

Navitus Bay - PCBA Meeting at Miramar Hotel, Bournemouth (May 23rd 2013)

Poole and Christchurch Bays Association (PCBA) organised a meeting re Navitus Bay at the Miramar Hotel (23/05/13) for local residents' associations representatives. The aim of the meeting was for the PCBA to report on its activity to date, to explain what the next steps will be in its opposition to Navitus Bay and to obtain feedback from the residents' associations.

Roy Pointer (Chair PCBA Steering Group) chaired the meeting, as well as detailing the PCBA's role and activity to date. John Beesley (Bournemouth Council Leader) and Mike Greene (Councillor) gave a Bournemouth Council perspective. Bill Hoodless gave an insight into national wind power policy.

RP explained that the final phase of public consultation is due this autumn, with Navitus Bay Development Ltd's planning application expected in Feb / Mar 2014. The application will be considered by the Government's Planning Inspectorate, who will recommend approval or rejection to the Secretary of State for Energy, who has the final decision. This is expected in 2015. RP summarised PCBA's goals as to prevent approval of Navitus Bay and to influence the approach to national energy policy.

JB highlighted the concern over 'visual amenity' and the impact the proposed wind farm could have on both residents and tourists. Potential impact on the world heritage site was also stressed. He also criticised the consultation process as being 'fundamentally flawed'.

MG explained that NBDL was treating the project as a 'campaign' and that the opponents of the wind farm needed to do the same. MG reiterated that visuals and the effect on the local economy were the priorities. NBDL's approach to the 'visitor survey' had been inadequate so far; MG stated that NBDL had until 01/07/13 to come back with something more substantive. MG demonstrated a tool he has developed, which allows residents to key in variables such as distance to shore, enabling the tool to show the height of the turbines compared to another landmark known to the resident. MG queried the subsidy available to Navitus Bay (currently £9 billion, although this could halve apparently). MG stated that even the lower figure would still be £45 million per turbine. MG also clarified that any local referendum could not be organised until after the application had been received by the Planning Inspectorate. MG underlined that the opponents of the wind farm need to run a professional campaign and that this will cost money.

BH talked about national policy and economic factors. The government has set renewable energy targets and provides subsidies to wind farms. BH explained that global agreement is needed to reduce worldwide CO2 emissions, otherwise any reductions achieved by the UK are being wiped out elsewhere. BH talked about the expense of wind power, e.g. because of the cost of upgrading the National Grid. On the subject of noise from the wind farm BH confirmed that NBDL has agreed to produce a report, as also has Bournemouth Borough Council.

RP concluded by emphasising that PCBA was very short of 'foot soldiers' and that they were looking for more volunteers to help with the considerable workload. He also confirmed that both PCBA and Bournemouth Borough Council will make their own representations to the Inspectorate.

STEVE ROBERTS (26/05/13)