

Rookery South ERF Community Liaison Panel Meeting 11 agreed notes

July 15th, 2019, 18.30 - 21.30.

Marston Forest Centre, Station Road, Marston Moretaine, Bedford MK43 0PR

In attendance: Representatives from Lidlington PC; Marston Moretaine PC; Houghton Conquest PC; Millbrook PC; Wootton PC; Bedfordshire against Covanta incinerator (BACI); Stewartby Water Sports; a Lidlington resident.

Councillor Sue Clarke – Central Bedfordshire Council

Tom Koltis; Neil Grimstone; Judith Harper; Marie Sirven; David Spencer – Covanta Energy

Roy Romans - Minerals and Waste Team CBC and BBC

John Emery, Sylvi Burton – Network Rail

Robin Treacher – Facilitator

Apologies were received from: Cllr Tim Hill; Grant Sorrell; Emma D’Avilar; Neil Goudie.

Resignations and appointments: Peter Neale has resigned from Marston Moretaine PC and been replaced by Chris Martin; David Sinfield was appointed to represent Cranfield PC.

NOTES FROM THE MEETING

Disclaimer: Membership of the CLP does not imply either support for, or objection to, the ERF development. Rather it is an opportunity to facilitate the flow of information between Covanta/Veolia and the local community.

The Terms of Reference for the Rookery South ERF Community Liaison Panel (CLP) as revised in October 2016 can be found on the facility’s website (rookerysouth.co.uk).

Adoption of the notes from meeting number 10: These were circulated in advance of the meeting and adopted without any further amendments.

Wootton PC expressed disappointment the Environment Agency was again unable to attend the meeting.

Matters arising:

- **Vehicle movements.** BACI asked if Covanta would reduce the number of vehicle movements permitted in the DCO from 594 in the consent to a figure around 300 if that is nearer the figure Covanta expects it to be. Tom Koltis said it was not a simple task to change the figure and that Covanta wished to keep the number given in the DCO.
- **Time taken to download DCO file.** Covanta’s IT team had investigated. The website contains both the decision file which was relatively small and the application document. Covanta agreed to look at the proposal to breaking the application document into sections with an index which would speed up download times.
- **Newsletter delivery database.** Covanta is reliant on the Royal Mail database which is only updated sporadically. This is the most reliable available to it. There has been an increase in the number of properties on the database. Covanta agreed to contact the eight parish

councils in the consultation footprint and offer to supply the newsletter (in a suitable format) for download from village social media pages to ensure a widest distribution to include recent new residents.

- **Site visit.** Councillor Sue Clark expressed disappointment the possibility of a site visit had not materialised for that evening. Covanta proposed to run several visits for a smaller number at a time due to the complexity of arranging a visit for all the CLP together. An unauthorised video of the site was said to be available on social media. Covanta agreed to circulate some potential visit dates as suggested by Houghton Conquest PC.

Judicial review update (verbal report – Tom Koltis)

The Appeal had been heard before 3 judges earlier in the month and it had been available to view live (a link provided by BACI was circulated to all CLP members). Date of outcome is not known but perhaps before the summer recess.

Community Energy Initiative (verbal report – Neil Grimstone)

The Community Energy Initiative has been closed to residents now. The cut-off point was 28th June. Over 3,000 of about 10,000 households who were eligible and 23 Not-for-Profit organisations had signed up for the discount – currently worth £64.35 p.a. (it is index-linked back to 2016). It is the only scheme of its kind in the country.

A Lidlington resident said she felt many residents had not signed up as a “silent protest”.

Q:Tim Fossey from SWSC asked if the water sports club was eligible for this grant; it is. Covanta would check if an application had been submitted.

Community Trust Fund (verbal update - Neil Grimstone)

Two organisations were being considered to run the Community Trust Fund (GrantScape and Bedfordshire & Luton Community Foundation). One would be appointed towards the end of the construction period. The Trust Fund would be accepting applications from the end of the construction period.

Construction update – Marie Sirven, Covanta Project Engineer (see presentation slides)

- Construction is on time, the compound and temporary car park are built, most of the piling is done (some 8,000 piles) and concrete pouring which started in May is continuing.
- A “civils” crane is on site (i.e. a smaller crane for the civil engineering construction works); two more process construction cranes are scheduled to arrive. The waste bunker will be complete by the end of August. The underground services (drains etc) are still being installed. The programme is as before and is in stages:
 - Civil works and reinforced concrete – in progress
 - Mechanical & Electrical (M&E) installation as a number of packages in parallel – starting February 2020
 - Boiler Testing
 - Cold Commissioning of all equipment} 9 months
 - Hot commissioning with waste}
 - The plant should be operational by early 2022.

Q: Councillor Sue Clark asked if permission for 24-hour pouring of concrete was required: permission had been granted for this (longer hours) and is being monitored – especially for noise; noisier activities such as deliveries were scheduled for daytime; pouring only is at night so it was less noisy. This will continue until 22nd August. Covanta also monitors noise levels. The constant flow of concrete helped with quality control and was far preferable than external batching being delivered to the site.

Q: Lidlington PC asked if the crane on site was of similar height to the stack to be built there as the crane is visible from the back of his house: - the process crane will be 70m and is lower than the stack, which will be half as high again.

The grid connection from the Marston substation is scheduled for this summer and will involve a temporary road closure to lay cables under Green Lane.

Q: Tim Fossey asked for assurance that access to the SWSC would always be maintained: Covanta is working with UKPN and will work with the club when finalising details, providing as much notice.

The road closures are expected to be towards the end of August.

A mains water supply connection will also be brought to the site via Stewartby village and will mean further roadworks. No dates are available yet, but this is likely to be the latter part of August.

Q: Lidlington PC asked if a large volume of water would be needed for the EfW process: most of the volume required will be to supply the large water storage tank for fire protection; process water required would be much smaller as it is recirculated and not discharged.

Q: Lidlington PC also asked if hot weather would adversely affect the quality of the new concrete being poured: rain was a greater issue, but both were manageable.

Q: Marston Moretaine PC asked how many daily lorry movements there are currently. Covanta undertook to find out.

Q: David Spencer asked how many people are currently employed on site: about 150 but this number will ramp up over time.

Q: Houghton Conquest and Lidlington PCs asked how many of the 150 are local: Covanta didn't have the figures to hand but agreed to a presentation on employment figures relating to the site at the next CLP meeting.

Q: Lidlington PC asked how many people would be employed on site once the plant was operational: about 50 full time.

Monitoring of the Development Consent Order - Roy Romans, Minerals and Waste Planning team leader (see presentation slides)

Q: Houghton Conquest PC asked if the department could issue a "stop order" if there was a breach of the DCO and could it prosecute the developer: they do have that power, but would need to consider if it was in the best public interest ahead of any prosecution and whether a violation was significant enough to merit a prosecution.

Q: Wootton PC asked how site monitoring took place: it is a combination of local authority officers and Covanta's own monitoring staff. Roy Romans had been to the site recently at night

to check. If CBC received complaints, the council would investigate and take appropriate action – as it does with the 100 other sites it monitors.

Q: *Houghton Conquest accepted that approach would work for noise but doubted it was reliable for other breaches on site as no-one other than Covanta would be aware of them and he asked how regularly a council officer makes a visit:* site visits are regular, and tend to be based on the programme focusing on new site activities. They will be more frequent when his team (currently two staff short) is fully staffed. One of the new officers would have this development as a major task to monitor.

Q: *Houghton Conquest PC also asked if visits were announced in advance:* some can be unannounced up to the point of requiring access through the security gates. The Council has powers of entry which can involve the police and it has used them on another site, but it is rare.

Q: *BACI asked how many sites does Roy Romans monitor which are of a similar size to Rookery South ERF and with a 105-metre stack?* The CBC team currently monitors a smaller scale waste incineration plant where the issues are similar, but Rookery will be the largest Energy-from-Waste facility

Councillor Sue Clarke added the council does regular site monitoring and the useful experience is irrespective of the size of the site. The council's responsibilities are not the same as the Environment Agency's and the Council's monitoring is more planning based such as vehicle movements.

Q: *BACI asked if the vehicle movements agreed in the DCO can be altered downwards:* this would be a matter for the developer. Changing the DCO is complex and Covanta is not intending to change the permitted lorry movement figure.

Q: *Marston Moretaine PC queried the quality assurance process for concrete and Houghton Conquest PC expressed concern over the lack of independent quality checking relating to the 24-hour pouring of cement:* Since deregulation the law allows companies to employ their own inspectors – they do not have to use the local authority.

A specific presentation on Q.A. monitoring was proposed for a future CLP meeting. CLP members should notify the meeting facilitator, Robin Treacher if they wish this.

Q: *Wootton PC asked for an explanation as to what would qualify for spending money in the "public interest" if councils are "strapped for cash":* the Council would not wish to spend money on acting where there is no apparent adverse impact on the environment or local population but would direct limited resources to where they are most needed. Where there may be an occasional minor technical breach, the planning authority will flag up these so that small ones do not accumulate to become major.

Q: *Houghton Conquest PC asked what percentage of Roy Romans' staff time is devoted to the Covanta development:* numbers are not available, but it is a lot as it is a big site. It will be the main task for a replacement member of staff about to join the team, who is expected to be 'up to speed' by the next CLP meeting. The new case officer for the project, Anita Taylor, would be attending future CLP meetings.

Level crossing upgrade - John Emery, Project Sponsor from Network Rail (see presentation slides)

- The upgrade of signals, a new crossing “deck”, barriers and signs will take place next summer (2020) and require two weekend road closures. The new crossing will be functioning by the end of 2020.

The CLP will be notified when the two weekend road closures will take place.

- Barrier down time per train would increase to 3-4 minutes (from one to 2 minutes) and that by 2020 the number of trains each way per hour may increase from one to two, however the additional train will not stop at Stewartby and so the barrier will be down for less time than for a stopping train.

Q: *BACI asked that as other crossings in the area are due to be closed and replaced by a bridge, why wasn't Green Lane included:* a bridge at Green Lane crossing had been an earlier consideration and a feasibility study had been done. The location was not suitable as new bridges needed to have additional height to allow for future electrification, which requires a longer ramp, affecting more land and access points.

Q: *Houghton Conquest PC expressed concern about the adequacy of the turning lane for site access given the increase in barrier down time and an increase in trains passing through:* the barrier would need to be down for about 4 minutes an hour and this would improve safety at the crossing.

Q: *Lidlington PC asked that as the barrier might be down for 5-10 minutes if trains were due to pass in opposite directions. could the local council look at the junction again given the new information and an increase in housing:* The detail (in a Section 278 agreement) was only approved this year so new housing had been taken into account.

Q: *BACI suggested it should be reviewed because at the time of the DCO it was thought only dustcarts would be using the access but now it is planned to use much bigger vehicles:* There is no new information; it was known from the start that the deliveries would primarily be by large vehicles carrying bulked up waste and of two proposals this was considered the best.

Q: *Houghton Conquest PC suggested that the amount of time the barrier would be down would be trebled as a result of the improved safety features - which he welcomed - and additional trains. He felt the impact on traffic, however, had not been fully understood or assessed.*

Councillor Sue Clark reminded the meeting that planning rules stipulate that subsequent planning applications must take into account the impact of granted applications.

Roy Romans added the access road layout was approved at the beginning of this year.

Q: *Lidlington PC asked if there is likely to be an increase in freight traffic on the rail network using the crossing:* this would be highly unlikely because of lack of available freight pathways on the main lines at either end.

Covanta news

Covanta will let the CLP know when the next edition of Covanta News is due to be published and delivered.

Millbrook PC asked if she had missed an edition as she had not seen a copy for a long time and was told she had not.

Q: *Houghton Conquest PC said people were still moving into the area unaware of Covanta's development and requested that more copies be made available via Parish Councils using websites and social media.* Covanta will contact the 8 Parish Councils in the consultation footprint and offer to supply future editions to them.

CLP member questions (refer to slides)

- **Bridleways** A Lidlington resident, Covanta and the Council have been discussing a suggestion that the footpaths and cycle ways covered by the project should be upgraded to bridleways. Tom Koltis asked the CLP for opinions about horse riders sharing Rights of Way with pedestrians. Lidlington PC observed it can “churn up” the surface and Roy Romans added bridleways require a higher specification than footpaths. Houghton Conquest PC said the paths would need to be wider. Councillor Sue Clark said there should be discussions with the council’s Rights of Way (RoW) officer and Roy Romans said that ideally bridleways should link into a network and be looked at strategically. Covanta is continuing to discuss this with RoW officers.
- **Perimeter fence security** Houghton Conquest PC had expressed concern previously and was assured that the fence is inspected on a regular basis and any repairs required are carried out by the contractor HZI. No deer have been seen on site in recent weeks.
- **Nassau whistle-blower** Millbrook PC asked for more information about a media report in the USA about ‘toxic ash’ involving an American whistle-blower. It was explained that there is a lawsuit ongoing; the motivation for the media coverage was linked to an unfair dismissal claim by a former Covanta employee which was still on-going. However, the plant’s regulators do not consider there are grounds for any action to be taken against Covanta.
- **Stack height v crane height** Millbrook PC asked how much higher the ERF stacks will be compared to the crane which can be seen working on site. The crane is about 70m and the stacks will be 105m from the base of the pit.
- **Noise out of permitted hours and continuous cement pouring.** Wootton PC and Councillor Sue Clark asked for more information as there had been reports of noise at night in early May. Covanta reported that construction hours were extended to 24 hours from May 15th (until August 22nd) and there was no activity on site after 7pm when the noise was first reported. Concrete pouring 24/7 started on June 17th and has not resulted in any complaints. A leaflet about 24/7 working was distributed in the area and visits were made to the nearest properties.
- **Stack emissions** Following a statement by BACI, Millbrook PC asked for reassurance that emissions from the stack will not contain Nitrogen Oxides, Carbon Dioxide, Heavy Metals and Particles PM10, PM2.5 down to PM0.01. Covanta and EA are to supply and circulate an answer.
- **Emissions can be exceeded for more up to four hours.** A Lidlington resident wanted to know if it is true that the Environment Agency permit allows breaches of emissions limits for up to four hours. She has a neighbour with breathing difficulties. This is a question for the Environment Agency to respond to.
- **Heavy metals and Stewartby Lake.** Councillor Sue Clark on behalf of Stewartby Water Sports Club wished to know how heavy metals would be prevented from getting into Stewartby Lake. Covanta/Environment Agency will respond after the outcome of the Judicial Review is known - as this was a matter raised in the JR.
- **Flood risk protection.** Lidlington PC asked how the site would cope in the event of a 1:100-year severe flood: there had been a full flood risk assessment in the Environmental Statement which took this into account and it was included in the low level restoration scheme for the site; the ground levels had been raised in some parts of the site and the plant platform is raised above the bottom of the pit. An extensive network of drainage channels deals with rainfall.

- **Air monitoring.** *Marston Moretaine PC asked if any wind flow monitoring was taking place using the tall civil crane.* Covanta was not doing so but there would be monitoring when the facility is operational.
- **Environment agency.** It was noted the Agency had been unable to attend the last two meetings. **Q:** *BACI asked if it was to do with Agency staff on a work-to-rule and that it did not bode well if there was an emergency.* Covanta said that it was disappointing the EA could not attend but this was for personal reasons and not a work-to-rule issue.

Next Meeting

It was agreed the next meeting – number 12 – be held at the Forest Centre, on Monday, October 14th, 2019 starting at 6.30pm