

LLANFAIR COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Minutes of Council Meeting held at St Hilary Village Hall on Tuesday, 13th October 2015 at 5.30pm.

Present: Vice Chairman : Councillor David Hawkins
Councillors : Malcolm Francis, David Ilsley, Ray Simkiss,
Geoff Simpson and Jim Teague.

In Attendance: Jackie Griffin, Clerk.

Item 1: Apologies for Absence.
Councillors Mary Llewellyn and Heather Shaw.

Item 2: Declarations of Interest.
None.

Item 3: Planning.
3.1 Planning Application No. **2015/00649/FUL**
Applicant: Solar Century
Agent: CDN Planning
Location: The Farm, Lane South East from St Hilary to Llancarfan
boundary, St Hilary.
Proposal: Installation of a 5mw solar farm and associated
infrastructure.

The Community Council is supportive of the principle of renewable energy, but, in this instance, it **strongly objects** to this planning application for the following reasons:-

1. **Location of the Site.**

The site, which is situated within the Lower Thaw Valley, is a designated 'Special Landscape Area' and should therefore be protected against such development. It is within close proximity to St Hilary Village which has Conservation Area status in its entirety and this development would neither enhance nor improve the Conservation Area. The site is situated approximately 400 yards from the Grade I listed CADW monument of Beaupre Castle and is relatively close to several heritage assets.

2. **Agricultural Viability of the Land.**

According to the Welsh Government's own Department for Natural Resources and in accordance with Town and Country Planning Act 1990, (Environment Impact Assessment) (England and Wales) Regulations 1999 (As Amended) Proposed 5 mw Solar Farm at St Hilary Farm, St Hilary – Initial Screening Assessment, the land is of significant high quality for agricultural use consisting of grade 3a quality for moderate to high yield and grade 3b quality for moderate agricultural use. The land has previously been used for growing crops and for grazing.

The Community Council would refer to the application's own planning statement item 5.10, which refers to 'policy ENV2 considers the use of agricultural land. It states that:-

*"The best and most versatile agricultural land (grades 1, 2 and 3a) will be protected from irreversible development, save where overriding need can be demonstrated. **Non-agricultural land or land of a lower quality should be used when development is proposed, unless such land has a statutory landscape, nature conservation, historic or archaeological designation which outweighs agricultural consideration**".*

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The planning statement then states in 5.11 that *“the land in this case is grade 3b and does not, therefore, fall within the definition of ‘best and most versatile’.* The Community Council would strongly dispute this as a substantial portion of the land is 3a and therefore of good quality agricultural use and the remainder is designated grade 3b, but the position of the **whole** site is of paramount importance being situated within the Lower Thaw Valley (Special Landscape Area), close to Beaupre Castle as stated previously and some other heritage assets.

3. Tourism in the Vale of Glamorgan.

The Vale of Glamorgan Council actively and widely promotes tourism within the Vale and is particularly protective of its rural areas. The proposed development will have a detrimental and devastating impact on both Beaupre Castle and the village of St Hilary, both of which attract many tourists to the area and which have a significant positive impact on the economy and prosperity of the Vale of Glamorgan. The proposed development would be visible not only from Beaupre Castle (very popular with tourists), but also from the Coastal Path and this is of immense significance as the Coastal Path is so important, not just locally, but nationally.

4. Effect of the Development on Neighbouring Properties.

The site of the proposed development is overlooked by several homes, which are in very close proximity to it. The loss of the visual amenity to those homes will have a severe detrimental effect on both the residents in terms of enjoyment of their property and also its value. Screening of the development would be most difficult if not impossible due to the lay of the land and its vast area.

5. Vale of Glamorgan Council – Adopted Unitary Development Plan.

The document states under Policy Comm 8 – Other Renewable Energy Schemes.

- (i) The proposal has no unacceptable effect on the immediate and surrounding Countryside.
- (ii) The proposal has no unacceptable effect upon the site of conservation, archaeological, historical, ecological and wildlife importance.
- (iii) Adequate measures are taken, both during and after construction, to minimise the impact of the development on local land use and residential amenity.

The Community Council is of the opinion that this proposed development does not satisfy any of these points for the following reasons:

- (i) The immediate and surrounding countryside will be detrimentally and permanently affected as stated previously being within the Lower Thaw Valley (SLA).
- (ii) The proposed development will adversely affect Beaupre Castle and other close heritage sites.
- (iii) The intended routes for construction traffic during the development and also for the site’s future servicing will have a serious and detrimental impact on not only the neighbouring residential properties but also the surrounding villages. The road network proposed for the construction traffic is totally inappropriate for vast numbers of large vehicles and the

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Highways Department should give serious consideration to this issue as previous experience with similar developments nearby have caused major problems for residents and hauliers alike and still continue to do so. There is a road sign on the A48 which was designed specifically for St Hilary Village and was sited at the junction to prevent large vehicles from taking this route due to its narrow roads which are totally inadequate for large vehicles.

6. Loss of Countryside.

The Community Council is anxious that another large section of beautiful countryside is not lost to yet another Solar Farm with the recent construction of two such developments in close proximity to this site. It strongly believes that it has a duty to preserve and protect such sites for future generations in this rural part of the Vale of Glamorgan.

Ultimately, should the application be approved, the Community Council suggests that the conditions placed upon the development include the following:

- Due to the historical importance of the area, considering the Roman settlement in Cowbridge and historical battles that took place on Stalling Down, the Community Council requests that an archaeological watching brief be kept on the site.
- It is suggested that a condition is imposed to ensure that the site is returned to its current state at the end of the life of the solar farm.
- Furthermore, if approved, the local community should benefit financially in some way for the inconvenience caused to it during its construction and the future maintenance of the site.

Item 4: Date, Place and Time of Next Meeting.

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, 5th November 2015 at 7.00pm in St Hilary Village Hall.

..... **Chairman**
Date : 5th November 2015.