

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET – 2 JULY 2008

CROSSROADS PRIMARY SCHOOL – UPDATE

Report by Executive Director of Educational and Social Services

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Members of the Cabinet on the progress that has been made in discussions with Mr Hendrie, a local farmer, regarding his proposals for Crossroads Primary School and related issues and to seek approval for further action.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 At its meeting of 19 March 2008 when considering the “Better Schools : Better Learning” initiative, the Cabinet decided to continue the education of children at Crossroads Primary School. However, during the discussions at Cabinet, the proposals that had emerged during the consultation from Mr Hendrie were felt worthy of further investigation. At its meeting of 21 May 2008, the Cabinet considered an update report on Better Schools : Better Learning within which was a commitment from the Executive Director of Educational and Social Services to compile a further report based on information from Mr Hendrie.

3. UPDATE

- 3.1 In consultation with a number of Council departments, a letter was sent to Mr Hendrie on 30 April 2008 requesting further information on specific issues related to his proposal. These issues were mainly in the legal and planning areas. Further information was also sought on his proposal for a bio-digester. In response, an e-mail was received from Mr Hendrie on 29 May 2008, and a meeting took place on 6 June 2008.
- 3.2 On his own behalf, Mr Hendrie has done a significant amount of research related to the technology of a bio-digester. This has included fact finding in relation to similar initiatives in Germany and a visit to a site in Aberdeenshire.
- 3.3 In essence, Mr Hendrie’s proposals divide into 3 distinct areas:
- The installation of a bio-digester at his farm
 - A residential development
 - A relocation and rebuild of Crossroads Primary School
- 3.4 The bio-digester aspect of his proposal would involve the construction of an appropriately sized facility at his farm to the south of the Kilmarnock – Mauchline road. His initial thought that the bio-digester could run from cow slurry has been shown by his own researches not to be viable. Instead, the

bio-digester would require approximately 25 tonnes of food waste per day in order to run economically. Mr Hendrie has made preliminary enquiries with HMP Kilmarnock, NHS Ayrshire and Arran and East Ayrshire Council, regarding the amount of food waste that is available to supply the bio-digester. Thereafter, the concept would be to distribute and sell the energy produced by the bio-digester to any residential development and renovated school. The maintenance of the bio-digester would require a dedicated member of staff and a specific installation. It would have the benefit of producing as a side product, composted material that could be used by local farmers. The electrical energy generated by the bio-digester would require to be fed into the national grid, which development in its own right, would require the co-operation of Scottish Power.

3.5 Depending on the size of the bio-digester, a number of houses in addition to the school would require to be constructed in such a way that they could capitalise on the energy that was generated. The houses would have to be energy efficient. The number of houses required may have significant implications for local planning.

3.6 Mr Hendrie has identified some of his own land that he is prepared to donate that is adjacent to the present site of Crossroads Primary School and immediately north of the Kilmarnock Mauchline road. Such a proposal would require consideration to be given to issues such as access to the school, car parking and together with the residential development. Mr Hendrie also wants to see the school developed as a community facility to include a meeting place and potentially in co-operation with the residential development, a retail facility which, for example, could sell local produce. It should be noted that for this proposal to work, the Council would be involved in land purchase from the owner of the adjacent land to the present school site.

3.7 Summary

Mr Hendrie's proposals are imaginative, environmentally friendly and generous. They therefore merit some close consideration by the Council. However, they also represent a complex set of relationships between technical issues, the technology of bio-digesters, planning matters, legal issues, finance, and the Council's approach to asset management. There are a number of key agencies such as Scottish Power, Scottish Water and the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency, all of which have a stake in this type of development. Last, but not least, is the consideration of the compatibility with East Ayrshire's local plan. The technology of a bio-digester is unknown to Council officers and this in its own right would demand, should the Cabinet wish to continue with considering this proposal, the expertise of a specialist in this area.

4. LEGAL/POLICY ISSUES

- 4.1 Legal Services have raised a number of matters in relation to the project. These would require to be clarified beyond doubt before any proposal could continue on to the next stage.

As indicated above, there is the critical matter of whether this proposal and the related issues can sit within the East Ayrshire local plan.

5. RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

- 5.1 There would require to be a specification of the risk related issues as they affect this project and other Council interests. This would include issues of business continuity should there be a power failure or the bio-digester fails, issues about changes in land ownership, and an analysis of the commercial residential market.
- 5.2 In view of the scale of development, a traffic assessment would require to be carried out and Transport Scotland would need to be consulted.

6. FINANCIAL ISSUES

- 6.1 Nil at this stage.

7. COMMUNITY PLANNING ISSUES

- 7.1 In terms of environmental issues, there is no doubt that Mr Hendrie's proposal is imaginative and forward looking and worthy of consideration. There is however the question about the impact of a residential development in the particular area.
- 7.2 The Executive Director of Neighbourhood Services has met Mr Hendrie to discuss the proposed biodigester. It has been established that it will require an input of approximately 25 tonnes of food waste per day to generate an output of between 350 kwh and 500 kwh. A scoping exercise is underway to identify possible sources of this waste. However, it is likely that the waste will have to be sourced across the West of Scotland and beyond since it is unlikely that this volume will be available locally.

The biodigester operation will require a range of permissions principally from the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency since it will effectively become a licenced waste disposal facility. Mr Hendrie is aware of the requirement for licensing and has had preliminary discussions with SEPA.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 It is recommended that Members of the Cabinet:
- (i) agree that a further report is brought to Cabinet by October 2008 with a summary of any recommendations for this project; and

- (ii) otherwise note the contents of this report

GRAHAM R SHORT
Executive Director of Educational and Social Services

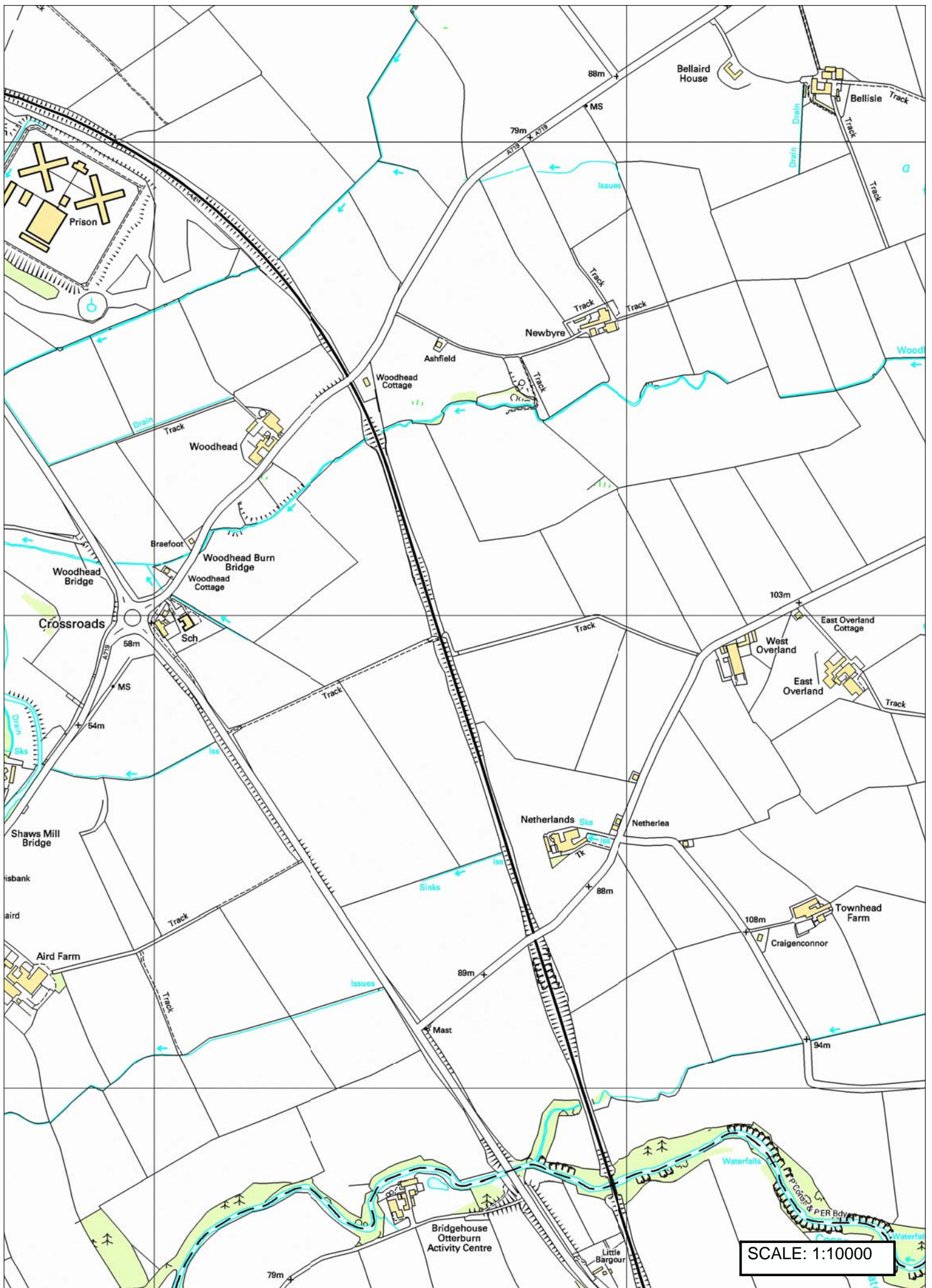
GRS/JP
11 June 2008

Members requiring further information should contact Graham Short, Executive Director of Educational and Social Services, Tel: (01563) 576017.

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

Nil

Implementation Officer: Graham Short



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