meet demands well into the future. As well as having safe water they are also interested in making sure water is good to taste, continually listening to customer feedback, and since new supply was put in they have received feedback that some people have taste and smell issues. Peter Farrer continued that because of the feedback they have acted and looked at further improvements that could be done, one of which was a proposal of a chloraminated water supply. In March a consultation was carried out and it was evident from this that there was a strong feeling in the community about the water, therefore decided to carry out a further 5 consultations with roughly 150 people at these information events in the area. The primary issues were taste and biofilms.

Peter Farrer explained in more detail about the proposal of chloramination. This is to add a small amount of ammonia to the chlorine to produce a different disinfecting agent. The benefit of this is that it reduces the chlorine taste in the water. Chloramination is not a new method, it has been used for many decades across the world, 1 in 4 Scottish Water customers drink chloraminated supplies. Areas such as Inverness, Aberdeen and Edinburgh, and in smaller areas Kyle, Fort William, Tomintoul, Wick and Thurso have chloraminated water. Peter Farrer also expressed that these areas that had the chloraminated water noticed a significant difference in the taste of water.

John Grierson asked how many water supplies prior to the changeover were there in the valley and why was there not a problem with the taste and smell then. Simon Parsons advised that Loch Einich had fed the whole valley. The previous treatment at Blackpark, took water from the loch and added chlorine to the water and that was it. He continued that 3 times more chlorine was added before, but because the water contained organic materials to which the chlorine reacted with and disappeared there was not an issue with the taste and smell.

John Grierson asked why if the water was so clean so much chlorine had to be used. Simon Parsons advised that 1/2 mg chlorine per 1000 litres is currently used, and explained this is very small amount. The 3 chemicals currently used at the treatment works in Aviemore are Lime (calcium hydroxide), chlorine, and phosphate, which is used to protect houses which have lead piping.

John Grierson asked what PH Scottish Water were aiming for, Simon Parsons advised that they operate between a PH of 7-8. Peter Farrer commented that one of the main reasons for raising the PH is if it is too low, lead pipes will dissolve and it will become a public health issue. It will also become extremely costly to ask people to take the lead out of their homes.

Alastair Dargie commented that if one of the key issues is ensuring that the far end of the network, you still have the same water. Scottish Water are adding x amount of chlorine in Aviemore, is there merit in investigating how an intermediary treatment works to re-dose part way through the network, for example Kincaig or Kingussie rather than Aviemore being closest to the source meaning our community has the highest concentration and asked if that had been looked at. Simon Parsons advised that before the new treatment works had gone in you would have had chlorine/chemical doses at different points and that at one of the community events, one of the members of the public advised that they experienced high peaks in the chlorine. At the treatment works they have to dose a certain amount to deliver the disinfection.

Peter Farrer also commented that every person has a different taste threshold for chlorine. Number of complaints have reduced since introducing chloraminated supplies. Particularly in Edinburgh, similar issues, people closer to the works had tasted higher chlorine, but since introducing the chloramination the complaints have significantly reduced.

John Grierson asked what the disadvantages to the chloramination was. Simon Parsons advised that downside was that more equipment/control was needed at the treatment works.

Joe Kirby asked for an explanation on the consultation process prior to any changes happening. Peter Farrer advised that it is a genuine listening exercise and if the communities did not want this happening then Scottish Water would then have to think again. Primary feedback from these is the taste and the proposal of chloramination will significantly reduce this.

Beth Hay asked if the chloramination would make a difference to people who have been suffering skin complaints? At the earlier meeting in Aviemore, Scottish Water advised there wasn't many complaints from GP's/Health Board Officials but Beth Hay believed this was not right and that people in the community had been complaining. Peter Farrer expressed this was difficult to answer as they are not medics, they are engineers and scientists, and unfortunately cannot comment. Peter Farrer advised these individuals should go to their GP if they have any concerns. If the GP's have any concerns they would feed this to NHS Highland and if they have concerns they would contact Scottish Water. Alastair Dargie commented that he himself suffered from mild eczema and once a year would get prescription for hydrocortisone and now 4-5 repeat prescriptions per year, so Scottish Water cannot say it's not the water. Alastair Dargie also asked what will happen to those with skin issues if the water changes again? Simon Parsons reiterated again that Scottish Water are

not health professionals, so causes for eczema or any skin complaints needs to be raised with a GP, the water is harder than the old water, but it is a conversation that needs to be had with a GP.

Joe Kirby also asked if there was alternative plans if this proposal did not go ahead. Peter Farrer commented that he believed this was the right answer for the problems the area is facing. Simon Parsons advised there are 3 options, chlorine, chloramination (the proposed) and final option would be ultra violet disinfection (if used at the treatment works would still have to add chlorine) Joe Kirby also commented that this had taken 4 years for Scottish Water to look at. Peter Farrer agreed that Scottish Water had left this "a bit too long" and continued that in 2012 they were adding the same amount of chlorine as they did at the old treatment works, which was too high. Over a 2 month period there was about 120 complaints. Since then, in the past 4 years they are receiving about 20 complaints a year, but does realise that something should have been done sooner. Alastair Dargie commented that at the start of the process the Community Council were asked along to the opening of the water treatment works, but did not attend due to lack of response to the issue raised. Peter Farrer also commented that they are a much different organisation than they were 4-5 years ago and are much more customer focused now.

Wilma Grierson asked more for information on the Ultra Violet option and would be happier knowing there wasn't ammonia in the water when there is another option. Simon Parsons advised that the ammonia is added to the chlorine at the water treatment works and dissolves. The Ultra Violet light option is a new disinfection process and they have put their first site on Skye. Levels of chlorine would be slightly lower, but wouldn't notice any significant difference.

Joe Kirby and John Grierson also commented about biofilms, and Simon Parsons commented that these are found in the network, typically bathroom sinks. If anyone finds these to contact Scottish Water who will come out and investigate. Peter Farrer also commented that this was the benefit of having these open consultation as he believes further investigation work to be done as there are localised areas that have commented about the biofilms.

Joe Kirby asked when the final decision would be made. Simon Parson commented that it was key to collate all the feedback from the public meetings and have a conversation with NHS Highland.

John Grierson commented that during the first consultation; he had asked about the resilience of the system, what would happen if it breaks down? Peter Farrer advised that the system is far more resilient than before and that there is standby equipment in place. Water is also stored outwith the network.

Joe Kirby suggested an open day for people to see what goes on in the treatment works. Peter Farrer advised that due to Health and Safety implications, they will take that away from the meeting and look into.

Peter Farrer also wanted to highlight how far they had come in regards to being a far more customer focused organisation. In the past customers in rural areas with burst pipes would be without water until Scottish Water sorted their system. Now across the country areas that are lacking in resilience (single treatment supply/single pipe) Scottish Water are tankering water into these areas while fixing the problem.

John Kirk (Public) said that if this was food there would be an outcry, but because it is water they are getting away with it. 3000 tests a year are also what are being carried out, but only 20 complaints a year? John Kirk continued to say that for the past 3 years the call centre has been a

disaster, definitely more than 20 complaints as he has a list of people who have complained. Simon Parsons advised that there is a random sampling and testing program that tests the water extensively. All data is available on the website, and each test is 100% compliant. Peter Farrer comments that the call centre is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year and you can speak to someone; calls are answered, logged and recorded.

John Grierson asked when the call would get logged as a complaint? Peter Farrer advised it is logged as soon as someone calls or writes to Scottish Water and says they have a complaint to make. John Grierson asked if he had called and said his water tasted funny would it be logged as a complaint to which Peter Farrer advised it would only be logged as a complaint if the word 'complaint' was used.

John Grierson also asked what the process would be if someone called to say about their water whether it be taste/smell etc. Simon Parsons advised that they would send out a sampler to your home to take samples in specific clear bottles, this is taken back and tested for safety. This is then given to panel of trained scientists who taste the water to see if there is any taste/odour. There hasn't been a failed test from this area.

Paul Arden (Public) asked for a list of the chemicals that were in the water. Simon Parsons advised that all information is available on the Scottish Water website, where you can get a break down of chemicals by entering your postcode. Normally about 50-60 different chemicals such as calcium, magnesium, chlorine, phosphate, and minerals from the ground.

Cllr Bill Lobban commented that given the number of sudden onset skin conditions, should Scottish Water not be instigating a process of investigation rather than NHS Highland. Simon Parsons reiterated that they have listened to the concerns, and fed these concerns back to the NHS Highland, they advise is if anyone has concerns to raise it with their GP. They are not health professionals but work very closely with them. Alastair Dargie commented that Scottish water put a lot of emphasis on how safe the water is to drink, but nothing about the side effects. Peter Farrer advised that the regulations are there to protect the public health, there are strict standards and it is up to the health professionals to decide. Simon Parsons advised that the hardness of the water had changed, the water is still classified as soft to moderately soft and 5 - 6 times more softer than London.

Kathleen Cameron advised that she had contacted Scottish Water regarding biofilms in the cold water tap and received a fact sheet this evening before the meeting. Peter Farrer advised to call again and ask for someone to come out to check.

John Kirk (Public) asked why there were variations on taste different days. Peter Farrer advised it was difficult to answer, but only thing that could be done was have more investigation done. John Grierson asked about flushing the system as that was a regular thing in the past. Peter Farrer advised he had picked up on that and will look at possibly doing some localised flushing.

Paul Arden (Public) asked if he put some water in a clear plastic bottle would Scottish Water be able to analyse. Peter Farrer advised that the bottles must be of the right standard to deal with chemical/bacteria. He advised calling the call centre and ask for someone to take a sample with the correct bottles.

Naomi Whyte (Public) commented that if the water is not quite right on a particular day, chances are that when Scottish Water come to take a sample the water may be fine again, can Scottish Water leave you with a sample bottle. Simon Parsons advised that if there is a repeating taste issue Scottish Water will pick this up and work out the best way to sample your water. The dip test's are nowhere near as accurate as their tests.

Meg Ross (Public) commented that she had issues with machinery, kettle corroded inside. Simon Parsons said that lime scale was due to the water hardness being higher because of increased calcium. Cleaning materials such as vinegar/lemon can be used to help.

John Grierson asked what was next. Peter Farrer advised will take feedback from consultations, consult with NHS Highland and wait to see what the result from that is. If chloramination goes ahead, a project will be put place as quickly as possible to reduce the taste and odour complaints. Judy is the communities manager who will look after the community and communicate/give feedback. She will also be available for any further community council meetings.

John Grierson commented that although the water is within the legal limits there is still something not right. He urged people to complain if skin issues/ odour or taste.

## **2. CLOSE OF MEETING**

John Grierson thanked the Scottish Water representatives for coming along and all the members of the public who attended.