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| **Bracon Ash and Hethel Parish Council**  **Minutes of the January Parish Council meeting**  **At Bracon Ash & Hethel Village Hall**  **On Monday 8th January 2024 at 7.30PM** | |
| **Present:**  Mr Colin Rudd – Chairman Mr Roy Hayes Mrs Anne Howlett  Cllr Nigel Legg Mr Steve Horton Mrs Mary Gray  Mr David Biddle  Cllr Webber  Clerk Mrs Carole Jowett  3 members of the public attended | |
|  | **To consider apologies** **for absence**  Mrs Barr and Mr Dyer had sent their apologies for absence. |
|  | **To receive declaration of interests in items on agenda**  There were no declarations of interest made. |
|  | **Resolution to adjourn the meeting for public participation, District and County Councillor reports**  **Public participation**  The ponds on the common were in excellent health.  **District councillor report**  Cllr Webber had sent a report in advance of the meeting which is copied at appendix a.  There was had been a flooding issue at Hethel, the Environment Agency had approached Lotus about issues about brown water.  There had been an open event at Swardeston where it had been explained that the proposed pylons were being put in for resilience whilst the existing infrastructure could cope with current demand if there were failures they would be needed.  The district councillors were trying to get county councillors involved in flooding on B roads.  South Norfolk Council was likely to increase council tax by 3%. |
|  | **To confirm minutes and review matters arising from the meeting held on 13th November 2023**  The bus shelter still needed to be repaired the clerk would pursue the provider of the shelter for a quote.  The minutes of the November meeting were unanimously agreed and signed by the chairman. |
|  | **To receive an update on battery storage issues**  A mining engineer who had an extensive knowledge of the issues with battery storage facilities attended the meeting.  The proposed site at Marsh Lane included battery storage and he explained that the static batteries to be used differed from the ones used in cars but there had been nothing about them in the planning application. There had been no comment from the fire service and this had been queried with the planning manager.  He had presented a report which is attached at appendix b.  A report on the safety of lithium-ion batteries from the fire service was also provided.  He said that there was a need to have 2 means of access 90 degrees apart.  A fire in Liverpool started as the batteries began to overheat, there were no vents in the containers which had then resulted in an explosion.  The Fire and Rescue Service was currently not a statutory consultee he said that this needed to be changed; efforts were being made to get government guidelines updated.  The type of batteries to be used at the Orsted substation site adjacent to the A47 was not clear.  The method of dealing with fires was also not clear but could cause toxic fumes if dealt with incorrectly.  The planning application for the Marsh Lane was due to go to the Development Management Committee but the relevant information had not been submitted and the parish council was urged to push for comments from the Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service.  It was hoped to get a response from the government early this year. The engineer agreed to represent the parish council at the Development Management Committee when the application was considered.  Thanks were expressed for attending. |
|  | **To consider traffic issues on the B1113 and agree any action**  Lotus had contacted the chairman before Christmas to ask for support for a 30mph speed limit on Potash Lane, currently 60mph, prior to the new road layout. There was increased lorry movement and an increased workforce with more walkers and cyclists using the lane. There were no footpaths along the road and the width of the road meant 2 HGVs struggled to pass each other.  It was stated that no speeding had been witnessed but that it was a good idea.  It was agreed to support the Lotus request the clerk would write to highways. |
|  | **To consider the issue of potential traffic pollution due to planning application 2021/2579 and agree any comments**  Concerns had been expressed about the level of pollution due to the volume of traffic as the houses were very close to the road and there was proof that this had a negative impact on health.  It was agreed the clerk would submit additional comments on the planning application. |
|  | **To consider planning applications 2023/3688 and agree any comments**  **Location: The Retreat ,The Street, Bracon Ash NR14 8EL**  **Proposal: Detached garage to front of property with cantilever car port on existing concrete pad**  The application was considered, it was agreed not to submit any comments. |
|  | **To consider and agree the provision of a replacement play train**  Remedial works would commence on the playing field on 9th January 2024.  There was almost enough money to buy a replacement train, Councillor Webber said he would try to provide a grant.  The cost would be £6000, the remaining CIL money was £3968.92, Lotus had said they would consider a donation.  It was agreed that if funds could be secured it would be ordered. |
|  | **Finance**  **9.1 To receive statement of accounts to 8th January 2024**  The accounts were reviewed and agreed.  The broadband contract had been renewed with a small reduction in the monthly cost   * 1. **To set the precept for 2024/25**   It was agreed to keep the council tax the same for residents. The precept would be £7676.00  **9.3 To agree invoices for payment in accordance with budget**  It was agreed that the playing field repair bill could be paid on receipt. |
|  | **To consider correspondence received**  There was a requirement to agree a Biodiversity policy and action plan. The information had been received too late to meet the required deadline and would be dealt with at the March meeting. |
|  | **To agree agenda items for the March parish council meeting and close**  **Agreed dates of meetings in 2024**  26th February 2024  15th April 2024  14th May 2024 commencing at 7:00  8th July 2024  2nd September 2024  14th October 2024  2nd December 2024  **Agenda item for next meeting**  To find out what checks were being made on the defibrillator  To review and adopt the biodiversity policy and action plan |
|  | **Close**  The chairman closed the meeting at 21:00 |
| Signed …………………………………………. Date ……………………  Colin Rudd  Chairman to Bracon Ash and Hethel Parish Council | |

Appendix A

**Bracon Ash Parish Council – 8 January 2024**

**District Councillor Report**

**Hethel Planning Applications**

We understand that the Hethel Engineering Centre Phase 4 will not go to the January Development Management Committee as previously expected. Norfolk County Council continue to regard the flood risk assessment as inadequate.

The Environment Agency continues to object to the Hethel Hybrid application due to foul water drainage issues and concerns over groundwater protection.

**National Grid – Proposed Norwich Main Substation Extension**

Your councillors attended the initial consultation meetings at Swardeston and Stole Holy Cross at the end of November. Little information was available at this stage and this can be found on the [National Grid website](https://www.nationalgrid.com/electricity-transmission/network-and-infrastructure/infrastructure-projects/norwich-main-substation-extension#:~:text=Our%20public%20consultation%20closed%20on,have%20more%20information%20to%20share.). A planning application is planned for 2024 and construction would take around 2 years starting in 2025. The development will link power from the 3 offshore wind farms to the National Grid. The online consultation closed on 8th December 2023.

**Greater Norwich Plan – Village Clusters**

SNC is re-consulting on the village clusters housing allocations for 8 weeks starting December 11. There are no new sites proposed for Bracon Ash,

**A140 North of Long Stratton Workshop**

Jim Webber attended an online workshop organised by the County Council in late November. Most contributors were from Parish Council’s bordering the A140. Congestion, economic growth and business needs, housing delivery and connectivity including sustainable transport were discussed. A report will be available in the new year.

**Flooding on B1113**

District Councillors are still active in attempting to resolve this. We understand that a new drain is being planned to better manage run off from the site into the river. A new temporary attenuation pond is being dug to improve on site water storage while the new drainage system is being installed. As this appears to be primarily the responsibility of Highways, your County Councillor has been emailed but no response. WE have also tried to contact County Councillor Graham Plant, the cabinet lead for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport. After 2 emails, we have received an acknowledgement.

**Council Tax Increases**

The Government is consulting on its proposals for the Local Government Finance Settlement. It is proposing that Council Tax referendum levels are set at 3% for district councils and 5% for county councils (reflecting county council responsibilities for social care). It is expected that Council Tax increases will be close to the maximum levels allowed without a referendum.

**‘Norwich to Tilbury’ Update**

In the November Autumn Statement, the Government announced the new 'Critical National Priority' (CNP) infrastructure policy and stated that communities near new pylons are likely to be offered discounts on their bills. CNP is a kind of fast-track planning category for wind farms and associated infrastructure but it’s not completely clear whether this will include the Norwich to Tilbury project.

On the 5 December, the Government published a statement confirming further funding for the investigation of offshore co-ordination between the North Falls and Five Estuaries offshore wind farms and National Grid, potentially avoiding the need for underground cabling or pylons across Essex. This could force a rethink of the Norwich Tilbury proposal. An initial report is expected in March next year.

A recent email from the Pylons East Anglia pressure group is copied below.

**Bob McClenning, Ian Spratt & Jim Webber**

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|  | **Councillor Contact Details** |  |
| Cllr. Jim Webber | [jim.webber@southnorfolkandbraodland.gov.uk](mailto:jim.webber@southnorfolkandbraodland.gov.uk) | 07394 323215 |
| Cllr. Ian Spratt | [ian.spratt@southnorfolkandbraodland.gov.uk](mailto:ian.spratt@southnorfolkandbraodland.gov.uk) | 07554 668337 |
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**Extracts from Email from Pylons East Anglia pressure group** (<https://pylonseastanglia.co.uk>)***Lack of transparency in consultation responses****. The non-disclosure of the relevant consultation responses undermines the legitimacy of the CNP policy. It ignores widespread regional opposition, including comprehensive feedback from our campaign, from residents, community representatives, academics, and council officers, and raises serious legal concerns relating to the Gunning Principles. This opacity suggests a disregard for community voices and a potential breach of legal protocol.* ***Flawed CNP approach****. The CNP simply magnifies and exacerbates the current fragmented, costly approach to grid development, potentially leading to an unnecessary £6 billion expense. Conversely, an integrated offshore grid solution enjoys widespread public support, as evidenced by a 27,000-signature petition, and statements from regional MPs, councils, and other statutory bodies.*

*Moreover, the CNP's approach significantly harms environmental habitats, including the proposed UNESCO East Atlantic Flyway Natural World Heritage Site and many priority habitats.  This contradicts the Environmental Principles National Policy Statement which requires policy makers to avoid harm.*

*The CNP ignores a number of studies, not least the National Grid ESO’s own report which set out the harms of the piecemeal approach and, significantly, the many benefits of an integrated approach.*

***Community Benefits – a misguided approach****. The community benefits under the current proposal are wholly inadequate and trivialise the substantial losses faced by homeowners and businesses. These benefits cannot and will not substitute for true comprehensive compensation and are perceived as a nothing more than a “Band-Aid” to cover-up deeper infrastructural and environmental issues.*

***The alternative. An Integrated offshore grid – faster, better, and cheaper.*** *We propose an integrated offshore grid as a superior alternative. This approach aligns with the government's environmental commitments, saves £6 billion nationally, and enjoys broad public and political support. It represents a sustainable, economically sound, and environmentally responsible path forward. We urge you to pivot towards this internationally recognised (and implemented), solution in the Autumn Statement. Choosing the integrated offshore grid will signal the UK's commitment to responsible energy infrastructure development, attracting wind farm developers and benefiting the environment, local communities, and the taxpayer.*

Appendix b

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**BRIEFING NOTE FOR BRACON ASH AND HETHEL PARISH COUNCIL MEETING**

**8th January 2024**

**Subject: Proposed Solar Development Land off Flordon Road Bracon Ash SNDC Application No 2023 1055**

Prepared by Charles Carron Brown – Consulting Engineer ARSM< BScEng, CEng MIMMM

Date: 6th January 2024

Following a review of the Design & Access and Planning Statement Revision D prepared by Pandescil I found that the solar farm includes the construction of energy balancing infrastructure in the form of a Battery Energy Storage Scheme (BESS).

However the planning statement does not provide any detail concerning the number, capacity (MW) or battery cell chemistry of the proposed BESS. Without this information it is not possible to evaluate the potential safety and environmental risks that the proposed development may pose.

Analysis of current literature indicates that the vast majority of industrial scale BESSs are based on the use of Li-Ion batteries and it seems probable, lacking any information from the project proposers, that this is the type of battery that would be used at the Bracon Ash development.

Under certain circumstances Li-Ion batteries can enter a thermal runaway situation where overheating occurs, this overheating exacerbates the situation and causes further rise in temperature until the battery and its housing catches fire. If no vents are included in the design this can result in an explosion as occurred in the Carnegie Road Incident in Liverpool in 2020. Potential causes of thermal runaway can include internal or external short circuit, overcharging, cell damage during transit or installation, power shock (such as nearby lightning strike) or external fire/heat. The risks of all of these can be minimised through appropriate design, manufacture and installation, however it is not possible to eliminate all risk of fire at a Li-Ion BESS. It is therefore essential to plan for the Worst-Case Scenario (WCS) of an uncontrolled fire and an explosion.

Should a fire occur the greatest potential danger to the general public and Fire and Rescue Services attending the fire is that of toxic gases. Fred Larson et al. Published a paper in Nature on 30 August 2017 entitled Toxic fluoride gas emissions from lithium-ion battery fires; they state:

“Lithium-ion battery fires generate intense heat and considerable amounts of gas and smoke. Although the emission of toxic gases can be a larger threat than the heat, the knowledge of such emissions is limited.” Such gases may include hydrogen fluoride, phosphorus pentafluoride (PF5) and phosphoryl fluoride (POF3) and depending on the cell structure also hydrogen cyanide, as well as carbon monoxide, sulphur dioxide and methane all of which are toxic and can kill if inhaled in sufficient quantity. Hydrogen fluoride is also highly soluble and dissolves readily in water so may produce hydrofluoric acid from any water used to fight a fire. Whilst the concentration will be low due to the large quantity of water used in firefighting the liquid effluent from a fire will cause pollution unless it is captured, stored and treated.

There are thus three key risks from a Li-Ion battery fire: toxic gases, explosion [[1]](#footnote-1)and environmental pollution. All should be addressed in an Emergency Response Plan to be prepared by the project proposer and taken into account when designing the site. This is likely to require additional studies to examine the possibility of a toxic plume from a fire and an evaluation of the most appropriate firefighting technique and medium to extinguish a fire in a WCS. Other additions to the design may include a secondary means of access from a different side, to allow the FRS to approach from upwind, and a reliable water supply either fire hydrant or water storage and a pollution control pond.

Key safety aspects to be addressed are addressed below.

**Fire and Rescue Service**

As yet the Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service have not provided any comment on the proposed BESS at Bracon Ash. They were alerted to the project by email on 22nd November 2023. It was also drawn to the attention of Helen Mellors Asst Director Planning SNDC on 4th December 2023, that the NFRS had not commented on the project.

Based on the National Fire Chiefs Council Guidelines version 1.0 issued in November 2022 the following matters should be considered:

1. Effective identification and management of hazards and risks specific to the siting, infrastructure, layout, and operations at the facility.
2. Impact on surrounding communities, buildings, and infrastructure.
3. Siting of renewable energy infrastructure so as to eliminate or reduce hazards to emergency responders.
4. Safe access for emergency responders in and around the facility, including to energy storage infrastructure and firefighting infrastructure*. (including two means of access to the site)*
5. Provision of adequate water supply and firefighting infrastructure to allow safe and effective emergency response. *(including a water hydrant with sufficient pressure or a water storage reservoir with 2 hours supply for the FRS)*
6. Vegetation sited and managed so as to avoid increased bushfire and grassfire risk.
7. Prevention of fire ignition on-site.
8. Prevention of fire spread between site infrastructure (solar panel banks, wind turbines, battery containers/enclosures).
9. Prevention of external fire impacting and igniting site infrastructure.
10. Provision of accurate and current information for emergency responders during emergencies.
11. Effective emergency planning and management, specific to the site, infrastructure and operations.
12. Owner to have a comprehensive Emergency Response Plan, showing full understanding of hazards, risks, and consequences.

**General Public and Local Residents**

The safety of the general public and local residents is only likely to be put at risk should there be a fire or explosion. Whilst the probability of such an event is low the potential impact can be significant and should therefore be addressed in planning BESS design, location and layout.

In addition to the matters that are of concern to the Fire and Rescue Services a plume study should be carried out to examine the effect of wind direction and strength on any gases emitted during a WCS. This should particularly address the question as to whether such gases could have an effect on the nearest inhabitants some 500 m to the north of the battery compound to road users on the Flordon Road 250m to the west of the compound.

**Environmental Issues**

In a worst case scenario, the NFRS are likely to use water to cool the containers adjacent to the fire and possible to extinguish the fire. In the latter case the water is likely to be polluted by the battery chemicals. The actual chemicals that will be dissolved in the water will depend on the battery cell chemistry. This needs to be addressed as part of the ERP and appropriate provisions should be included in the design of the BESS to ensure capture and treatment of the effluent as may be required by the Environment Agency.

**Recommendations**

1. Contact SNDC Planning Officer to request a briefing on the status of the project and determine when it will be considered by the planning committee.
2. Request confirmation from SNDC that the Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service has been informed of this and that their response will be included in any consideration of the proposal by the planning committee.
3. Contact the project developer and request further information on the BESS.

**Comment Submitted to SNDC**

Application Summary

Address: Land Off Marsh Lane Bracon Ash Norfolk

Proposal: Ground mounted solar panel array and ancillary equipment

Case Officer: Helen Bowman

Customer Details

Name: Mr Charles Carron Brown

Email: ccbdrcongo@gmail.com

Address: 23 Church Road, Swainsthorpe, Norfolk NR14 8PH NR14 8PH

Comments Details

Commenter Type: Member of Public

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Reasons for comment:

This application includes a battery energy storage system (BESS) with the 25MW solar farm. There is absolutely no detail provided on the number or type of batteries to be installed other than there are to be 12 x 40ft containers with batteries. Based on my understanding of the National Grid and ESO requirements for energy balancing infrastructure, the BESS would have to be at least of similar size to the solar farm so 25MW. However, the number of containers is 4 times as many as were installed at Orsted's Carnegie Road site in Liverpool which was 20MW. The capacity may therefore be as much as 80MW. Either way, this makes it large enough to warrant the attention of the Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service and the application of the National Fire Chiefs Council guidelines.   
  
As yet, I have seen no comment from the NFRS and am concerned that the project may be considered without their important input.   
  
I also note from the very minimal design information that they appear to be intending to use 40ft shipping containers to house the batteries. This is a matter for considerable concern as this was the design used by Orsted in their Carnegie Road BESS in Liverpool and which caused the Merseyside FRS significant problems when they were extinguishing the fire there, as they had to cut the containers into pieces to gain safe access to all the battery racks. There is also no evidence of deflagration vents in the containers, these are a vital safety measure.  
  
In addition, the site layout does not provide for two means of access, which is one of the key recommendations of the NFCC Guidelines. Another key recommendation is to have a water supply on site and storage for polluted water in case of a fire. Neither of these are evident in the plans provided and none of the other recommendations of the NFCC are addressed. The information provided in the planning application is singularly lacking in any detail on any of the following matters:  
1. Fire and Rescue Service Information requirements under section 7(2)(d) of the Fire and Rescue Services Act (2004)  
2. System design, construction, testing and decommissioning  
3. Detection and monitoring  
4. Suppression systems  
5. Site access  
6. Water supplies  
7. Emergency plans  
8. Environmental impacts  
9. Recovery  
  
Unless this information is provided, I object to the proposal on grounds of safety for local residents and the Fire and Rescue Service

1. This can normally be eliminated through appropriate design of the battery cells and containers by including venting systems to ensure that there is no buildup of gas pressure. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)