

POULTON & PULFORD PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of meeting held on 26th July 2023

PRESENT : Cllr J Ewins (Chair) : Cllr Board : Cllr West : Cllr Evans : Cllr Franklin :

Cllr D Ewins: Cllr Murray

6 members of the public attended the meeting

Items in RED added before Minutes were issued

1 – Apologies – Cllr Douglas was unable to attend the meeting. PCSO Cain did not respond to invitation to the meeting. **Subsequent e-mail from PCSO Cain stating she is leaving in September and will be replaced by Jamie Carpenter**

2 – Adoptions and Appointments

2.1 – Register of Interests – none raised

2.2 – Peter Hynes has agreed to join the Parish Council with immediate effect. He wishes to focus on ecological and environmental issues

3 – Suspension of Standing Orders

3.1 – Cheshire Elite 10K Road Race 2024 – Michael Harrington (Race Director) did not attend the meeting – **he apologises he thought meeting was on Thursday**

3.2 - Proposed substation off Old Lane – Charlie Steer (CS) (Grosvenor Farms representative) attended the meeting.

3.2.1 CS presented the reasons for the proposed substation – see attachment for details.

The Proposal is to increase the power available to support a BIOGAS scheme in Aldford. This has to be operational by early 2025 in order to secure non carbonisation grants. Power would be taken from, not added to, the grid for the benefit of the Estate. This could degrade power available to Poulton and Pulford residents. The Estate considers the installation of a substation in Pulford woods connecting to the 33 kv HV Power line crossing the woods is the cheapest way to achieve this. No other schemes/options have been seriously considered by the Estate.

3.2.2 Peter Hynes (PH) the resident living on Old lane, the nearest property to the proposed development, then led discussions on the concerns about the Planning Application – see attachment for details.

In summary the main objections to the scheme are : -

a) the Planning application appears to be incomplete/incorrect and has been publicised with minimum notices and no thought to meeting residents of Poulton and Pulford to explain the proposal or to consider residents' concerns.. The residents of Aldford, Saughton, and Churton have been informed although they are much less affected by the proposal.

b) no other options have been seriously considered. There is ample land owned by the Estate to seriously consider viable alternatives that do not disrupt the environment and the ecology of the area

c) the proposed route passes through a cherished piece of narrow prime and ancient woodland which is in the Green Belt. No thought has been given to the environmental and biodiversity aspects of the proposal. It is also likely to disturb/destroy archaeological remains dating back to medieval/roman/ and neolithic times. The area being disturbed is of national archaeological importance

- d) the proposed substation structure is of huge size (11x7 mtrs) – and wider and higher than Pulford Village Hall. The developed site footprint is c 10x greater than the footprint of the substation itself. The entrance is wider than Old Lane itself. It is completely out of character with the Pulford woods area
- e) Should the Application be approved the land would become the property of Scottish Power who would be free to develop it for other energy purposes and there would be no right of veto over this.
- f) PH has appointed advisors to oppose the Planning Application. He has been denied access to the woods to perform an ecological impact survey
- g) CS has been informed that the proposed application must be withdrawn within the next 7 days. Otherwise PH intends to take whatever legal action is possible to prevent the application in its current form from proceeding. CS promised to update PH asap on the response by the Estate
- h) This proposal appears to offer no benefits to either the village or the residents of Poulton and Pulford. In fact it may be detrimental to an aged power supply system to the villages
- 3.2.3. Other concerns were expressed by those at the meeting about the approach adopted by the Estate in this instance when set against a long and cherished history of previous co-operation and support between the Estate and the local village communities. The view was also expressed that avoidable distress and anxiety had been created amongst many residents in connection with a proposal which it had been agreed was based upon the cheapest commercial solution for power supply for the sole benefit of the Estate without a wider evaluation of the wholly disproportionate impact on the Estate's neighbours and local residents and their access to the natural, historic and environmental amenities involved. Further concerns were expressed that the recent extensive and wide felling of trees under the Estate's woodland management program, which the Estate had suggested would also create a woodland pathway for residents, had been undertaken without any indication of the imminent possibility of a large substation development at the same location where the now widened clearance was in part the very route where cable laying for the substation would be required.

4 – Minutes of Annual meeting in May 2023 – approved

5 – Progress Reports

5.1.1 – Police –No report.

5.1.2 – Security App is under development to help persons out on their own or concerned with their safety – a/w update from Police/Neighbourhood Watch - c/f

5.2 – Community Park – report noted (attached).

5.2.1 - Direction signage to the Park – c/f – **Action Cllr Franklin**

5.2.2 - Repainting of Community park furniture complete at no charge, Recruitment of additional safety officer required. Cllr Franklin will organise attendance at a training course – **Action Cllr Franklin**

5.2.3 – Dog fouling – problem increasing - additional warning notices have been erected – c/f

5.3 Bus authorities (Arriva) have been contacted re removal of bus stop – reply awaited.

5.4 Vandalism by school children from Rosset. School - school to warn children

6 - Planning

6.1 – Woodfield Farm – occupiers warned to leave the field otherwise court action to follow – c/f

6.7 – Substation – see item 3.2 above. **Subsequent to the meeting Grosvenor Estate have withdrawn the application – c/f**

6.8 – Brookside Farm extension – it was agreed to submit statement of support to CW&C Planning – **Action Clerk**

7 – Finance and Audit

The following items were noted/approved : -

	Paid In £ 2023/24 May to July	Paid Out £ 2023/24 May to July	ITEMS REF VH or CP are approved by the VH and CP Committees
7.1		2923.67	Recurring Payments made 1 Apr to 24 July – exc Vat
7.2	44	130.97	VH internet contributions (x4) and BT payment (x4)
7.3		930	#gardening May to July
7.4		24	HSBC ransom May to July
7.5	23,808	23,808	VH refurbishment toilets – inc Vat
7.6		187.56	Clerk’s gross pay (Apr to June)
7.7		37.29	Autela Payroll Svces inv 11649 – inc vat
7.8		20	Cheshire Community Action
7.9		835.19	Zurich Insurance
7.10		246	JDH Business Svces inv 4522 – inc vat
7.11		35	ICO Renewal
7.12		15.75	Coronation Bunting – inc vat
7.13		292.98	Planter stuff – inc vat
7.14		14.97	Stationary – inc vat
7.15		175.20	Defibrillator Pads – inc vat
7.16		25	CHALC Course
7.17	To pay >	181	Election recharge
7.18	To pay >	1746.30	Confirmed to pay a single payment for 50 mph limit on B5445
7.19	To pay >	252	External audit fee – invoice received – inc vat
7.20	To Pay >	3968	Transfer to VH account
7.21	On web site		Detailed spreadsheet for 2023/24 showing RECEIPTS, PAYMENTS, ANNUAL RTN 2022/23, and ASSET REGISTER

Finance Status	2 Bank £ 24 July 23	3 o/s recurring payments £ to Mar 24	4 CP Ringfenced £ to 26/27	5 Further Income £ est 23/24	6 Probable One-off Payments £ 23/24
7.22	9276.42	3380.53	3211.01	4095.19 vat 325 rec receipts = 4420.19	6095.30 from above table hence av funds 1009.77

7.23 £ **4647.55** available for Infrastructure improvements **in the Community Park** but an application would need to be made to get access to these funds – **Cllr Franklin** obtaining quotes to access the funds

8 – Correspondence for Information – no comments

9 – Clerk’s Reports & Queries

9.1 Old Lane and Pulford Court pavements – Streetscene to be notified - c/f

9.2 – Ivy Court road surface, costings being prepared and repair scheduled c/f
– ref HW256724200

9.3 – Road surface B5445/Dodleston Lane junction – incorrect ref no – to be resubmitted – **Action Clerk**

9.6 – Defibrillator refresher course – any Tuesday in Oct except the 17th. Rob requires estimate of numbers attending – **Action Clerk**

10 - Councillors Reports, Future Agenda Items, Any Other Business

10.1 – Risk Assessment Reports – No new reports

10.2 - VH update - toilets now successfully refurbished and decorated to a very high standard. In addition 60 new robust, stackable, cleanable chairs have been ordered. Many thanks to Cllr D Ewins and Peter Gosmore

10.3/4 – Grosvenor Estate – update on Pulford Woods operations. Completion scheduled for end of August. Surface and bollard upgrade/replacement deferred till Sept. 4th Planter now installed – **Action Cllr Ewins**

10.6 – Coronation event – successful event - £436 to be claimed from Parish Council – **Action Clerk**

10.7 – Old Lane additional lighting installation – 3rd unit to be acquired but not from Festive Lighting – **Action Clerk**

10.8 – B5445 – 30 mph signs required when entering village from Rosset – discussions taking place with SB – c/f

10.9 - #gardening have just indicated they will no longer cut the Community Park Grass or maintain the VH surrounds. This is with immediate effect, The Council agreed to pay an extra £ 200/month for the remainder of the season, which was accepted by #gardening – Action Cllr Franklin and Clerk

10.10 – The Chester marathon will take place on Oct 8th

10.11 – Cllr Franklin will investigate the tree problems in the Community Park

11 – Date for Meetings in 2023 – agreed - details to be notified.

Oct 25th

DATE	NAME	SIGNATURE
JULY 2023		
JULY 2023		

Proposed substation off Old Lane – Charlie Steer (CS) (Grosvenor Farms representative) – ref 3.2.1 above – a/w Proposal Notes

PH Letter to Planning Officer ref 3.2.2 above re Planning Application 23/01387/FUL

Poulton and Pulford Parish Council

Communication following the Meeting at Pulford Village Hall (Wednesday July 26th 2023)

Communication Date 27th July 2023

For the attention of the assigned planning officer, (Ms. Jo Redmond), regarding planning proposal **23/01387/FUL** - Erection of substation to land south of Old Lane with vehicle access onto Old Lane, installation of underground HV Cable route from Grange Farm Churton CH3 6LA to proposed substation Location: Land to South of Old Lane Poulton Cheshire.

Dear Ms. Redmond,

Following a regular meeting of the Poulton and Pulford Parish Council on Wednesday July 26th the above detailed proposal, (to erect an electrical substation in the woodland off Old Lane and the deployment of high voltage cable connections from a connection point in the woodland, throughout the length of the woodland, through the Eaton Park Estate, under the river Dee and on to Aldford and Churton), was discussed and reviewed.

A representative of the Grosvenor Estate, Mr. Charlie Steer, was present at the parish council meeting to explain why the planning application had been submitted and to answer resident questions regarding the proposed scheme.

The key points arising from the meeting were as follows:

1. It was cited by Grosvenor Estates that the application had been necessarily rushed due to the commercial need to secure non carbonization grants linked to their future process, (for the yet unconsented biogas scheme in Aldford).
2. It was further stated by Grosvenor Estates that no alternative connection routes had been investigated, proposed, or evaluated at this time and that the Old Lane woodland site had been selected simply for expediency and to reduce project cost.
3. The scale and location of the substation were challenged by the council members and attending residents, with the significant scale of both the substation and the surrounding carpark, entrance track and road entrance all being of great concern.
4. Indeed, the proposed substation was recognised to be of huge size, as the village hall was measured and found to be of similar dimensions to the proposed substation (11x7 mtrs) with the proposed roof height actually being higher than Pulford Village Hall (4.3 mtrs).
5. It was also noted by residents that the proposed road entrance to the sub-station would be wider than Old Lane itself and due to the typical 'palisade type' security fencing usually used to secure such a facility, it would be completely out of character with the Pulford woods area. Although this likely negative visual impact cannot be fully verified as no photomontages have been supplied by Grosvenor Estates as part of the application.
6. It was further cited by both council members and residents that the very large compound area indicated in the planning application as the planning boundary for the proposed substation, would be circa 10 times larger than the oversized substation itself, this due to the significant access road, car park and facility entrance way. As this entire area would be subsequently adopted and owned by Scottish Power Energy Networks, (SPEN), it would then become a potential site for further SPEN expansion and development. This in turn could certainly lead to an even more out of character facility.

The site could essentially evolve to become a SPEN depot with both Grosvenor Estates and local residents losing any control or power of veto over future SPEN expansion, which due to the apparent over specification of the sub-station, could be considerable.

7. It was also cited that as there would likely be a perceived future risk of trees falling on to the proposed substation facility, that this would lead to even more extensive tree felling in the vicinity of the sub-station on health and safety grounds, this then leading to greater future degradation of the woodland area.
8. It was stated by one resident, with specific knowledge of high voltage electrical distribution, that the substation was clearly significantly over-sized and over-engineered for the proposed connection and would only serve to maximize the ecological impact on the woodland greenbelt site.

It was accepted by Grosvenor Estates, that they could not verify that the scale of the substation detailed on the application was needed, and that this application had been prepared in an approximated and cursory manner, due to the need for both subsidy application by a pressing deadline and the urgent need to reserve electrical output capacity with the local district network operator (DNO) Scottish Power Energy Networks, SPEN.
9. It was stated by attending residents that nobody disagreed with the Grosvenor Estate ambition to produce low carbon renewable energy and in fact this was certainly supported and encouraged, but for Grosvenor Estates to progress this ambition at the expense of this cherished woodland, at the center of a close rural community, when other options could be evaluated and progressed, was obviously not acceptable.
10. It was stated by council members that the planning application itself was incorrect and misleading, as it clearly stated that no trees, hedges or habitat would be impacted by the scheme. As the scheme would certainly involve significant clearance of trees and hedges and would heavily impact habitat, it was suggested that due to these false claims, that the application should be immediately withdrawn.
11. It was confirmed by Grosvenor Estates that the residents of Aldford, Saighton, and Churton had been informed about the scheme, even though they were significantly less affected by the proposal. This incomplete communication was deemed both very unfortunate and highly inconsiderate by the attending parish residents.
12. It was cited by both council members and attending residents that the proposed high voltage cable route passes through a cherished piece of narrow prime woodland, which is in the Green Belt. It was clear from the presentation by Grosvenor Estates that no thought has been given to the environmental and biodiversity impact of the proposal, as the proposal was repeatedly referred to as a rushed application for commercial reasons. This was deemed as both very concerning and highly regrettable by the attending parish members.
13. It was highlighted by one parish resident with woodland management experience that the planned 'trenching out' for the 33,000 Volt cable would mean excavating a wide channel to a depth of circa 1.5 mtrs, which is approximately the clay level under the relatively thin layer of top soil. Such an excavation operation would certainly impact the root structure of existing trees leading to weakening and instability, with this in turn leading to further tree loss and associated habitat loss.

It was also stated by one resident, who had asked permission from the Grosvenor Estate to allow his privately engaged ecologist on to the proposed site to perform an initial evaluation, that the Estate had not permitted him access to the site to perform the requested study.

It was then highlighted by the same resident that Grosvenor Estates currently had a 24 ton excavator operating within the woodland, impacting habitat and local ecology.

14. It was cited by a local resident who is very active in local archeological matters that the proposed scheme was highly likely to disturb and or destroy archaeological remains dating back medieval, roman and neolithic times, with the area being disturbed known to be of significant, national archaeological importance.
15. It was repeated by Grosvenor Estate that no other options had been seriously considered, which was regarded as both strange and troubling for the attending residents, that the Grosvenor Estate would default to a scheme impacting a cherished local woodland and greenbelt, rather than progress more typical and less controversial grid connection schemes.
16. It was highlighted by attending residents that due to the extensive land and property bank managed and owned by the estate that the estate needed to seriously consider viable alternatives that do not disrupt the environment and the ecology of the area.
17. It was highlighted by one parish resident that whilst the proposed connection is for the benefit of an energy generation facility near Aldford, that the connection was not primarily for feeding energy into the electrical grid. The connection was in fact to draw energy from the grid to power various processes in the proposed , (but not yet consented), bio gas facility. More specifically, it would be used to drive and control the energy generation process. Moreover, this electrical ‘draw’ from the Poulton 33KV circuit would be quite unpredictable, due to factors such as biogas process downtime, facility maintenance, process faults etc. The consequence for parish residents could be significant supply interference and electrical grid system faults, leading to a less reliable local electrical energy supply.
18. It was highlighted by one local resident, with specific electrical distribution knowledge, that the benefiting facility, (biogas facility in Aldford), should work to develop an electrical point of connection in the nearby Aldford and Churton Area – essentially linking to a nearby substation at 11KV.
It was stated by the Grosvenor Estate that there was currently no connection capacity available in the immediate vicinity. It was clarified by the local resident that Grosvenor Estates should work with the local District Network Operator (DNO) to reinforce the substation near to the proposed Aldford facility, rather than progress a 5.4km cable run, under the river Dee and across cherished greenbelt, areas of national archaeological interest and through a much-loved village woodland to a very large and out of character substation.
19. Several residents and council members expressed their significant concern regarding the apparent proactive tree clearance being prosecuted by the Grosvenor Estate, which were still ongoing in the woodland area concerned.
It was stated by one resident that a large 24 ton JCB machine was currently destroying woodland habitat along the proposed cable route of the Old Lane woodland area
It was cited by Grosvenor Estates that this was purely coincidental and that a planned tree thinning operation was underway.
A number of residents expressed their continued concern, citing the very great coincidence that extensive tree clearance had been performed along the proposed cable route, whilst other areas of the wood had apparently no tree thinning operations performed.
20. It was cited by one local resident with specific knowledge of energy generation and distribution that the proposed scheme was routed through the Eaton Park Estate, where ‘step down transformation’, (from 33Kv to 11Kv) was performed.

This was suggested to be an unusual design feature, as the best way to provision electricity is at higher voltage to reduce energy loss – hence interim ‘stepping down’ prior to the end point of consumption, (the Aldford biogas plant), is not logical.

It was further suggested that the reason for this was that Grosvenor Estate likely intended the connection to not only provide electrical power for the proposed biogas scheme, but also to provide an enhanced electrical connection for the Eaton Estate itself.

It was then confirmed by the Grosvenor Estates representative that this was indeed part of the electrical supply plan.

This scheme clarification generated significant concern from the local residents who then recognized that the Eaton Estate would receive an enhanced electrical power connection at the expense of cherished local woodland and greenbelt and the utility of the local residents.

In summary, the scheme to erect a substation on land south of Old Lane with vehicle access onto Old Lane, installation of underground HV Cable route from Grange Farm Churton CH3 6LA to proposed substation Location: Land To South of Old Lane Poulton Cheshire, **was poorly received by the parish council and attending residents of Poulton and Pulford.**

The scheme, which was admitted by Grosvenor Estates to be rushed, due to various commercial reasons, with connection options not fully evaluated and considered, would have very significant and negative impacts to the local ecology, habitat, community and utility of the local village area.

The HV electrical connection scheme, which has now also been found to provide an industrial power connection to the Eaton Hall Estate itself, (in addition to the proposed biogas facility - which was not disclosed in any scheme documentation or scheme description), has resulted in a loss of trust with the estate management and their lack of transparency with the local community and residents.

The conclusion of the meeting July Parish Council Meeting of Poulton and Pulford is that the planning application 23/01387/FUL is most certainly not supported by the Parish Council of Poulton and Pulford.

Friends of Poulton & Pulford Community Park – ref 5.2 above

Chair’s report Tuesday 26th July 2023

Working capital (current bank balance) – treasurer confirmed this as being £1366.58

We are reliant upon one local to do safety checks. Requirement for an annual inspection (Alan Dymond of Morral) NEXT DUE DECEMBER. Loose bolts on seesaw/rocker have now been tightened and hex keys obtained.

Fortnightly Boules sessions have started again in early July with good attendances.

The missing defibrillator sign is now back in the park notice board.

King Charles III coronation event was a resounding success. Thanks to the Friends committee and helpers for their hard work. Positive feedback received from several attendees – **NB we need to claim £386 personal expenses plus £50 village hall rent from the PC.**

Intention to add play graphics to paths. One quote has already been requested. Nick to contact Dan Crabtree (The School Playground Specialists) to procure a further quote. It is proposed that the residual s106 monies be used to fund the costs. Distance markers & Stop sign by gate (stencils) ideally these will be done by the company tendering for the children's play activity

Dog fouling has increased recently, to be regularly monitored. David & Jean Ewins have added several information signs re risks of toxocariasis

Glenys has raised several remedial actions re planting and tree/hedge maintenance - pending

Ryan O'Rourke (CWaC) was contacted again by Nick re fingerpost sign for main road and automatic email response received advising that he has now left the authority! Nick to follow up as will have to start process again by logging with CWaC Highways.

Minor vandalism noted being boules court rake damaged & some toxocariasis notices torn down also as seen by Nick on 24th July one picnic table now has minor graffiti

Intention to hold another charity fundraiser in late November or early December, beneficiary is Dementia UK – further information to follow.

Nick Franklin

26/7/2023