

PRESTON PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY, 1 MAY 2014

PRESENT: Cllr Mrs C Sutton, (Chairman), Cllr Mrs P Chester-Master (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Mrs S Cameron, Cllr R Canton, Cllr Mrs Regine Freyne, Cllr N Price, Cllr Mrs J Tomblin, Cllr Ms J Layton (District), Cllr S Parson (County), Alexander Lindsay, Guy Edwards, Karen Thornton, Joy Canton, Pip Sharp, M Rogers, Anne Smith, Bill Mortimore, Barbara King, A Swain, Jennie Beadle, Howard Spivey, Sue Spivey, Ioan Jones, Sue Gulliford, Alex White, Christopher Huck, David Huck and Mrs Huck, Mr M Rogers (Belectric), Mr G Dix (Savills) and Mrs C Braidwood (Clerk)

1. **Apologies for Absence**

Cllr C Bennett (District)

2. **Proposed Solar Farm, Land East of Witpit Lane, Preston
Mike Rogers, Project Development Manager, Belectric**

Mr Roger's explained that Belectric is based in Iver. Terms for a Solar Farm have been agreed with the landlord and Belectric is now preparing to submit a planning application in about 6 weeks. There will be a full community consultation prior to submission for planning permission. He said that Belectric would like to understand any concerns that residents may have and to try to incorporate comments into the plans. Belectric is the largest solar provider in the world with sites in 16 countries. Savrill's role was to find the site and prepare the planning application.

Mr Dix explained that Savill's provide a specialist service in renewable energy using GIS to look for sites that fulfill their clients' criteria.

Points raised included:

- The site will be very well screened to limit impact on nearby residential dwellings.
- A habitat and land impact plan will be developed.
- Highest structure will be 3.5 m high.
- New energy sources are needed and solar power is very efficient.
- This site could probably power half of Cirencester homes.
- Full habitat management plan will also be developed and small animals encouraged to live underneath the panels as on other sites. Sheep could also be grazed.
- It is hoped that the local community will invest in the development with a minimum of £60. Would prefer to deal direct with people to cut out pension fund investment.
- Likely to bring a 6 - 7 % return. Based on current subsidy £7,000 will return £490 pa which is equivalent to the average spend on electricity for a 4 bedroomed home
- If all goes to plan, the site could be built and be fully operational by March 2015.
- Willersey site is fully operational and is providing wildflower seed for selling on.
- Government is withdrawing support for development of green field sites.
- Transport plan will be developed so that the Village will not be used as the main access route.
- Construction time – approx. 3 months
- Will connect to grid along the A417 dual carriage way using existing overhead cables.
- Inverter will be the tallest structure (2.7 – 3 m) and located in the centre of the site.
- Minimal noise will be created by the inverter with a slight hum that can be heard from 20m. They will be sited approx. 50 m into site
- No risk from magnetic field.
- End of lease and planning consent will be restricted to 25 years and funds are in place to recycle all of the panels and restore the site to the original state.
- Panels are provided by First Solar who will recycle them after use.
- Existing hedges can be allowed to grow to form a screen
- There would be new planting along the bridle way to create a screen
- Deer fencing (wire or stock) will be used and determined by CDC
- CCTV will be in place and access to local residents and bee keepers restricted for security.
- No light pollution as infrared will be used.
- Access will be needed to maintain the panels.

- Most commonly used modules are crystalline with a silver edge but the panels on this site will be plain dark blue (non-reflective) and the glass will be self-cleaning.
- There will be approx. 4 – 5 m between each row of panels
- The site is currently Grade 3 land – arable
- Even without subsidies it will be cost effect.
- The cost of the technology has fallen by 80%
- The company has another site near Swindon and 9 others around the country
- Would like to offer a local tariff but it is not yet available
- Maintenance agreements will be tied to the site and continue if the company should cease to trade. Stepping rights will also be in place to allow a new company to take the assets.
- The number of farms in the area will be limited by potential capacity of the grid and none allowed in AONB. Therefore, unlikely to be any more farms in Cirencester area
- Full public consultation will be carried out in the next month or so.
- Belectric will take care and effort to be as de-minimus as possible
- Data is available to show the effect on house prices.

3. **Minutes of the last Parish Meeting held on 9 May 2013**

It was agreed that the Minutes were a true and accurate record of the previous meeting and were signed by the Chairman.

Matters Arising

It was noted that the Highways issues raised in 2012 remain outstanding and they should be taken up with Highways at the earliest opportunity. The Village farm sign is also still an issue.

4. **Finance Report**

Noted.

Mrs Thornton asked why the Parish Precept is so high and the Chairman explained that tax is being collected on new properties in Kingshill Meadow. When the boundary changes come into effect in May 2015, these properties will come within Cirencester and, therefore, the Precept will reduce. It was pointed out that because of the increased number of properties, the burden on individual properties has not increased.

The Chairman advised that she had received Cllr Canton's resignation and she thanked him for his work for the Council and the Village. Cllr Mrs Sutton called for offers to fill the vacancy.

5. **Annual Report of Preston Parish Council**

Attached.

6. **Annual Reports from County and District Councillors**

Cllr Clive Bennett (District)

Report Attached

Shaun Parsons (County)

Cllr Parsons said that:

People are not always aware of the range of the County Council's activities and that it has a budget of £430m budget. Its main spend is on adult services as it tries to protect the growing older population. £300m of debt is gradually being repaid and there have been savings of £114m in the last 4 years. These savings will continue but it is becoming much more difficult and there will be further staff cut backs. There has been a reduction in the number of serious road accidents in recent years, 90% indicate a strong element of driver error especially the use of mobile phones while driving. There are also SAGE Courses for the elderly to help them drive safely. A419 junction still a problem and pressure is being put on national government to provide the missing link. The development of an incinerator is now being reviewed.

Cllr Parson was asked about potholes in Cricklade Street and flooding of the Old Cricklade Road near Tesco for 4½ months. He confirmed that a monitoring group has been set up with CDC, Thames Water and the Environment Agency to get them to take responsibility.

Juliet Layton (District)

Report Attached

7. **Comments from the Public and Parish Council Grant Recipients**

Cllr Mrs Chester-Master thanked the Council on behalf of the PCC for funds towards the

Churchyard grass cutting.

Mr Alexander Lindsay from the Village Hall Committee thanked the Council for its contribution towards the secondary double glazing and the sinking fund for maintenance. It was agreed that the Hall is a great asset to the Village.

The Clerk was asked to take forthcoming events from the newsletter for the website.

8. **Any Other Business**

None

9. **The Meeting Closed at 8.55 pm**