

SHEBBEAR PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of Council Meeting held on Tuesday October 18th 2011
in the Village Hall, Shebbear.

Present:

Chairman: Cllr R Clark.

Cllrs: H Davis. P Lomax. M Wells. J Stupple. T Carr. J Curtis. E Haste. J Dungate.

D/Cllr J Lewis.

Clerk. David Walker.

In addition, a large number of Members of the Public, mostly Shebbear residents, who had been invited to attend to participate in an agenda dealing exclusively with the subject of wind turbines.

Agenda. Commenced at 7-30 pm.

1. Chairman opened the meeting by welcoming all present. An apology was received from Cllr Gliddon who was delayed at NDDH with a relative.

Cllr Davis declared a personal interest in the proceedings as a family member was to be one of the invited speakers.

Chairman informed those present that the meeting was an official council meeting, held to obtain a measure of public opinion that the parish council could refer to when considering the applications for wind turbines which are likely to be submitted in the near future. Shebbear has to be consulted on applications that relate to proposals in Shebbear parish and our decisions considered by planners, but we are only notified of applications that relate to adjacent parishes and any recommendations that we may make about them do not have to be taken into consideration. A show of hands indicated that the public in the, filled to capacity, hall were overwhelmingly Shebbear parishioners, only six indicated that they were from elsewhere.

Chairman then introduced the first of the invited speakers:

2. (7-40pm). Baerbel Francis. BSC(Hons) MA. MRTPI. TDC Environmental & Sustainability Officer.

The speaker began by talking about the alleged "loophole", that Torridge do not consider turbines that are less than 15m high. This has arisen due to the wording of the guidelines being misinterpreted and is being clarified. This was followed by a description of the things that officers consider when dealing with the landscape and impact factors of a turbine application. The ecology, noise, flicker effect, and TV interference. Applications for turbines higher than 25 m are decided by Planning Committee. The Draft National Planning Policy currently available, offers guidelines but is vague about their application as it is not specific to the Torridge area.

- (7-50 pm). Mike Wright. MOIA. A local acoustics specialist.

Mike was speaking on the basis that no planning applications have yet been submitted, and began by describing, in decibels, the average persons perception of noises. In order to describe how noisy a wind turbine is Mike would have to say - how long is a piece of string? It would depend on their size, type and progress of improvements to their design. Illustrations were given of approximate figures for small and large turbines over varying distances and wind speeds. Shebbear is described in the College prospectus and local holiday cottage brochures as "tranquil". We don't know how quiet Shebbear really is as no measurements have been taken. Background noise is constantly varying and is affected by wind speed. Measurements need to be taken at dwellings closest to proposed turbine sites and of the turbines themselves. The cumulative aspects of noise should be taken into account. There is a British Standard for noise that applies to industrial and commercial areas, this does not cover rural situations.

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2.

(8-10 pm). Brad Horn. Bursar. Shebbear College.

Mr Horn told the meeting that Shebbear College considered a number of factors when thinking of installing a 55kw wind turbine, among them were that it be used as an educational aid and that it would reduce their carbon output. The effects of climate change are also a concern, as are the reaching of peak oil production and the world population increase. The College has made every effort to improve its energy efficiency and a turbine, which would be located lower in the valley north west of the sports hall, would be part of that. The College is taxed on their energy consumption and is currently paying around £5,500 per year in addition to paying the wages of 103 employees. Fran Lovett. Teacher of Media Studies at the College then took over the presentation and explained how the turbine would be used as an educational tool, for teaching living in harmony with nature, and for future generations to live sustainable lives.

(8-35pm). Marlies Koutstaal. MA. Communications Manager at Infinergy.

Marlies began by stating that wind power works! Modern turbines operate for 80% of the time, and each supplies up to 1200 houses, replacing the carbon production of conventional methods of generation. They pay for themselves in their first year of operation, this includes the cost of manufacture, transport, commissioning, and operation. Then followed a technical description of their operating efficiency. Infinergy is interested in community partnerships, or LEO's (Local Energy Orgs) and has been involved with successful schemes elsewhere in UK. They are currently working with Totnes on a joint ownership scheme involving 2 turbines.

(8-50pm). Penny Riches-Mills. CPRE.

Penny runs the Torridge Group of CPRE which is a voluntary charity. CPRE is a consultee to TDC together with other groups. A map showing existing turbine sites and the current proposals was displayed which dramatically illustrated the effect the cumulative effect would have on the Torridge district. There are now nearly 100 proposals in the pipeline for NW Devon. The cumulative effect is of great concern and should be considered by the planners. CPRE are not against turbines but are very concerned about where they are sited. The College for instance could consider solar panels instead of a turbine. Penny advised that the "600m from a dwelling" rule is only a guideline and open to flexible interpretation. Also that installing a community turbine still carries the noise and visual impact implications. Turbines are primarily popular for making money.

(9-05pm). Tessa Osborne. Shebbear Parishes Protection Group .

The Group want to wear the badge of "Nimby" with pride in their efforts to protect the beautiful rural scenery. There is also concern about property prices, which are not considered by the planners, and are already being affected even before applications are being approved. Properties adjacent to the Darracott turbines for instance have seen their prices drop by £100,000 as a result. Potential buyers are avoiding this area. We have a wonderful quality of life here and Shebbear is nationally 6th as the best area to raise a family. Tourism is a major revenue source locally and must not be jeopardised. There is also concern about the proximity of the village school. The SPPG urges everyone to reject these proposals.

3. (9-15pm). Break for refreshments. Those in attendance took the opportunity to inspect the information charts available in the hall and to add any comments to the questionnaires.

4. (9-40pm). Chairman invited questions from those in attendance which were answered by the speakers.

A number of questions involved the College and were answered by Brad Horn:

Q. How much power would go to the grid?

A. The College would use nigh on all the power, but outside term time some may go to the grid.

Q. Wouldn't solar panels be a better option?

A. They have been considered, but there are problems with listed buildings and old roofs that don't all face the right direction. Land sited panels were also considered but their output was not sufficient compared to a turbine.

Q. Will the College benefit from power or revenue?

A. Electricity.

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Q. Will one turbine lead to two?

A. We have thought about this, any increase we hope will come from panels as we don't aspire to have a wind farm. However we can't guarantee that there will not be another turbine.

Q. Have the effects on the community and pupils been considered?

A. The regulations are clear, we have to abide by them. We would not allow pupils to be affected.

Q. Will the College compensate home owners?

No reply was noted to this question.

At this point Chairman intervened and suggested that all the emphasis so far was on the College, and that there may be questions to be heard on other aspects.

The following questions were taken by the Infinergy representative:

Q. There is concern about the welfare of horses.

A. 200 metres has been established as a safe minimum distance from a turbine.

Q. Is it possible for Shebbear to have its own turbine to supply the whole village so we can have free electricity?

A. No.

Q. What are the sizes of the proposed turbines, it is hard to visualise them unless they are in place?

A. The College is 46 metres. Darracott is 80 metres and Alscott is 100 metres.

Q. What will replace the wind turbines in 25 years time?

A. Possibly tidal or other renewable sources, maybe even newer technology wind turbines.

Q. Why can't turbines be sited in already spoilt areas?

A. That is difficult to answer, but as there are so many aspects to consider in each case, so many areas are ruled out for one reason or another.

Q. How would the noise from the College turbine compare with Darracott?

A. Noise is less of a problem in urban areas. Shebbear is not urban but is busier than the Darracott location.

The following answers were given by Baerbel Francis. TDC.

Q. Can the turbine be stopped by TDC if the conditions are not met?

A. Exact figures cannot be laid down when permission given, but noise nuisances can be investigated.

Q. What is the timescale from application to decision?

A. There is an 8 week deadline.

Q. It would seem that a community turbine would be beneficial, is it possible this would work?

A. It has been done, there is a scheme in Oxfordshire where a cooperative took out a loan and now run the operation themselves, and there are others elsewhere.

Marlies Koutstaal (Infinergy) added that their project in Totnes involves the community buying a 49% stake and Infinergy the rest, and taking all the risks. The community stake is funded by shares which are priced at a level which everyone can afford.

Chairman introduced Councillor Mrs Gaye Tabor, Vice Chair of Community and Resources at TDC, who informed the meeting that TDC does have a Wind Energy Policy in place. It is not legal but it is at least something. There is also a Landscape Impact Assessment in place and the process of identifying suitable areas is ongoing.

Penny Riches-Mills (CPRE) answered the following question:

Q. How many applications are turned down?

A. In the last 2 years, 10 have been refused and 2 were withdrawn.

In reply to a question about a possible parish referendum on wind turbines, Chairman said that it could be discussed at the next parish council meeting.

5. The public responses entered on the information charts will be collated and presented at the next Parish Council meeting on November 8th.

6. Chairman thanked the speakers, and all present, for their attendance, and closed the Meeting at **10-40pm**.