

TYDD ST GILES PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of Tydd St Giles Parish Council held in the Community Centre on Thursday 13th July 2023

Present - Cllr T Brown (Chairman), Cllr B Allen, Cllr M Carter, Cllr L Slade, Cllr K Malin, Cllr A Renshaw, Cllr S King (CCC), Cllr B Barber (FDC), D Gibbs (Clerk), 13 members of the public

Apologies for Absence - Cllr M Connell, Cllr S Clark (FDC), Cllr C Seaton (FDC)

Public Time - Mr Mallett reminded the Council of the absence of protective barriers where the Drainage Board dyke passes under Hockland Road. The Chairman advised him that this had been noted during a recent tour of the village and would be rectified.

024/23 Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman welcomed everybody to the meeting and introduced Jack Halstead from Renewable Connections to present the proposal for a solar farm on land off Cross Drove.

025/23 Urgent Items

None.

026/23 Treading Bank Solar Farm

Jack Halstead and Rebecca Neal from Renewable Connections presented their company's proposals to install a 49.9MW ground-mounted solar farm on 85.4 hectares of land to the west of Cross Drove and north of Treading Bank. The development would be capable of providing sufficient power for approximately 18,000 homes and be in place for 40 years, after which the land would revert to its current use. The site will save nearly 10,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide in its first year of operation.

Renewable Connections is a subsidiary of Armstrong Capital established in 2019 and has installed or secured permission for 17 solar farm developments across the country.

An Environmental Impact Assessment screening opinion application was submitted to Fenland District Council in June. A full planning application is anticipated in September. The site comprises 40% grade 2, 58% grade 3a and 2% grade 3b land according to the DEFRA classifications. A landscape plan is being developed to provide screening around the site and to maximise the environmental benefits. The site will be securely fenced and sheep will graze the grass to maintain an appropriate level of vegetation.

Following the public consultation event in May, a number of concerns were raised by residents and the project team is working to address these. The panels have been moved further away from Cross Drove and the planting plan enhanced to reduce the visual impact for residents and the inverter will be placed further away from Treading Bank to mitigate any noise pollution for walkers and riders on the public right of way. It has become apparent that there is an informal path crossing the site from north to south and this will be retained with a 9m buffer for screening. A 15m buffer will be created along Treading Bank. Part of the site has been identified as potential archaeological remains, so no panels will be installed in this area.

The proposed community benefit fund would provide £100,000 for the local community, either a one-off payment on first energisation or by annual instalments throughout the period of operation. The local wildlife trust would receive £2,000 annually and a local charity a further £1,000 annually. Local schools have enquired about the installation of roof-mounted solar panels and other benefits. Once operational, educational visits will be offered and local schools will be equipped with materials for classroom solar activities.

A number of residents asked questions regarding the proposals, including the details of the statistics being provided, the choice of site, the construction traffic route, responsibility for site remediation after the 40-year lifespan, disposal of the panels, delays in connecting to the National Grid, and local employment. Mr Halstead explained that the basis for the calculation of the statistics was laid out by the Government and used for all similar developments, there were many factors in the choice of location, including the availability of an on-site connection to the existing high-voltage cables, farmers are being encouraged to diversify and energy generation provides a means to retain and improve the land for agriculture in the long term, the grid connection date has already been secured, so the widely-publicised delays will not impact upon this site, the new panels are designed to be recyclable, with 96% of the components already capable of being reused, funds will be bonded to the landowner for the removal of the panels and site remediation, local residents and businesses will be required for some construction tasks, roles in animal husbandry, site security and dismantling of the installation at the end of its life. Cllr Malin asked about the possibility of extending the life of the project beyond the initial 40-year deadline. Mr Halstead explained that a new planning application would be required and would be subject to local and national policies at that time.

The Chairman thanked Mr Halstead and Ms Neal for their presentation, noting that the core issue appears to be how we balance the country's need for food security and energy security.

027/23 Confirmation of Minutes

- a) RESOLVED - that the minutes of the Annual Meeting held on Thursday 11th May 2023 be agreed and signed as a true and accurate record.
- b) RESOLVED - that the minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting held on Wednesday 31st May 2023 be agreed and signed as a true and accurate record.
- c) RESOLVED - that the minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on Thursday 8th June 2023 be agreed and signed as a true and accurate record.

028/23 Matters Arising

- a) Drainage issues - Work ongoing.
- b) Sewage pumping plant - No further issues have been reported, but the system is being monitored for potential future problems.

029/23 Police Matters

The Clerk reported that no meetings have taken place.

030/23 Cambridgeshire County Councillor Report

Cllr King congratulated the new councillors on their appointment. He reported that the County Council had launched the new Priorities Capital Fund, offering capital grants of up to £40,000 for community facilities such as village halls and community centres, with priority being given to projects that align with the County Council's strategic objectives. The fund has been allocated £1,000,000 and a two-stage application process has opened.

The 2023/24 Local Highways Improvements application for dropped kerbs at the junction of Broad Drove East and Newgate Road was approved. The 2024/25 Local Highways Improvements timetable has been announced, opening on 27th October with an application deadline of 12th January.

031/23 Fenland District Councillor Reports

Cllr Barber introduced herself as the newly-elected ward councillor, resident of the parish and member of Street Pride. She asked anybody with concerns regarding the solar farm proposal to contact her.

032/23 Clerk's Report

The Clerk reported on meetings attended and correspondence received, including a public meeting with Cambridgeshire Police in Leverington regarding anti-social behaviour, forthcoming planning training, the announcement of a new Queen Elizabeth Hospital and an invitation to join the Campaign to Protect Rural England. Members asked the Clerk to add the final item to the agenda for the next meeting.

033/23 Reports from Members

- a) Communications - Nothing to report.
- b) Highways - The Clerk reported that the Dragon Patcher had filled a number of potholes around the village.
- c) Street Lights - The Clerk reported that three lights are out of action, two of which are awaiting replacement.
- d) Churchyard - The narrow path from Church Lane to the west door of the church has been resurfaced.
- e) Trees - Nothing to report.
- f) Foul Anchor - Cllr Carter has obtained a quote to remove the accumulated rubbish from the site adjacent to the war memorial of £85 per tonne and £90 per hour. The waste is estimated to be three or four tonnes. Residents will be consulted on the proposal prior to any work being undertaken.
- g) Community Centre - Cllr Carter thanked the Council and the Brigstock and Wrens Charity for their support for the Coronation celebration. This year's Toy Fair was very successful and stallholders have expressed an interest in a second event in the autumn. A Car Boot Sale is planned for July. The Management Committee hopes to install a patio and seating area adjacent to the building.
- h) Waterway Walk - The Clerk announced that Tydd Pumping Station will be open to the public on Saturday 9th September.

034/23 Member and Parishioner Issues

- a) Black Dike Footbridge - The Clerk reported that repairs are scheduled for early August.
- b) Withdrawal of bus service - The Clerk reported that the last day of service under the current contract will be Saturday 22nd July. The Council had received no notice of the possible withdrawal of the service or of potential alternatives and would continue to seek answers from the Combined Authority. The scheduled shopping service provided by FACT Community Transport will offer an alternative service for some residents.

- c) Local Highways Improvements application 2023/24 - The application was approved, as reported by Cllr King in his report.
- d) Community Centre heating system - Members approved the submission of an application to the County Council's Priorities Capital Fund for £25,000. The Clerk will submit the application.
- e) Tydd St Giles Community Discussion Facebook page - The Chairman explained that there were previously three administrators for the page, but that two of them had relinquished their roles, leaving the Council as the sole administrator. He hoped that the page could be a positive space for community cohesion.

035/23 Council Administration

- a) Delegation to committees - Members resolved not to establish committees at the present time.
- b) Portfolio responsibilities - Members resolved to defer this item until the next meeting.
- c) Confirmation of the appointment of Cllr Malin as Armed Forces Champion - The appointment was confirmed and Cllr Malin reported that he had already been contacted by former members of the armed forces and was considering the potential for a veterans' forum in the parish.

036/23 Planning

- a) F/YR23/0280/F - Erect 1 x dwelling (2-storey 3-bed), and culvert drain for formation of a new access - Land South of Elton House, Church Lane, Tydd St Giles (re-consultation).

Members were pleased to note that their previous concerns had been addressed in the new design and for this reason had no further objection. They noted that a culvert is included in the proposals to provide access to the property and that the site lies at the current northern end of the Church Lane footway and asked that a condition be added to extend the footway across the whole frontage of the proposed dwelling.

- b) F/YR23/0520/F - Erect a single-storey extension to rear of existing dwelling – Homelea, Church Lane, Tydd St Giles

Members resolved to offer no objection.

- c) F/YR23/0523/F - The re-siting of a mobile home for the purposes as a holiday let, involving demolition of existing garage (retrospective) - Land East of Windy Roost, Bythorne Bank, Tydd St Giles

Members expressed frustration that the mobile home had been installed without planning permission and noted that the application seeks permission for the re-siting and change of use of the existing caravan, whereas a new larger static mobile home has been installed adjacent to the pre-existing caravan that remains *in situ*. The elevated position of the new mobile home and its prominent location projecting forward of the building line of the applicant's dwelling present an overbearing feature in the landscape when approached from the east along Bythorne Bank. The isolated rural location will result in an increase in traffic along this quiet narrow lane. Members also questioned the need for a holiday caravan in this location, bearing in mind the proliferation of such accommodation at other established sites within the parish of Tydd St Giles. They resolved not to support the application.

037/23 Finance

a) The Clerk presented the financial statement as at the end of June showing income of £10,834.29, expenditure of £10,939.31, resulting in a deficit of £105.02 and funds held of £39,829.61.

b) Members noted the following sums received since the last meeting:-

Brigstock & Wren's Charity (Coronation celebrations)	£	500.00
Barclays Bank (interest).....	£	43.29
Fenland District Council (concurrent functions grant)	£	2,791.00

c) Members ratified the following payments made since the last meeting:-

NEST (pension contributions)	£	416.40
The CGM Group (East Anglia) Ltd (grounds maintenance)	£	445.72
Information Commissioner (registration)	£	35.00
ProEdge Construction Ltd (church path)	£	3,918.00
Business Services at CAS Ltd (insurance).....	£	544.54

d) Members approved the following payments:-

D Gibbs (salary June and July)	£	1,418.76
The CGM Group (East Anglia) Ltd (grounds maintenance)	£	303.81
Fenland District Council (street lighting)	£	4,345.23
Tydd St Giles CC & RG (hall hire and Coronation celebration)	£	378.00

e) Members noted the transfer of £8,000 from the Barclays current account to the NatWest current account and resolved to add Cllrs Brown and Malin to the list of authorised signatories for the new account.

f) Members authorised the use of payment by direct debit for the following payments:

HMRC liabilities, pension contributions, drainage rates and Information Commissioner registration.

038/23 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Parish Council will take place on Thursday 14th September at 7.30pm in the Community Centre.

The meeting closed at 9.10pm