

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE MILTON ABBOT GROUPED PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON WEDNESDAY 7<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2015 AT MARYSTOWE CHURCH HALL AT 7.30PM.**

(also available at [www.chillaton.net](http://www.chillaton.net))

**PRESENT:** Cllrs J. Anderson (MA) H. Asbridge (C), R Brewer (C), M. Pahlsson (B) Cllr J. Spurr (MA) R. Tucker and Mrs A Westcott (C) (Chair)

Cllr Bob Baldwin (WDBC)

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

P. Hough (MA).

**Cllr DAVID GRADIDGE**

It was agreed that the Parish Clerk should contact Cllr Gradidge in view of his absence from recent meetings of the Parish Council.

**2. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> November 2014 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

**3. PROPOSED WIND TURBINE - CARDWELL FARM**

The Parish Clerk reported on the outcome of the public meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> December 2014, when this proposed development had been discussed as part of the pre-application process.

The Parish Council had previously informed WDBC of its concern at the lack of such a meeting, the increase in the height of the proposed turbine since a postal survey was carried out and apparent deficiencies in the scope of that survey.

The following issues regarding this proposal had been raised at the public meeting:

The turbine height had been increased because the latest version of this model was 2m higher, but it generated 20% more power and should be quieter than the previous version. In theory, it should power 107 homes.

The original location would have had too great an impact on the AONB and so a lower position, requiring a taller turbine had been chosen, but local wind-speed studies had not yet confirmed its suitability.

The turbine would be connected to the National Grid and the majority of the power generated would not be consumed on the farm.

The applicants would investigate the potential for the contamination of the water supply currently extracted from bore holes in the area.

The applicants undertook to have the turbine and its concrete base removed after the expiry of the 25 years of operation that would be approved, should planning permission be granted. They would set aside the necessary funds to ensure this took place.

The postal survey had not included a property that was one of the nearest to the turbine site, because it was not occupied.

Over 70 people attended the meeting and all of those expressing a view were opposed to the proposed turbine.

The Parish Council decided:

(i) that the determination of its views regarding this proposal would be deferred until such time as the application for planning permission and the associated Environmental Impact Statement had been submitted to WDBC.

(ii) that in view of the additional action taken by the applicants, no further representation need be made to WDBC regarding the pre-application process, the question of whether the scope of the postal survey was appropriate being a matter for WDBC to determine.

#### **4. PROPOSED WIND TURBINE - BECKWELL FARM**

It was noted that a Planning Inspector would shortly be making a site visit in connection with the appeal against the refusal of planning permission for this turbine, on 13<sup>th</sup> January. It was agreed that Cllr John Spurr should represent the Parish Council.

#### **5. TRAFFIC ISSUES – FELLDOWNHEAD ROAD**

Cllr Pahlsson reported that this matter had been referred to the local MP and he was awaiting the outcome.

#### **7. SPEED WARNING SIGNS – CHILLATON**

The signs had now been ordered.

#### **8. MACKPlan**

The two training/briefing sessions with an external consultant had been held and the necessary claim forms for grant aid submitted on schedule.

#### **9. DECLARATION OF PRECEPT FOR 2015/16**

At the last meeting it had been agreed that the precept for 2015/16 should remain unchanged. WDBC had now provided more information regarding grant aid for next year. It was noted that the Parish Council's budget would remain at last year's level i.e. £4,085 and not the £4,051 forecast in Appendix B to the agenda for the last meeting. This would be made up of a precept of £3,901 and a Council Tax Support Grant of £184

#### **OUR PLAN – HOUSING TARGETS FOR LOCAL COMMUNITIES**

At the last meeting, the Parish Clerk reported that WDBC had originally proposed that Milton Abbot might take between 20-30 new houses over the 15 year life of Our Plan. This was because the main centres of population, Okehampton and Tavistock, could not generate enough new development to meet the target, although they would provide the great majority of sites.

That target was then increased to 20-50 homes. The Parish Clerk made further representations on behalf of the Parish Council and at a meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> December, WDBC proposed that the target for Milton Abbot be a minimum of 20 homes but with no

maximum. Chillaton would not have a separate allocation but might contribute to the overall achievement of the Milton Abbot target.

WDBC had invited comments on the various consultative e-newsletters that had been previously circulated and a draft response had been prepared by the Parish Clerk. It was agreed that the response prepared by the Parish Clerk, as set out in the Annexe to these minutes be endorsed and submitted to WDBC.

#### **APPOINTMENT OF PARISH CLERK**

Cllr Asbridge had been carrying out the duties of the Parish Clerk on a voluntary basis for several months, during which time he had produced revised standing orders, new financial regulations and an annual cycle of financial reporting and control, all of which had been approved by the Parish Council.

There were still several significant elements of the Parish Council's administrative processes that needed to be overhauled and recently approved initiatives, such as risk management, needed to be implemented. Cllr Asbridge was prepared to carry out the work necessary to introduce whatever further improvements the Parish Council saw fit to adopt, but it would now be possible to recruit a new Parish Clerk who would have a firm basis upon which to support the work of the Parish Council.

It was agreed that the salary for the post should be increased to £1,500 p.a. plus expenses, based on an hourly rate of approximately £8.50, the precise rate being dependent on the relevant NJC salary scale and that the post should be advertised as soon as possible.

There being no further business the meeting was closed at 9.10pm.

#### **NOTE. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> March 2015 Milton Abbot Village Hall

Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> May 2015 Parish Meeting for Milton Abbot, Dunterton and Bradstone at Milton Abbot Village Hall.

Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> May 2015 Parish Meeting for Chillaton followed by the AGM and an ordinary Council Meeting.

**Submission to WDBC in response to informal consultation request**

Our Plan E-Newsletter 4 - Our Heritage and Environment

The overall approach and the proposed policies in E-Newsletter 4 provide a good counterbalance to other policies in Our Plan that necessarily promote new development to meet housing need, renewable energy production, etc.

That tension between the need to meet demands for development, whilst retaining the character and attractiveness of both the townscape and rural landscape is particularly acute in West Devon, given the relative 'sterilisation' of land with the DNP and the AONB and the vulnerability of the landscape of much of the remaining area.

Given the presumption in favour of sustainable development and renewable energy development in the NPPF, is there scope for a more specific status in Our Plan for those parts of rural areas that have considerable historic value and visual attraction, but do not currently have any formal protection? In that way, a better balance might be achieved that more properly reflects the particular value of those local landscapes.

Some other local authorities have carried out landscape sensitivity analyses and a commitment to this or a similar review, to establish where additional formal protection of rural landscapes may be needed, would be a very useful addition to these proposed policies.

Many heritage assets in rural areas are inaccessible to the general public because they are in private ownership. The enhancement of existing public footpaths and the development of new trails, etc is a practical way of raising awareness of these assets and thereby increasing the likelihood of their protection. The policy on Green and Blue infrastructure is therefore welcomed, but more information is needed to understand how this will contribute in practical terms to improving access.

Our Plan E-Newsletter 5 - Our Resources [Renewable Energy]

It is not necessary to generate energy closer to home in order to 'make communities resilient to future energy issues' as stated in this Newsletter; it is necessary to have a secure energy supply at a national level. The national grid will deliver that energy to where it is needed. Similarly, the impression is given that 'we' i.e. WDBC are working towards legally binding targets. The Government has those legal obligations and of course we need to play our part in meeting them, but there is no specific legally binding contribution required from WDBC and that should be clarified in future documents. Reference should also be made to the fact that one of those targets will now be met with the amount of RE development already commissioned or approved/likely to be approved.

To increase the amount of RE production in West Devon, the process of obtaining planning consent needs to be less adversarial. There should be more certainty for applicants that if they meet certain criteria, they stand a good chance of approval. At the same time, there needs to be more security for residents that their enjoyment of their homes and the success of their local businesses will not be affected by the inappropriate location of large RE projects.

Several elements of the RE policy set out in Section 4 could be strengthened to more effectively reflect the value of the landscape in which turbines and solar panels are situated

and to be more specific about the opportunities and constraints relating to RE developments, as follows:

The proposals to safeguard residential amenity in this section are not specific and will lead to interested parties arguing about their own interpretation of data either collected by applicants or consultants working for them. As far as noise impact is concerned, the current standards are widely accepted as being out of date.

Residential amenity should be protected by a clear set of standards relating to distance from RE developments and also to the sensitivity of the landscape concerned. There are already precedents elsewhere for establishing minimum distances between wind turbines and dwellings and for setting criteria relating to landscape sensitivity.

The reference to Devon Landscape Sensitivity work is far too vague and should be replaced with a commitment to link sensitivity assessments to a review of the potential for large-scale RE developments within particular landscape areas.

If there is any way to strengthen the expectation of the LPA, that the roofs of commercial developments will be used to support solar panels, then that should be done.

The encouragement of proposals that use energy on site should be accompanied by a requirement that applicants state the likely balance between their local use and the sale of the surplus to the national grid. The fact that the amount of power produced is not a material consideration, should not be used to avoid this question being asked. At present, agricultural applicants usually emphasise the benefits of their farm going green and do not state that the majority of power produced will be actually sold elsewhere. This is particularly important in sensitive areas, where the needs of the farm could be met with a smaller turbine. Local residents can also be misled when they try to assess the benefits of a proposed turbine against its likely impact.

Rather than promoting the use of RE systems in new buildings, as stated in Section 3, there should be a specific RE development policy in Section 4 that makes it as mandatory as possible, within existing legislation, to install RE systems in all new developments.

The policy relating to justifying site selection where farm land is used is unclear. Wherever farm land is used, solar panels and wind turbines do not have to have any significant effect on agricultural production, so does this policy mean that any application on farm land is automatically justified?

#### Our Plan E-Newsletter 6 – Planning for new development

The need for new development and the basis on which locations for new homes have been identified, has been clearly set out and is accepted.

The application of this approach, as far as Milton Abbot is concerned, raises some concerns over the scale of the development proposed, namely the overall visual impact on the village and the sustainability of such development, given the lack of facilities in Milton Abbot.

Although the Parish Council was supportive of the idea of development on several of the sites identified in last year's 'call for land' it did express concerns at the overall impact on this historic village, if all those sites were developed. That would be most likely if the minimum target was to be reached.

The final Site Information Pack for Milton Abbot still states that there is a village shop, although it has been pointed out that this has been closed for some time. The lack of this facility must have a significant impact on the sustainability of any new housing. Milton

Abbot does have a primary school, but this only serves a section of the community and should not be regarded as an equivalent facility, as far as sustainability is concerned.

Given that the NDP for this area will have to contain at least the minimum amount of development proposed in Our Plan, it is likely to have a greater chance of approval in a referendum if it can be demonstrated that the lack of a village shop has been specifically reflected in the approved target. It is therefore suggested that in the case of the three villages where a minimum allocation of 20 homes has been made, this should be reduced to 15 if there is no village shop available, on grounds of sustainability.

The proposal to allow up to two dwellings outside settlement boundaries, where they demonstrate real community benefits is welcomed, as is the application of strict criteria to control such development.

The proposals for smaller villages, etc are supported, but it is suggested that a criteria-based approach, similar to the above, would be appropriate as it would discourage speculative land acquisition for development and promote the provision of dwellings that meet local needs.