

NAVITUS BAY UPDATE JANUARY 2013

We felt it would be a good idea to provide this update after an active year opposing the wind farm scheme and before the next formal consultation in February 2013. It is based upon a document produced by Hengistbury Residents Association who are coordinating our local efforts and who we thank for their efforts on our behalf.

February 2012 Eneco Consultation

This was where it all started.

The Eneco promotion road-show generated a lot of interest but it was evident that the wind company (now NBDL) would not give full details of the scheme, in particular the number, size and location of the turbines. Furthermore, their visual presentation was misleading because it underplayed the visual impact.

It was clear from the start that in their view the "consultation" was merely an exercise in explaining what was going to happen rather than any attempt to engage or negotiate.

Challenge Navitus (CN)

You can find a link to this important organisation on our website www.wcresidents.co.uk under Environment/Navitus Bay

Throughout the year, an information campaign has been undertaken to raise public awareness. Presentations have been made to councils, etc. and meetings held with the wind company, particularly concerning the visual impact.

Following the highly professional videos on the CN website (now including a video from the top of Hengistbury Head), the wind company has responded by updating their own visuals for the consultation in February 2013. Hopefully, they will be less misleading than those used in February 2012.

CN has also taken part in useful press and local TV coverage.

Main local objections

There are many reasons to oppose the wind farm.

National issues include the controversial foundation for the huge subsidies from us the tax payers, the many billions now being spent on green policies and the fact that UK wind farms will have minimal effect on global carbon dioxide emissions.

However, *the generally agreed local view is that it is best for us to concentrate on local matters*, such as visual impact, tourism losses, risk of noise affecting human health, risk to migrating birds, unbelievably poor choice of such a sensitive site for a wind farm and sailing/navigation problems.

In the end, if the scheme does not fail due to austerity-driven national subsidy cuts, there will be a planning enquiry. The inspector for that enquiry will have to take national policy as given, but will be able to listen to local issues - hence our view that it is best to concentrate on those.

Our Local MPs

Conor Burns (Bournemouth West), Christopher Chope (Christchurch), Richard Drax (South Dorset), Tobias Ellwood (Bournemouth East), and Robert Syms (Poole) are all understood to be opposing the scheme.

Their concerns were spelt out at a House of Commons adjournment debate about Navitus Bay. That debate secured the statement from the minister then in post (Charles Hendry) that Navitus Bay is "*not a done deal*" by any means and if the wind company has not followed due process that would disadvantage the company before the planning inspector. (*An example here is that the company has not put forward the "worst case scenario" as required by the Rochdale Envelope rules*)

Consultation and transparency

It is fair to say that whilst claiming to be open and listening, NBDL falls short of that objective.

Delays and unanswered enquiries are common. For example, HENRA are still awaiting a site plan giving the 50 metre depth line, the Wight Barfleur reef location, the sloping seabed location etc.

NBDL has also failed to respond to a request for the noise output of the different turbine sizes that may be used. (A noise expert from Canada has studied an offshore scheme in the Great Lakes and advised there should definitely be an independent study of noise risk here, a matter being considered now by Bournemouth Council.)

RSPB is still waiting for disclosure of NBDL's bird survey information in order to be able to decide their response to the scheme.

Bournemouth Council has suggested a one year delay in NBDL making their planning application to allow time for necessary work to be completed by NBDL, work that was long since identified by the council as essential.

10 July 2012 House of Commons Select Committee.

Hengistbury Residents Association (HENRA) made a written submission to the Energy and Climate Change Committee about the economics of wind power.

In summary, the wind industry are happy to carry out these schemes onshore and offshore due to the enormous subsidies derived from customers' fuel bills and without which no wind farm would be built. HENRA referred amongst other things to the Hughes' report demonstrating that the capital cost of wind power is ten times that for gas producing the same amount of power.

A key submission was made to the Committee by Adrian Snook, who is an advisor to onshore wind farm protest groups and who has also mobilised the opposition of MPs. He talked about the steady increase in local anger caused by the high-handed attitude of the wind companies. In one case, The Watford Lodge wind farm, the proposal involved three years of "consultation" which he described as trench warfare - it was then built without a single change from the original design.

Despite HENRA requesting in writing that the Committee issue a report on this hearing, that request has been declined.

21 September 2012 Meeting of Residents' Associations' Representatives

A lively meeting of RAs took place at the Miramar Hotel, including Andrew Langley from CN, and Mark Smith (tourism), Mark Anderson (task and finish group) and Steve Davies (planning) from Bournemouth Council.

There was virtually no support for the wind farm scheme in the room and matters were left for attendees to report back to their associations, with a view to forming an umbrella body that could speak for residents from Purbeck to Christchurch.

In the meantime, HENRA would update on key matters by email, as has been done. The proposal has now been taken forward with a steering group to meet on 24 January 2013 in Poole as the next stage.

19 October 2012 Meeting of Council Leaders and MPs

Following a particularly fruitless conference with wind company NBDL (so frustrating that one senior person from the council side walked out of it), Bournemouth Council arranged this meeting to plan a strategy for the future.

It was successful in that there was no support for the wind farm scheme as currently known and it was decided not to allow the company to continue to "*divide and rule*." In future, councils will not meet with the company in isolation or support the company's false claim that genuine consultation is happening and that "*box can be ticked*." **Each council also agreed to review its approach for consulting residents with a view to mutual co-operation.**

Anger was vented about how NBDL wanted to disclose their scheme in detail only after securing full planning consent. This scarcely complies with the spirit of the Rochdale Envelope, which is supposed to allow streamlined planning in return for effective consultation. MPs and councils feel that the number, height and location of turbines should be disclosed now. Without knowing this, how can councils produce proper Local Impact Reports?

Summary

From a standing start one year ago your local Residents Associations have been instrumental in organising local objection to this scheme and we will continue with that work in 2013. Please, if you have knowledge of these things or pertinent information please let us know.

We will keep you in touch with developments.

Jim Biggin

ACRA 2nd January 2013