

Navitus Bay - Public Meeting at the Royal Bath Hotel (23/03/2013)

A public meeting was organised by Bournemouth Borough Council on 23rd March 2013 at the Royal Bath Hotel. The objective of the meeting was stated as informing residents, so that they could decide whether they were for or against the wind farm. Close to 400 people attended the meeting.

Speeches were made by Bournemouth Borough Council representatives, including the Leader of the Council and the Director of Tourism. Andrew Langley of Challenge Navitus gave a presentation in which he showed Challenge Navitus's view of the visual impact of the turbines from various places along the coast. There was also a presentation from the Poole and Christchurch Bays' Association, plus a speech from Conor Burns MP.

Timescales were confirmed, namely that the latest round of public consultation ends on April 5th, that there is another round planned for the autumn, the planning application is likely to be around March 2014, with planning consent in 2015, if it is granted.

There was quite a lot of criticism of the developer during these speeches, highlighting the apparent difficulty of getting information on things such as the possible impact on tourism, questioning the accuracy of their visuals and the absence of any night time visuals, which have been requested, but not yet produced. There was concern expressed that the final layout of the wind farm in terms of numbers and height of turbines will not be known until after planning consent has been given.

A lively question and answer session followed, during which there was some criticism expressed that the meeting had only presented one side of the argument. I did ask the chair of the meeting at the end why the developer had not been represented at the meeting and he confirmed that this was because the developer had not been invited (as they'd had their own public exhibitions to get their point of view across).

Conor Burns MP explained that he and the other local MPs would be seeking a debate in Parliament at which they would highlight the various issues with the proposed development, as they see them. Mr Burns spoke out very forcibly against the wind farm.

Forms were distributed at the meeting to all attendees, which people can use to either support or object to the wind farm. Residents were encouraged to send these (freepost) to Navitus Bay Development Limited, also writing to their councillor and MP. The chair also asked people to take away batches of leaflets for their roads or blocks of flats, as it was important that as many people as possible expressed their view.