

ROCKCLIFFE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Rockcliffe Parish Council Extraordinary Meeting held on Monday 12th December 2016 in Rockcliffe Community Centre at 7:30 p.m.

An Extraordinary Meeting was called by the Chairman J Harper & seconded by Cllr R Park. It was called to consider and agree a response to the North West Coast Connections Project (NWCCP) proposed route corridor. This was a public meeting and residents of the village were invited to address the council and make their views on the proposed route known.

1/12/16 Apologies for absence

City Cllr J Mallinson – due to illness.

2/12/16 Present

The Chairman Cllr J Harper, H Graham, M Irving, G Moss, G Mounsey-Heysham, R Park, S Sidgwick, G Percival & J Twentyman.

3/12/16 In Attendance

County Cllr V Tarbitt & City Cllr R Bloxham.

Mr C Hardman, Development Manager, Carlisle City Council advised that he was in attendance to gain local opinion on the route and that it was his responsibility to co-ordinate a Carlisle City Council response to the consultation.

Eighteen members of the public also attended.

4/12/16 Declarations of Interest or Requests for Dispensations

Cllr G Mounsey-Heysham declared an interest, due to being a landowner on which pylons maybe situated.

5/12/16 Public Participation

A Rockcliffe resident made a PowerPoint presentation to the meeting, that highlighted resident's concerns on the proposed route of the new electricity line. This included: -

- That Rockcliffe residents did not accept the proposed route, which was felt to be markedly different to the existing route and what had been previously discussed with NWCCP. The route being considered unsuitable as it was located on raised land to the outskirts of the village – making it visually obtrusive; it incorporated a sweeping 'loop' and almost doubled the number of pylons to be situated around the village; was situated within metres of the AONB, River Eden & SSSI; was located within 200m of land that had recently been granted planning permission for new housing and that it traversed the road as you entered Rockcliffe village. Concluded that the route did not make sense, was twice as long as the original route and used twice as many pylons - which could not be cost effective;
- other alternate routes included within the consultation were also discussed in depth;
- that pylons are to be 44m in height – equivalent in height to the Civic Centre;
- that no photo-montages had been made available at the Rockcliffe Centre public consultation held. This was thought a strategic move by NWCCP and questioned how a £6 million consultation exercise could be so deficient in information and that due to this an informed judgement could not be made by residents;
- the proposed route does not utilise existing brownfield, industrial and low-amenity land and instead traverses un-spoilt countryside that has, to date, provided a 'green buffer' between Rockcliffe village the adjacent AONB, SSSI and River Eden and Carlisle City;
- previous consultations undertaken approximately 2 years ago with NWCCP had indicated that the new route would follow the existing line, with the existing pylons removed and replaced with larger pylons. This was, at the time, considered acceptable by residents for the new connection at Harker sub-station to be made. However, the new proposed route is considered markedly different to what was initially proposed and was simply not acceptable;
- requesting that the PC supports the residents group in its objection to the route and that Cumbria County Council & Carlisle City Council are made aware of their reasons for objection.

DRAFT MINUTES TO BE AGREED AT MEETING TO BE HELD 16th JANUARY 2017

Cllr G Mounsey-Heysham advised that (as a landowner on which they could be positioned) he had requested in October 2015 that the pylons were not positioned near Rockcliffe. However, NWCCP advised that they could obtain a compulsory purchase order to site them without his agreement. He also advised that he had queried the consultation period required and NWCCP had responded they are only legally required to consult for 28 days - and that as they are holding the consultation for 10 weeks, this is procedurally correct. Advised that feedback obtained by himself from NWCCP indicated that they had been impressed by the representation at Morton by residents. Suggested that the PC replaces the term 'landscape' with 'wirescape' within its consultation response to NWCCP.

Cllr G Mounsey-Heysham then produced a personal map which suggested an alternate route that could be undertaken and circulated it to Cllrs for discussion.

Cllr G Mounsey-Heysham then left the meeting at 8:15 pm due to his attendance being required at another function.

Cllr J Harper urged residents to submit individual responses to the consultation by 6th January 2017. The more individual residential objections received, would inform the Planning Inspectorate on the strength of public feeling and that they consider all responses received.

Cllr S Sidgwick advised that he had initially been informed that the 'loop' around Rockcliffe was required by NWCCP so that connection by the Scottish windfarm projects could be made. This connection had now been abandoned and made the reasoning behind the extended route in-valid

Cllr R Park reported that having spoken to Mr R Powell, NWCCP at public consultation sessions held, he had feedback that anything can be done, within reason and that NWCCP are obliged to look at any alternative proposals and alternative/additional routes that are put forward for consideration.

Cllr G Moss reported that information provided by NWCCP within the consultation was contradictory, e.g. that when appropriate, it was preferential to route pylons away from houses - but NWCCP had moved them closer to properties within Rockcliffe. Also advised that 5.4 million had been recently invested in removing pylons from the Solway Firth area, for more to be erected at Rockcliffe!

Cllr queried Mr C Hardman as to if there was any benefit to be gained by residents approaching Carlisle City Council directly with their objections? Mr C Hardman advised that he was taking all their views and representations on board but would also welcome any additional comments/information to be e-mailed directly to him.

Resident commented on the detrimental impact that the proposed route would have on wildlife in the area and that this was a serious consideration that needed incorporated within the PC response. Cllr J Harper advised that further details on wildlife had just been received and this would be added to the PC's draft response.

Items included:-

- that the route was directly on the migration flight path for up to 10,000 pink-footed geese and 400 whooper swans. Concerns have been raised that the moving of the power line may interfere with bird's flight descent lines and this could result in collisions with the new lines;
- that over 100 whooper swans occupy the area in summer;
- Osprey's had been witnessed in the area in the spring/summer months;
- wading birds of national importance live and breed within the area e.g. the greater yellow leg; white winged black tern and the little ringed plover which is a schedule one species and as such protected by law;
- that adequate wildlife surveys did not seem to have been undertaken within the consultation.

Resolved: PC to suggest a preferred alternate pylon route, within its response to the consultation. Suggested route and amended draft response to be circulated to councilors for approval before submission to NWCCP by 6th January 2017.

The meeting closed at 8:30 p.m.

