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Rookery South ERF Community Liaison Panel Meeting 10 draft notes

April 29th, 2019, 18.30 - 20.50.

Marston Forest Centre, Station Road, Marston Mortaine, Bedford MK43 0PR

In attendance: Representatives from Houghton Conquest PC; Wootton PC; Cranfield PC; Millbrook Parish meetings; Bedfordshire Against Covanta Incinerator (BACI); a Lidlington resident.

Councillor Sue Clark – Central Bedfordshire Council (and Cranfield PC)

Tom Koltis, Judith Harper, Neil Grimstone – Covanta

Tina Knibbs – GrantScape

Grant Sorrell – Marston Vale Forest Trust (MVT)

Robin Treacher – facilitator robin@quantumpr.co.uk Tel 07818515770

Apologies were received from: Lidlington PC; Marston Mortaine PC; Brogborough PC; Neil Goudie and Emma D'Avilar (Environment Agency); Roy Romans (MWPA).

Resignations were received from: Sue Marsh (MWPA) retirement; Nick Webb (MVT) moved jobs; Richard Franceys moved away.

NOTES FROM THE MEETING

Disclaimer: Membership of the CLP does not imply either support for, or objection to, the ERF development. Rather it is an opportunity to facilitate the flow of information between Covanta/Veolia and the local community.

The Terms of Reference for the Rookery South ERF Community Liaison Panel (CLP) as revised in October 2016 can be found on the facility's website (rookerysouth.covanta.com).

Introductory remarks

The facilitator explained that Roy Romans felt unable to attend because of Purdah; that his colleague Sue Marsh has retired, and Richard Franceys was moving away from the area for work reasons.

Houghton PC said the promised note from the Environment Agency on CICs had not been circulated to CLP members. The facilitator to remind the EA. He also said there had been an undertaking to circulate a clearer map showing footpaths in and around the site. Judith Harper said the map was included in the attachments sent out with the draft notes in January.

The facilitator asked for the notes of the previous meeting held on January 14th, 2019 to be approved so they could be published on the Rookery website. The CLP reinforced its wish for the current protocol for notes to remain. Councillor Sue Clark explained she represented both Central Beds as the ward councillor for Cranfield and Marston Moretaine and she was also representing Cranfield PC (twin hats) and would like to be mentioned by name in the notes representing CBC.

The notes were than approved.

Appeal of the Judicial Review

Tom Koltis said an application to appeal in relation to the Permit had been accepted for a hearing that would take place on July 2nd or 3rd 2019. All the papers have been submitted and it was a case of waiting for the hearing to take place. Asked how quickly the outcome would be known it was stated that no-one knew for sure. BACI added it could be on the day or at any time later and that there was a possibility it might be live streamed on video under new recording protocols which would then allow everyone to hear exactly what each side said at the appeal.

Houghton PC asked that if the appeal was granted what would happen next? BACI asked what the EA procedure would be after the outcome.

Matters concerning the Environment Agency

Councillor Clark said that after the July outcome was known she still wanted to better understand the Permit and what would be monitored and when, and where they could find the evidence. She felt it was all a bit “vague”. BACI said all the EA documents are on its web site and they explain everything about the Permit. Councillor Clark said she would rather have a person explain it to her so she could also ask questions.

Tom Koltis added that any ruling would not affect the construction phase as the permit is concerned with operational matters. He concluded that until the appeal is decided he would not speculate as to what would happen next. He felt explanations would be more beneficial after the appeal hearing outcome was known. The facilitator was asked to make this request of the EA.

Wootton PC wanted to put a question to the EA: “During its investigations into the efficacy of the project Covanta and its partner Veolia were examined. On that basis since the award of the Permit the Green Investment Bank has become a major shareholder in the scheme. Has that company also been investigated by the Agency and is the information available for public scrutiny? Should another organisation be brought in will they be scrutinised, and the results made public?”

This is a question for the Environment Agency – however Tom Koltis was able to provide information.

Tom Koltis said the Green Investment Group will not be the operator. While the Green Investment Group has duties and responsibilities as a shareholder these do not include operational responsibilities. The Permit assessment looks into the operator and does not scrutinise shareholders.

Houghton PC said UK law requires Directors to be named in case they need to be blamed. Therefore, shouldn't this also apply to the Covanta and Green Investment Group partnership?

Tom Koltis replied that the liabilities applying to Green Investment Group were not the same as the operators' responsibilities. He added directors have a general responsibility to ensure the facility is operated with due care and the way they carry out this duty is to have the project engage a capable operator to operate it.

BACI asked "Why does Covanta operate under so many different names?" and were the track records of all the different Covanta named companies examined by the EA as well?

Tom Koltis said the obligations of Covanta Energy Ltd are guaranteed at the "parent level" as it does not yet have a track record in the UK. So the EA did consider Covanta's operating capabilities company wide. The companies are often dedicated to local authorities, which is why they are separate entities; Rookery is not tied to a local authority. All the Covanta operating companies are accountable and subject to examination. It made examination of the track records more transparent.

Covanta newsletter

Tom Koltis said the next edition of the Rookery newsletter is expected to be published at the end of May or beginning of June and that while he was still aiming at quarterly intervals, they may not coincide with CLP meetings and they would only be published when there was useful or important news to disseminate to the community. The next edition would include updates on the construction timetable; the Community Energy Initiative and the names and roles of key people the public might need to make contact with.

Councillor Sue Clark suggested information be given about how to access the DCO (Development Consent Order) and where to go for more information. Cllr Clark to raise with Roy Romans access via the Council's web-site. Judith Harper reported that the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) has taken it off its site and Wootton PC said it took a very long time (several minutes) for the link to work between the Rookery site and the documents (Just the page to react, not the down load time).

BACI asked if the next newsletter would carry an item on the appeal and was told "probably not".

Houghton PC asked if the data base for the newsletter is up-to-date and how will distribution be carried out. Judith Harper said distribution would be via Royal Mail and the database had been updated.

Houghton PC added that the number of houses in the area had increased by “several thousand” and the update of the database would not be an easy process. He added that in Houghton Conquest alone there have been an extra 200 homes, and that the Parish Council has to ask the housing developers for additional new addresses when it distributes information.

Tom Koltis said the database would be checked again.

Houghton PC said people were still moving into the area unaware that they would be living next door to an incinerator. He said local developers were turning a blind eye towards it and that the newsletter should reflect the project will be “news” for some people. Houghton PC felt that developers should be represented on the CLP. However, Tom Koltis said that Covanta is talking with developers and that it has close contact with them. Houghton PC said it was obvious that communications were not flowing down to the Sales level.

Wootton PC asked if the CLP will see an advance draft of the newsletter. Tom Koltis said that was not now the plan. The newsletter will contain Covanta information not that about third parties.

Houghton asked why not “surely it cannot be harmful” adding it would be reassuring to think the CLP checked it out making sure it was both accurate and easily understood. Tom Koltis noted that on the last couple of editions there had been no comments. He undertook to reconsider but without making promises.

Councillor Sue Clark said she was hearing on “doorsteps” that some people are worrying unnecessarily about the plant. She said people coming into the area are worrying about issues such as traffic routes for lorries. She suggested repeating some of the information disseminated earlier might be helpful.

Tom Koltis agreed and suggested a repeat of the construction and traffic management plans.

Millbrook PC said it would also help to reiterate HGV vehicle movements in the newsletter.

BACI suggested that the number of vehicles was irrelevant as Covanta would “let them in anyway”, a point rebutted by Tom Koltis. Tom Koltis said HGV vehicle movements would not exceed 250 including those used for ash. BACI’s suggestion that this should be changed in the DCO was rejected. He added the vehicles could be “16 wheelers” which could carry more waste - thereby reducing the number of vehicle movements. BACI said this could result in 594 “massive” HGV movements if the DCO was not changed. Covanta explained that would not make sense as it would result in more waste being delivered to the plant than it could handle. After the debate about lorry movements and their size and number Tom Koltis said he would look at how best to explain this in the next newsletter.

Millbrook asked if some of the lorries might be the smaller dustcarts taking local waste straight to the facility. Neil Grimstone replied that this would only happen in the event that the local councils award contracts to companies using the plant. BACI urged that the local council be lobbied not to use the ERF facility. Neil Grimstone asked whether BACI would prefer local waste to go out of the county for treatment and disposal and was told by BACI "we can sort out our own waste."

Houghton Conquest asked if bottom ash will be taken off-site for processing as previously they were told no decision had been made. Tom Koltis confirmed that it would be processed off-site; Houghton Conquest then asked if the traffic management figures accounted for taking bottom ash off-site and was told they were included and that this would have no effect on the lorry movements as the same amount was still leaving.

Construction update (see slide attached)

Tom Koltis gave an update on the current construction programme and schedule. He confirmed the project reached financial close in March 2019. The project has attracted investment from the Green Investment Group (GIG). Covanta owns 40% of the shares; GIG 40% and Veolia 20%.

The plant is being built by Hitachi Zosen Inova under a turnkey contract.

Councillor Sue Clark requested a site visit soon.

Highways work under Section 278 were completed in February (Green Lane access) and earthworks and piling are currently underway including the excavation of the waste bunker. Piling should be completed within 3 months which is quick because the clay is hard and there is no need for "super deep" piles. Tom Koltis said he thought they might only need to be 1.5 metres, but he didn't recall the exact depth. Preparation of the stack base, concrete works and underground services are being constructed along with car park and storage areas.

A construction timetable is included in the attached slides.

Tom Koltis added work should take 36 months (from Feb 2019) with commissioning starting around November 2021.

Councillor Sue Clark asked that near neighbours be informed when the piling is due to commence and be completed. Judith Harper said that noise monitoring and notification is required by the local authority.

Houghton PC asked why Network Rail was absent as they were due to address the CLP about the junction/ turning off Green Lane and whether the two-vehicle bay was sufficient in relation to the level crossing. Neil Grimstone said Network Rail was not available but it will attend the next meeting. Judith Harper added that the road adaptations were in accordance with the requirement set down by the Council in a Section 278 agreement under the Highways Act.

Wootton PC asked if there were to be works at the Green Lane/C94 (former A421) junction? Judith Harper replied that there is, but timing is that it has to be completed before operation of the facility so would not be for a while.

Community Energy Initiative

Tina Knibbs from GrantScape gave an update on the CEI. She reported that over 1500 households had registered for the scheme. The first-round drop-in sessions have been held and the second round is scheduled for May 13th for which there is a letter about to go out to households which have not yet signed up.

Houghton PC asked how many households were now on the database and was told 10,174. Tina Knibbs said that in some areas entire streets had registered while in other areas registration is patchy. However 7 not-for-profit organisations have registered. She confirmed the cut-off date for registration is June 28th, 2019. Neil Grimstone added that as an example of different take-up levels, Stewartby had a high level of take up while Marston Mortaine's level was relatively low.

Community Trust Fund

Tom Koltis reminded the CLP that the Community Trust Fund (CTF) would be £150,000 for the first year and £50,000 each year after that. The administration function of the CTF is being set up and it will include an independent trustee to help ensure good and appropriate governance. Covanta is currently looking into independent trust administrators and has identified one possibility as being Bedfordshire and Luton Community Foundation, drawing on its knowledge and expertise in this field, which is based in Luton, having just moved from Cardington.

Councillor Sue Clark asked if the Fund would be administered like a Landfill Tax Fund and urged consideration be given to revenue funding requests – not just capital funding assistance. Judith Harper said the criteria is set out in a Section 106 agreement which states projects must demonstrate “environmental benefits” to qualify. Tom Koltis said this wouldn't stop Covanta supporting other, local good causes in addition and applications could be made directly to Covanta.

Councillor Sue Clark questioned the use of Bedfordshire and Luton Community Foundation and recommended Covanta approach a more local group called BRCC (Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity).

Houghton PC asked if anyone could approach Covanta for funding at any time as well as under the Section 106 approach and was told they could.

Wootton PC asked if Covanta is a member of the Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce. Tom Koltis said it was and it had recently attended a ‘meet the buyer’ event.

Veolia depots (see slides attached)

Neil Grimstone projected two slides explaining where the bulk of the waste destined for the plant would be coming from. It will come from a two-hour drive catchment area largely

from the south of the site via a network of Veolia's depots and waste transfer stations. Currently much of this waste is either going to landfill or is exported to the continent as Refuse Derived Fuel.

He added Veolia already has 10 operational ERF plants in the UK and there would need to be some flexibility between them, and Rookery so other plants could be used when plants are "shut down". Rookery, for example, is expected to be down for 30 days a year (e.g. routine and essential maintenance). Wootton PC asked Neil Grimstone to enquire from Veolia what size the catchment radius is for each of the 8 main depots.

It was agreed most of the waste would be coming in from the South via the M1. Millbrook PC asked how lorries would be stopped from leaving the M1 at junction 12 instead of Junction 13. Judith Harper said the route is specified in the DCO and vehicles are to use J13.

BACI asked where the waste from the depots shown on the map currently goes. Neil Grimstone said it went to landfill or was exported out of the country.

Houghton PC asked why Veolia wasn't using other EfW plants such as Edmonton and was told all the facilities in the London area are currently at full capacity.

A Lidlington resident sought confirmation that most of the waste would be coming from the south of England and this was confirmed

Councillor Sue Clark said that this demonstrated that the Traffic Management Plan needs to be properly enforced and added a 6-month study of J13 by Highways England and the surrounding local authorities is due to report back in June. It is looking at developments and pending permissions to identify what needs to be done to improve J13.

Questions (see slides attached)

Millbrook PC asked if Covanta will be joining with Millbrook Power for the connection to the national grid.

Neil Grimstone explained why this couldn't be done. Reasons include: different voltages (Covanta 132,000 volts; Millbrook 400,000 volts) means connections need to be made at different points (Rookery to the north of the site and Millbrook to the south) as well as different infrastructure needs. The routes for each company's power cables have been set within the respective DCOs.

Millbrook PC also asked that with all the new developments going ahead in the area is there an opportunity for Covanta to provide energy to them directly from the plant.

Neil Grimstone said it was a requirement for the Rookery plant to have a "tap" ready to supply any local heat demands, be that housing or business needs. He explained that while property developers are often keen on the idea individual builders taking parcels of the overall development would also need to be persuaded to take the offer up.

Tom Koltis said the plant will be capable of providing local heat export, but it is not an easy process adding “we will be ready to go if and when an opportunity arises”. Neil Grimstone said that Government policy is to try and ban individual home gas boilers in new homes at some point in the future and this might act as an incentive for house builders to tap into the plant.

Wootton PC asked what range could the plant supply heat for domestic use. Neil Grimstone said 5-6 miles. Houghton asked what happens to the heat if it can't be exported in this way. Tom Koltis said it would be converted into electricity, but it would be better if it could be exported as heat as that is more efficient. Neil Grimstone added the plant would be about 28% efficient by electricity production alone. Tom Koltis added to be able to export heat as well would be a win:win situation.

Questions from CLP members

Houghton PC asked for the answer to a question from meeting 9 requesting consideration be given in the footpath strategy to upgrade the footpaths to bridleways.

Judith Harper said the Rights of Way Strategy does not need to be completed until the plant becomes operational so there is still time to discuss this.

A Lidlington resident urged the RoW strategy to make more bridleways as it should include horses and horse riders. Judith Harper said she would discuss this with the local authority. Tom Koltis said the strategy should also be mindful of cyclists and asked if cyclists and horse riders were compatible on the same path. The Lidlington resident said she thought they were.

Councillor Sue Clark suggested the resident lobby her local authority as it would be making the final recommendation.

Houghton PC asked what had happened about the reported holes in the perimeter fence (caused by letting in deer?). Judith Harper said the fence now receives regular security checks and she would find out the latest information and report back.

Councillor Sue Clark asked if there were any plans for the continuous pouring of concrete. Judith Harper undertook to find out and report back. Councillor Sue Clark then added that the nearest properties should also be notified.

Next meeting

The next meeting is to be held on Monday July 15. Covanta to consider arranging a site visit at the request of Councillor Sue Clark.