

Cyngor Tref Llanandras a Norton
PRESTEIGNE AND NORTON TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 4th JUNE 2008 AT THE SHIRE HALL, BROAD STREET, PRESTEIGNE

Present: Cllrs. C. Kirkby (Mayor), B. Price, P. Robinson, Ms. B. Baynham, N. Green, Ms. A Wake, J. Tennant-Eyles.

Apologies: J. Wilding (Deputy Mayor), P. Spawton, Ms. J. Simpson, H Owens, J. Kendall.

In Attendance: Mrs T. Price, Town Clerk

Declarations of Interest. Members were requested to declare any personal and/or prejudicial interests they may have in matters to be considered at this meeting in accordance with the terms of the Model Code of Conduct Order 2001 issues under Section 51 Local Government Act 2002.

No Declarations were made.

Cllr. Kirkby began the meeting by welcoming the new Members to the Town Council.

MIN 1934 DECLARATIONS OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE

The four co-opted Members present, Ms. B. Baynham, Ms. A. Wake, N. Green and J. Tennant-Eyles, completed their formal acceptance of office, witnessed by the Clerk.

MIN 1935 PLANNING PROPOSED WIND TURBINES AND ASSOCIATED WORKS AT REEVES HILL, NEAR KNIGHTON

Cllr. Kirkby had examined the proposal in some detail and proceeded to outline the contents for Members. In particular Members examined the various plans provided and considered the results of various surveys concerning wildlife, geology etc.

It was recalled that the first application for turbines in the area in the early 1990's had failed because of the visual impact and the effect on the then Observatory on Stonewall Hill. This application was for fewer turbines and the present owner of the Observatory (now the Spaceguard Centre) no longer had any objections to the application as it did not affect their needs.

Cllr. Kirkby pointed out that there was nothing contained in this application for connection to the National Grid (for which there were two possible options) and that an application to Powys County Council for the use of Llanshay Lane and associated works had not yet been made.

In general the application was for four turbines, one to be for community ownership and three to be owned by the landowners. It was estimated that the turbines would generate enough electricity to power 5144 homes. Estimated costs would be £2 million per turbine. Objections could not include comments on the efficiency/viability of wind power.

Cllr. Robinson pointed out that two residential sites were not shown on the map showing properties affected, these being Cooks House and The Colony. In addition he stated that two properties had not received documentation about the proposals, these being The Warren and The Cooks House.

It was felt that any comments made by the Town Council be made as initial comments due to the short notice and that the right be reserved to add further to these when the comments of Powys County Council were available for guidance.

With this proviso the Council resolved that the following comments be submitted to Herefordshire Council:-

- 1) **Time Scale for Comments** - The request for comments by 13th June is unreasonable given the size and complexity of the documents involved. In addition this date is not consistent with that shown on the Planning Notices on site. Due to the short notice not all Members could attend the Town Council meeting.
- 2) **Community Consultation** – Much is made in the application of the community involvement. The Town Council suggests that there has in fact been no community consultation on the need or suitability of the turbines or indeed the uses to which any community money would be placed. Much information has been supplied but there has been no actual consultation.
- 3) **Letter from Shropshire County Council Planning Dept. (5/9/7)** – This letter refers to the need for any application of this type, (regionally significant planning application), to be submitted to the West Midlands Regional Assembly. Has this been done and if not why not?
- 4) **Transport/Road Issues** – the Town Council understands that the best practice drawn up for wind Farm Development states that the site should have access to the road system without major road modifications being necessary. This would not appear to be the case with this site, as Llanshay Lane would require modification. It was noted that four mature Ash trees would need to be removed and the Town Council asks that should this prove necessary and in the event of the application being approved, trees be re-planted at a ratio of ten new plantings to each one removed. Mention was made of the need to carry out a 'test route' to ensure that all was satisfactory. Has this been done and if not when will it be carried out.

The Town Council would wish to comment fully on the application concerning Llanshay Lane at such time as it is officially made.

- 5) **Traffic Survey** – This was very limited in scope due to the short time over which it was conducted and was therefore considered to not be representative of the true usage.
- 6) **Landscape and Effect on Visual Amenity** – This was considered to be of major importance. The magnitude of the change to local views and enjoyment of such cannot be overestimated. The turbines will be visible for some considerable distance affecting all who live within the scope of the altered views. This is entirely out of proportion to the electricity generated.

In Powys high consideration would be given to the visual impact of the development. This application is only a few metres from the border and does affect many Powys residents.

The site and surrounding area have been designated an 'Area of Tranquillity', one of very few in the UK. This would be lost if this development went ahead.

- 7) **Effect on those with photo sensitivity** – The documents state that this effect would be restricted to 710 metres but the Town Council has seen evidence produced by Professor Arnold Wilkins stating that the a more appropriate distance would be 4 kilometres.
- 8) **Wildlife** – The Town Council is concerned generally on the effect on wildlife in the area in particular on the two rare species of bat. It was notice that there was no evidence on the effect the turbines could have on these and felt that in the absence of evidence then any alteration to their habitat should not be undertaken.
- 9) **Policy Issues** – Under Powys County Council guidance presently under consultation no development such as this would be permitted unless it was part of a bigger scheme or unless the intention was to further expand the scheme at a later date. The Town Council would like to know if expansion is planned/possible. It does not feel that a larger development would be tenable and would

ask if Herefordshire Council has a similar policy to that of Powys. The Council requests a copy of your own planning guidelines for this type of development.

10) Community Fund – Members felt that far too little information was given on this matter. There was no indication of what areas would benefit or in what proportion. No detail was given on how the funds would be administered. In the event of the application being approved the sum of money set aside per annum should be considered as an absolute minimum and be index linked.

11) Design of Turbines – Members felt that the design of these turbines could be greatly improved thus reducing their visual impact. More modern designs are available which are considerable less intrusive. In addition the height of these turbines would make them as high as some of the tallest in Wales.

12) Eventual De-Commissioning – It was felt that funds should be set aside and placed with the local authority to allow for full and complete restoration of the site following de-commissioning.

13) Other Possible Planning Gain – The Town Council felt that an educational fund should be provide to encourage and promote the use of clean energy and 'green' issues generally, possibly by the creation of an education centre on or near to the site.

It was agreed that all the observations above are made as an initial response only and that further comments will be made following the meeting of the Powys County Council Committee and also after the submission of the application involving Llanshay Lane.

No formal vote was taken for supporting or opposing the application at this stage. A vote will be taken at a later date when a response to the above issues has been made.

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting closed at 9.50 pm.