

Minutes of Extraordinary Snetterton Parish Council Meeting
22nd July 2015

Visitor Centre, World Horse Welfare

In attendance :

F D M Skinner (Chairman)

Helen Foley (Vice Chairman)

Trevor Watkins

Tom Goodley

Amanda Skinner

1. The Chairman welcomed Neil Goudie, Compliance Officer for The Environment Agency.

2. Neil Goudie made a presentation, outlining The Environment Agency responsibilities, the Permit Determination process and timescales.

He received questions from members of the Parish Council and parishioners, some of which he was able to answer, some which he has taken away with him, throughout the course of his presentation.

To summarise, the questions / concerns below remain unanswered and we have requested responses to them from NG :

- what % of permits are granted where effluent is pumped into a local river ? (as opposed to recommending an alternative disposal – sewer / another method)
- The Inland Drainage Board have to be consulted prior to a permit decision being made ?
- the addition of a conveyor in the amendments constitutes a change of operating method and should be flagged up with the Health and Safety Executive ?
- what is the precise process for the treatment of waste ? NG did not believe that the operators had given enough information on the treatment process.
- what is the size of the holding tank for untreated effluent ?
- what is the total storage capacity for untreated effluent in the event of a breakdown in the treatment process ?
- why has no physical survey been made of The River Thet. A parishioner complained about the flooding in May 2013 and was told the flood risk survey is computer generated. To our knowledge no survey has been made and the river has flooded for both subsequent winters
- whilst it is accepted that the bio mass installation is in a Zone I flood risk area, what is the Flood Risk Zone for The River Thet, into which the water is proposed to be discharged ?
- Landowners pay Drainage Rates but no dredging is taking place. Philip Cowen requested a response from the EA to Breckland Council as to why this was not happening.
- The Inland Drainage Board have requested that The River Thet be made their responsibility. The EA have apparently refused ?
- could the EA recommend to Breckland Council that a condition of planning permission would be the dredging of the River Thet ? (similar to a Section 106)

The main observations made were as follows :

- the delay in getting the process to this stage has been due to the operator has submitted plans with insufficient detail to the EA who have had to request further detail and clarification on a number of occasions. NG expressed a view that this could be related to the application being speculative / the company not being well developed.
- NG expressed “disappointment” that the operator had not considered any dialogue with the parishioners as a priority. The EA attend liaison meetings with operators and local residents - 4 times per annum in constructions and 2 times per annum during operation.
- NG stated that the information submitted on the treatment process was “crude” in it detail. The submission of detailed information remains outstanding.
- if the permit is not granted, the operator has six months to appeal. That appeal is heard by The Planning Inspectorate. If a permit is granted, a third party can go through a complaint procedure which is heard by an ombudsman.
- a permit could be granted with very tight conditions which an operator might not be able to meet.
- The EA do not look at location / traffic (County Council responsibility) / visual impact / operating hours.
- a requirement for the operator to finance the dredging of the river could not be a condition of the permitting process.
- there are no plans or funding for the dredging of The River Thet by the EA.
- it took a number of years for the bio mass at Ely to operate efficiently. The EA regard the start up and shut down process in new bio mass plants as being the main issue in terms of emissions.

The Chairman of East Harling Parish Council flagged up the following facts re. water quality of The River Thet :

- children play in the river shallows in East Harling
- the quality of water in the Aquifer has to be maintained for the English Whisky company
- there is a Spring Water bottling plant in East Harling

He also expressed disappointment that parishes that would be affected down stream of the effluent pipe had not been notified and had only been made aware of the issue by Snetterton Parish Council. (NG responded that the EA rely on the operator to consult with interested parties).

3. A copy of the slides for his presentation will be e-mailed to Helen Foley.
4. Councillor Philip Cowen (Ward Representative) addressed the meeting to answer various questions raised by the Parish Council.

He started by clarifying that this bio mass could burn agricultural or forestry waste only. In the event of the operators wanting to change the type of waste, a new application would have to be made.

The operators submitted the amendments to the original planning documents as “minor amendments”. PC confirmed that he was not of the view that they were minor and spoke with co-Councillors who agreed and the application will go to Committee. The application is likely to be on the agenda for the Planning Committee meeting on 24th August, 2015. PC will confirm to the Parish Council.

In the event of the application for planning amendments being refused, the applicant can appeal. In the event of the planning amendments being accepted, the only course for the parishioners would be a Judicial Review in the High Court which they would have to fund.

The meeting concluded at 8 p.m.