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Mr Rob Pridham
Department for Energy and Climate Change
Onshore Consents Team
Area A, 3rd Floor
3 Whitehall Place
London
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9 March 2012

Dear Mr Pridham

E.ON PROPOSED ROYAL PORTBURY DOCK RENEWABLE ENERGY PLANT

The Parish Council writes further to the 9th December 2011 invitation to comment on E.ON's Environmental Statement Further Information Report with regard to constructing a 150MW biomass renewable energy plant at Royal Portbury Dock in North Somerset.

The Council did not respond to the 20th January 2012 reply deadline noting a) that it was not itself a statutory consultee and b) that the statutory consultees, including Natural England on environmental impacts, had mostly expressed themselves as satisfied that their concerns had been met.

However, information has now reached the Council concerning reports in the press and on local television news about potentially serious ill-health effects affecting local

residents in Avonmouth caused by wood dust in the atmosphere emanating from a woodchip processing plant operated by Stobart Biomass Products Ltd (part of the Stobart Transport Group) which has been established to source and distribute biomass fuel to renewable energy market. It is understood the facility brings in waste timber and other plant materials, before turning it into wood chippings to be exported for use as biomass fuel in generating electricity.

Residents have complained of clouds of dust rising from open wood piles on the dockside during crane operations in dry weather since October last year which has covered their gardens, cars and homes, and reported that they have been blighted by colds, chest infections, sore throats and coughs. One young mother, interviewed for local television news and reported in the press, has been so concerned for the health of her baby that she has reported the matter to the Health Protection Agency which has confirmed that prolonged exposure to wood dust (which may contain chemical carcinogens) would be injurious to health.

It is understood that the Environment Agency has withdrawn Stobart's exemption for chipping the wood, meaning that they can no longer chip wood at the dock site until the EA is satisfied that they have satisfactorily addressed the problem with dust, but the company can still bring material to the site and export it. Nonetheless, residents remain seriously concerned and there appears to be a blanket reluctance from the EA and the company to discuss details in public of the discussions that continue in progress to find a solution to bring the problem fully under control.

It is against this background of concern that the Council wishes to reserve its position in commenting on the E.ON biomass proposal at Royal Portbury Dock given that the company will import up to 1.2 million tonnes of chipped or pelletised wood fuel each year with up to 360,000 tonnes delivered by truck. If the fuel is presented in that form and is fully enclosed without further processing there is unlikely to be a problem. If, however, the wood is exposed in fuel piles to be moved or lifted by crane and is or may be subject to further processing, there very clearly will be a serious environmental health concern as with the Stobart operation on the opposite side of the Avon estuary at Avonmouth.

The Council would be very grateful therefore if, under a Freedom of Information Act request, you would disclose:

- The exact nature and dust causes of the health problems complained about by residents in Avonmouth;
- HPA and EA assessments, including atmospheric dust concentration samples and other environmental data, of the likely impact on residents' health;
- The measures that will be taken by the EA and Stobart Biomass to satisfactorily address the problem.

The Council will then return to the E.ON consultation on the Further Information Report and would respectfully ask that nothing further is done to determine the application by the Secretary of State under Section 36 of the 1989 Electricity Act, until the Council has been able to take up a position and express its view.

Yours sincerely

SARA THOMPSON
Parish administrator