

NORTH TAWTON TOWN COUNCIL

Town Clerk:
Mrs R Rice

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Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of North Tawton Town Council held at the **TOWN HALL** on **Friday 13th March 2015** at **7.30 pm**.

Present: Cllr Dr P Brickley Cllr Mrs C Burrow
Cllr K Hodge Mrs G Hoggins (Chair)
Cllr I MacLeod Cllr N Morgan
Cllr Mrs D Rice

18 members of the public were present.

- 1. Apologies for Absence** – Apologies were received from Cllr Mrs A Ponsford (family matters), Cllr Mrs L Watts (family matters) Cllr S Blood (prior engagement), Cllr a Gillespie (work commitments) and Cllr S Whiteley (objected to the application prior to the amendments).
- 2. Declarations of Interest** – Councillor N Morgan stated that he had an interest in Planning Application 01132/2014, as the documentation accompanying the application states the amount of business rates payable to West Devon Borough Application if the application is approved. The Clerk pointed out that in her opinion this was not the case, as if this was an interest, it would mean that all WDBC Councillors on the Planning and Licensing Committee would have to declare an interest and not be able to vote on the application.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending this Extraordinary Meeting of the Town Council.

The Chairman said that on Monday of this week The Town Council received notification of the amended proposal for the Eco Park. The Town Council has 14 days to respond to West Devon.

Kinectica were invited to the meeting tonight, but were unable to send a representative to attend, but they had submitted a statement. This statement was handed out to all Councillors and members of the public.

The Chairman stated that Dr P Bratby from the CPRE had kindly said he would answer any questions, if he was able.

A question and answer session followed:

Various questions included

- Comments from a teacher stated that the proposal for education field trips was useless as there were no toilets, no indoor cover. Children should study the topic in the classroom and then go on field trips.
- It seems all Kinectica are offering is an open day and a video.
- The only benefit seems to be Taw Valley Creamery
- Who is going to go into the schools?
- Who asked for the educational benefit to be added, it all seems to have been dressed up
- Education for children should be for farming instead of ruining the land
- This is good agricultural land
- North Tawton could thinking of a smaller renewable energy scheme for the benefit of the community, this site is too large, 58 ha, a modest site would be more appropriate.
- Sensitive historical site, lots of historical artefacts.

- The bigger picture should be discussion on new housing to include solar panels, commercial buildings should be used for solar panels, protect our good agricultural land, there are other alternatives, brown field sites, but green field sites cost less to develop.
- There is a government initiative, we could do it ourselves, government funded, or invite developers on our terms, and the profits could go to the town. DARE have knowledge and experience of this.
- Denbrook has a community fund, but Kinetica have not offered any Section 106 money, an educational centre would have drawn people into the town.
- When the original plan was submitted the subsidies were higher, now the situation has changed, less money to do less.
- Western Morning News headline – “new tough regulations to drive up prices”. Dr Bratby explained that on shore wind schemes are cheaper than offshore scheme.
- Do Arla need subsidised electricity; they do not have any solar panels on their land.
- Would we say yes if the educational element was better?
- What will happen at the 25 years?
- Why was renewable energy not included on the Wainhomes site?
- Do West Devon respond to technical questions? Dr Bratby said no, only when, and if, it goes to appeal.
- There does not seem to be any consultation response from Western Power.
- An application for a large scheme at Sampford Courtenay has not gone ahead because there is no capacity on the National Grid.
- Probably viable because of the close proximity of Arla, but they have taken away the educational shelter, the wood trail is small, included areas for Skylarks, but the RSPB stated that Skylarks need big open fields, this is all just window dressing.
- This is Grade 2 land, Kinetica website says that they build solar farms on Grade 3, 4 and 5 land.
- The scheme is devised to make money, this is all about money – landowners who do not want to farm should sell up.

The Chairman asked for a show of hands from the public – 17 were against the proposal, with 1 person abstaining.

The meeting was opened.

3. PLANNING MATTERS

To consider the amendments to the planning application received from West Devon Borough Council and to make recommendations.

3.1 01132/2014

AMENDED DESCRIPTION & PLANS: - 30 year permission for development of a 58 ha 'Eco Park' comprising of a ground mounted solar photovoltaic system (22MW) and associated infrastructure incorporating access trail and an ecologically enhanced landscape.

Location: Land to rear of Taw Valley Creamery, North Tawton, Devon

The Chairman stated that Councillors have now heard the views of the public and called for a proposal.

Cllr Dr. P Brickley proposed that as the amendments have not addressed the concerns of the Council that the Town Council should object to the proposal, on the same grounds as the previous objection. This was seconded by Cllr Mrs C Burrow.

It was therefore resolved that Town Council would object to the application, as the amendments have not addressed the concerns of the Council.

A vote was taken, 6 Councillors supported the proposal to object to the application, and Cllr N Morgan abstained.

The reasons for objecting to the proposal are:

Impact on the landscape, including fringes of Dartmoor
Use of Grade 2 agricultural land

Accumulative effect on North Tawton
Historic assets on the site and surrounding area
No evidence of that applicants have searched for brownfield sites in the area
No community benefit offered with application

National Planning Policy Framework

Paragraph 97 – the cumulative effect of visual impact should be taken into account, and in North Tawton there is the Denbrook Wind Farm and the adjacent Cheese Factory.

Paragraph 98 – even small scale projects contribute to the Government Targets and this is a tacit acceptance that small scale rather than large scale projects are relevant.

WDBC Core Strategy

SO 9 – the LPA needs to sustain an active and working countryside, acknowledging the importance of agriculture, tourism and rural housing, this site does a reverse of this.

SO 15 – there is a need to enhance the high quality landscapes of West Devon, this application damages the quality of the area.

SO 16 – protect and enhance and promote the historic heritage in our towns and villages, this proposal has an adverse effect on the sensitive area of the town,

SO17 – conserving and enhance designated areas, such as SSSI, SAC's both of which involve Dartmoor and the fringes of Dartmoor, this application does not do this.

SO 1 – must try to use previously developed land resources (brown field), where possible, and there is no evidence that the applicants have tried to do this (i.e. the Cheese Factory land or buildings/roofs at Gregorys).

The Government designation for this land is BMV– best and most versatile – in that it can be used for arable and grazing.

Community benefit, which cuts across industry standards in the sense there is no community benefit with this application.

Mrs C Hughes suggested that perhaps Dr P Bratby could speak at the Planning and Licensing Committee on behalf of the people of the town and the Town Council.

4. Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Council shall be Tuesday 7th April 2015

The meeting closed at 8.20 pm.