

NAVITUS BAY WIND FARM PROPOSAL

PUBLIC MEETING ARRANGED BY BOURNEMOUTH COUNCILLORS

1.30 PM 23 MARCH 2013 ROYAL BATH HOTEL, BOURNEMOUTH

MEETING REPORT

1. Councillor Mike Greene

I would like to welcome all those who have turned out despite the miserable weather. It demonstrates how much interest there is in the proposed wind farm.

The wind farm concerns people for different reasons including climate change, CO2 emissions, navigation danger, risks to birds etc. but perhaps mainly, visual impact. Today's meeting has been organised by the councillors from the seven Bournemouth Wards that would be most affected by any visual impact. Our intention is to give residents we represent the opportunity to get the most realistic idea of what the wind farm is likely to look like, so they can judge for themselves. In addition, Bournemouth West MP, Conor Burns, is here and Tobias Ellwood is hoping to arrive during the event.

Letters of support or objection should be sent to Navitus Bay Development Ltd. (NBDL) by the 5 April 2013 end of consultation deadline but many residents do not yet know what the wind farm will look like. Since questions have been raised about the NBDL images, Challenge Navitus has been asked along today to give a presentation so that you can make up your own mind.

Although other questions can be raised today, the main issue, to concentrate upon, is felt to be visual impact. I would like the comment forms to be completed please and handed in at the end of the meeting and we shall forward them to the company. Please also fill in the attendance sheets now circulating and tick the boxes to allow future contact. The order of the meeting is John Beesley, Andrew Langley, Roy Pointer, Mark Smith, Q & A and Next Steps.

2. Council Leader John Beesley

The history of wind farm presentations has continued for about four years so far since the first one was made to the council in the Pavilion. The latest presentation last August has left us no wiser despite being told that it would give us a better understanding by the end of the meeting. I wrote to the Echo to express frustration with the company at that time – I explained we were being treated with contempt, like children and without openness.

At that meeting, we were told that it was still an early stage, that the tourism issue was certainly recognised and that full consultations with stakeholders would precede any decisions. However, it should be noted that the final design of the scheme will be decided after getting consent for it.

We are concerned about visual amenity in Bournemouth. Some consider the location by the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site to be bizarre. Tourism and jobs would be affected here, whilst the Eneco Dutch scheme was out of sight of their coast.

We know that we must challenge the correctness of evidence provided by the company. Last autumn, there was a robust meeting between Bournemouth Council, representatives from the tourist trade in Bournemouth and the developers. Following this, Bournemouth Council set up a meeting of all the affected coastal authorities and MPs. This was to ensure we can speak with one voice, as a team and have ensured we all have the same information at the same time. Since it is important for Bournemouth council to have accurate facts about the wind farm, we shall provide it ourselves where needed and where it is clearly not available elsewhere. I am confident that Bournemouth and the others will react to the scheme with “joined-up” thinking.

3. Mike Greene

There are 435 seats here and still some available at the front for those standing up at the back. The visual impact is very important and I now introduce Andrew Langley from Challenge Navitus.

4. Andrew Langley, Challenge Navitus (speaking to various illustrations on screen)

We are speaking for residents and are not political. Our beautiful coast is such a major asset that we must be careful how we respond to changes – these proposals are very large, complicated changes that require independent information to be provided.

The nine zones, of the government’s Round 3 plan for offshore wind farms in the UK, have a huge total area of 10,400 square miles, i.e. 30% larger than Wales. However, the Navitus zone (No.7) and Nos. 6 and 8 are small. Mainly, the zones are over 12 nautical miles from the coast. Since the offshore zones alone should be able to meet the national wind target, there is choice possible about which ones should go ahead.

Navitus Bay wind power is only 2.8% of the Round 3 national wind target and 85% of the development area lies within 12 nautical miles of the coast. The revised plan of 1100 MW is still 22% more than the budget of 900 MW for this site. From Bournemouth, it takes up about a third of the horizon between Old Harry and St Catherine’s Point. The area is 68 square miles and turbine heights could be from 542 feet to 657 feet. By comparison, Salisbury Cathedral spire is 404 feet. The most affected location is Durlston from where the wind farm would appear as 2.3 times the width of the Isle of Wight and 2.5 times as high.

Despite the distance from shore, do not underestimate your ability to see the turbines. Is it appropriate here? We have two Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, a World Heritage Site, cliffs running in an arc around the scheme and the turbines sited in the mouth of Poole Bay thereby affecting a long coastline. We should ask “Why here?”

The government concluded that offshore farms more than 100 MW should

generally be sited at least 12 nautical miles away from the coast. It is ironic that the Dutch exclusion zone is the same, but unlike here, has been applied to the much smaller Eneco wind farm known as Prinses Amalia.

Comparing the visuals, you will see on the screen that a montage, at the same scale as NBDL's website banner photographs, is so small that you cannot make out the turbines, whereas they can be seen on my next image. Some visualisations are misleading. You can also see the turbines properly on my videos from the West Cliff and Durlston. Finally, look at the 2 black horizontal lines at the Isle of Wight indicating rotor tip height (well above the Isle) and tower height. It is best to take the NBDL A3 size montage book out on to the cliffs and then imagine the position of those two black lines.

Other factors to consider include tourism, birds and noise impact.

5. Mike Greene

Yes, it is very important for us to get a true perspective of the proposed wind farm and I would encourage everyone to look at the Isle of Wight on a clear day and see how large it "feels" to them. Now consider the wind turbines, taller than the Isle of Wight and stretched across the middle third of the horizon. I now hand over to Roy Pointer who represents the new Poole and Christchurch Bays Association (PCBA).

6. Roy Pointer, Poole and Christchurch Bays Association (speaking to various illustrations on screen)

"The wind farm will happen." "The government is determined." "We cannot do anything about it." These are some of the messages we have received from the residents. It will indeed happen, if we do nothing about it! But we and you can do things if we put our minds to it.

The PCBA is a loose network of Residents' Associations (RAs) born from the Hengistbury Residents' Association that has done an immense amount of work on the topic to date. PCBA seeks to work with a wider franchise of RAs over an arc from Durlston to Christchurch. There is now a small Steering Group. About 40 RAs are currently signed up. PCBA is acting as a complementary force to existing opponents of the wind farm; we are not trying to take over, rather we are co-operating and working together in order to help. We are restricting our work against the wind farm to planning matters and are not arguing about the economics of wind power or government policy.

We are already consulting with councils and other stakeholders. However, the level of public interest is still small judging by attendances at the exhibitions by NBDL – 200 Phase 1; 2,000 Phase 2; not known current Phase 3. Phase 4 will be in the autumn and the application made for a consent order in Feb/March 2014. A decision by the Secretary of State is due in 2015. Early action allows time for the developer to change the scheme, or ideally to drop it altogether. At present, his proposals are unacceptably vague.

Our coast here is a gem in the UK crown, one which deserves proper care.

There are impacts on the local economy, wildlife, tourism and sailing. Look at these pictures of the Imax compared with a proposed wind turbine, and the same for Salisbury Cathedral, the Needles and the Isle of Purbeck. You can also see on the screen that the NBDL consultation document (page 25) displays images of turbines which are misleading – rotors are shown as much too small and completely out of scale. This map shows that about 88% of the site infringes the 12 nautical mile government guidance.

Tourism relies on the unspoilt coastal area. In Bournemouth alone, this is £462 million and 12,000 jobs. If there is merely a 1% drop in Bournemouth tourism, that drop could equate to the loss of 100 jobs, i.e. the same figure for permanent jobs that NBDL claim would be created for their wind farm.

We have six work streams for the main objections: visual impact, World Heritage Site, noise impact on health, tourism, birds and sailing/navigation. We shall keep our link with Andrew at Challenge Navitus and provide a news feed to our RA supporters.

There is the 5 April deadline for objections sent to NBDL preferably with copies to MPs and local councillors. We have a model letter available via the RAs' Navitus team leaders on request. If there are 400 objection letters, that is much better than a petition of 400 names. Please get your association linked to us to get regular information.

Think about the 10 years to 2023; this wind farm could then be in place. At present, if you were to bump into someone in travelling around the UK, in conversation, they may say: "How fortunate you are to live in the Bournemouth area!" We would agree. But during our time here, we are guardians of this heritage for our nation and for generations to come.

If the wind farm is built, it will be in operation in 2023. We could then be asked 'How could you have allowed this to happen?' What answer would you give to that question?

7. Mike Greene

I would urge any RAs to join the PCBA, and also to speak to the developer about these things. This time, let me introduce Mark Smith.

8. Mark Smith (Director of Tourism, Bournemouth)

We have here an emotional issue but must be factual and practical in dealing with the planning application. This area depends on tourism, for which the most important factor is the beauty of the bay. The £5 billion turnover supports 18,000 jobs.

Most of the research in this field has been done by the Scottish government including the key issue of the percentage of people affected by wind farms. Between 1% and 9% of people "would not want to go there." If the proposed visit is the final holiday destination rather than just passing through, it is towards the 9% figure. Moreover, some 18% of Scottish businesses would avoid locating near a wind farm.

We have to consider the substantial amount of property in Poole Bay. Holland and Germany are more careful than the UK taking the view that there is no merit in gaining a green benefit if it causes environmental damage. A 2008 study found that property values can be affected and compensation should be paid by the developer accordingly.

We have the right to expect a constructive approach from NBDL. Eneco sent out a press release which referred to its care in protecting beachgoers' views for its Prinses Amelia scheme. They have not done that here. We require the right facts. Although we asked for a tourism impact survey in 2011, only last week did we finally get some limited information and were then given 4.5 days only to review that research. The government may well be concerned at this lack of essential information and of any mitigation plan from the developer. Bournemouth council will now do the necessary research in these circumstances.

In short, we cannot be steamrolled by big business – we must have the facts. If the beauty of this place is spoiled, future generations will ask why we allowed it.

9. Mike Greene

And now to questions and comments. Please make a short comment or ask a brief question.

10. ONE (Frank Harvey, East Cliff resident) – This is a very important issue and the “higher-ups” often get these things wrong. **STOP THIS WIND FARM NOW!**
(Applause)
11. TWO (Mark Chivers, Broadstone) – It is disappointing we have not had the promised debate; instead it has been emotion and the wrong facts. Since tourism figures vary by 33% to 20%, then just 1% change will have no impact. We should really be thinking about climate change policy.
RESPONSE – Mike Greene said there was never a suggestion of having a debate. This meeting was to explore mainly visual impact and give an opportunity for people to give their opinions.
12. THREE (from Green Park, East Cliff) – The Times has been running a series that has referred to Bournemouth, Christchurch, Poole and Swanage in most favourable terms compared to elsewhere in the UK. Part of this has been the tremendous view – it would be silly to lose that view.
13. FOUR (from Southern Road, Southbourne) – Are there any images available of the expected view at night of the wind farm?
RESPONSE – Andrew Langley replied that NBDL has promised a night-time photomontage but in the event, it was not supplied for the exhibitions. However, he is planning to do this although it is not yet clear how many lights there would be.
14. FIVE (Tony Specterman, East Cliff resident) – What information exists about noise impact?
RESPONSE – Andrew replied that there are 2 types of noise airborne and marine. At

present there is no information available to us but we shall be pressing for it.

15. SIX (John Lambon, Southbourne resident) – As the person who produced the comparison of a proposed turbine with the Imax, I was equally shocked but can confirm it is entirely accurate. As for the comparison with the Dutch wind farm, the developer is applying double standards with Prinses Amalia approximately 10% the size of the proposed Navitus Bay and just half the height yet 12 nautical miles from the coast. In our location, it is additionally significant that the turbines are to the south thus seen and emphasized against such a bright horizon. Finally, any loss of production by not developing this unsuitable site can be readily made up in those much larger sites well beyond the 12 nautical miles with the new generation of higher capacity turbines now shown by the developer to be an option. Thus the Government's green ambitions can still be achieved without destroying this national asset.
16. SEVEN (Angela Pooley, East Dorset Friends of the Earth) – This has not been a balanced meeting. It is hypocritical of councillors to oppose the scheme when they have accepted a Dorset renewable energy target of 15% by 2020.
RESPONSE – John Beesley replied that the energy target is clearly a separate matter. Government policy is to reduce carbon. However, he will get an update on where we stand on that at present. Certainly the policy target is not being ignored. Mike Greene added that one must look beyond the headline point here, i.e. the policy actually says to encourage renewables whilst being a responsible local authority.
17. EIGHT (from West Cliff) – The wind farm could be a terrorist target. Many here are about 55 years old, but I am sitting next to a baby now. In 55 years time, the country will have come to its senses and turned over to nuclear power. (Applause)
18. NINE (from Westbourne) – In my early dealings with Eneco in February 2012, I naively thought that they wanted input from the public. So I asked questions. They said they would assess impact on the micro-climate but did not do so as promised saying it was too difficult to model. University of East Anglia tell me it can be modelled. They also promised to provide night views but did not do so. This time the excuse was that they decided it was not important. The question is: “Who will want to book a room facing 150 red lights flashing in the dusk?” I think the night view will be almost as bad as the day view.

19. Conor Burns (MP)

Thank you for arranging to allow the public to be heard today. NBDL do not answer simple questions, the mood of a meeting can become angry and we get no better information at the end of it. As for a debate, we would have that if they shared their analysis with us. We have had an adjournment debate in the House of Commons about this wind farm plan. I think it the biggest issue facing Bournemouth in the last 25 years. It is important for Minister Ed Davey to be fully aware of the large volume of protest. We must safeguard this area for future generations.

20. Mike Greene and Next Steps

This meeting has been about finding out what you think of the wind farm proposal. Please get involved with the PCBA if you are concerned, and also respond

with your comments to NBDL. There have been 380 people here today and many more were not able to attend. There are stacks of sheets for you here to take away – if you feel strongly, take these around your own block of flats or area. Knock on doors – many are not aware of the wind farm plan. We must let everyone have their say whichever way they feel, so please make use of the comment forms on the chairs.

MEETING CLOSED

WAH 27 March 2013