

Agenda item 2

STOP HEYDON GRANGE WINDFARM ACTION GROUP

Chairman's Report June 2011

Background

As you well know a German wind farm developer called Volkswind submitted a Scoping Report in March 2010 to South Cambridgeshire District Council. This Scoping Report was a proposal to build a large wind power plant to the north of Heydon village. In response, a group of concerned local residents formed an action group to fight the proposed wind farm to try to prevent the devastating effects it would have on the surrounding countryside and communities.

The aims of the group were, and still are, to;

- maintain the natural beauty of the area;
- protect the quality of life for residents;
- protect several famous and unique views in Cambridgeshire;
- protect the unique heritage of the area, and;
- oppose this development, the scale of which we believe to be unsuitable to the surrounding area.

From those beginnings an "ad-hoc" committee developed under the guidance of Alex Duffus, our first Chairman, and of Oliver Stracey our Secretary into a working group to fight the proposal.

Achievements

Initially due to the very limited funds available, the only way to get our message known was via the internet and to this end our website, www.stopheydonwindfarm.com was established. For this we are very much in debt to Steve Wright who helped create and still administers this marvellous facility.

Following a very well attended village meeting in Heydon Church, we arranged and promoted our first public meeting in Great Chishill village hall which well over 100 people came to and which certainly raised awareness. From there we began to build our supporters database. Many people from Heydon and Chishill helped us with printing and distribution of flyers etc. To fund the flyers and further action Jo Freestone and Hannah Gregory, along with a hardworking team, put together an "Auction of Promises" which raised over £7,000 - a fantastic result.

Then with funding behind us, we were able to up the marketing effort and after much work by all the committee, members and friends we managed to "cover" all the surrounding villagers with our "STOP" signs.

Peter Jones rented us a helium balloon and arranged for it to be flown at the height of the turbines. Not only did this bring home the scale of the proposed structures but it also coincided with Volkswind's public meetings and generated a lot of very positive press comment for which we are eternally grateful to Hannah Gregory who seems able to get us in the news almost on demand!

Volkswind's public meetings were held on the 15th and 16th of February. We were delighted with the attendance and the support for our cause. Over 85% of the visitors were completely against the proposals, making their opinions clear to the Volkswind representatives. Volkswind went as far as to say they had never experienced such opposition at other exhibitions, which was clearly good news for us and demonstrated to them the opposition to the scheme by all the local communities. Our local MP, Andrew Lansley, also issued a very strong statement demanding the developers cease in their actions.

Volkswind's meetings so angered local residents that our treasurer, Simon Bray, was able to report at the next committee meeting numerous very generous donations for which we are most grateful. My thanks go to Simon for keeping our now growing finances in order. We have 53 named donors, and hence members, as well as over 200 supporters registered on our website.

Edward May was also able to take many photographs from various locations using the balloon as a reference point to properly demonstrate the proposed turbines in their locations, as it was felt that the wide angle photomontages provided by Volkswind were misleading. Ed's pictures are really very good and can be seen on our website.

With the campaign gathering momentum Rollo Barnes very kindly gave a lot of his time and expertise to help "formalise" the structure of the committee and, together with Oliver Stracey drafted our constitution.

The Future

Volkswind have yet to submit a planning application to South Cambs District Council and until they do, the other interested parties, Duxford Airfield, The Campaign for the Protection of Rural England, the National Air Traffic Control to name but a few cannot declare their opinions publicly, either in favour or against. We however continue to prepare our case, as the experience of other wind farm action groups shows that the developers are unlikely simply to go away; there is too much money at stake. When Volkswind do submit their planning application we need to be ready to respond, with our objections properly researched and documented. One of our key responses will be a report by a landscape architect whom we have now briefed and retained.

Summary

I would like to thank all of the committee and the members as well as those people in the wider community who have given their time and support, as well as their hard earned money, so generously to help our cause. We are very appreciative and remain committed to fighting this "environmental vandalism" for as long as it is a threat.

Jason Cross
Chairman
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