



PORTBURY PARISH COUNCIL

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19 November 2012

The Right Honourable Dr Liam Fox MP
Member for North Somerset Parliamentary Constituency
House of Commons
London
SW1A 1AA

Dear Dr Fox

Further to the letter you have recently received from my predecessor, Les Summerfield, concerning the routing of the 400Kv power lines through Portbury, please find below an update following the latest parish council meeting, held on Tuesday 13th November, which was attended by a large number of residents. An invitation was extended to National Grid to attend and they were represented by two members of their PR team, Ivan Stone and Aileen Smith.

For three years Portbury Parish Council have been engaging with NG to agree a route through the parish, NG offered a choice of two routes and, by negotiation, Portbury Parish Council were able to use the most favourable elements of routes A and B to create a route C proposal. All PPC discussions and suggestions were confined to the NG routing corridor which has been clearly defined on the consultation documents since 2009. We were given to understand by NG that this was to become their preferred route.

It has come as a tremendous shock to both the parish council and the residents to learn that NG now plan to route right through the centre of the parish, giving no prior warning and very little time to respond.

The very real and serious concerns of both the residents and the parish council can be summed up as follows:

No warning or consultation prior to releasing the information

Very short consultation period – it ends on December 18th.

NG are already entering into negotiations with local landowners over compensation, they held a meeting on Saturday 17th November, in Portbury Village Hall for NG land agents and local landowners, the meeting was closed to the general public. The provisional booking for the hall for this meeting was made on August 31st, further indicating that the revised routing plan has been in existence for a considerable time before it was released into the public domain.

There is no mention of Portbury in the latest documentation from NG, everything revolves around the views etc. for Portishead, ignoring the fact that Portbury will be dissected by the new route, plus, it will pass extremely close to our 2 major residential areas and in addition to any concerns regarding illness caused by the EMF, it will be an extremely visually intrusive feature.

What also concerns PPC and residents is that with the removal of one 132kV route, and the burying underground of the second route, land to the east of Portishead will now be available for building. This land is green belt and is a badly needed buffer zone between Portishead, Portbury and Royal Portbury Dock. Our Ward Cllr. Nigel Ashton, fought a very long and intensive battle to preserve this as green belt and we would not wish to find that his efforts were in vain. PPC has already written to major developers, and to North Somerset Council, seeking confirmation, or denial, of any approaches made to local landowners regarding possible land purchase or pre-application planning advice.

The proposed route will be yet another blight on the rural aspect of our community, we already suffer from the M5 and the Highways Agencies continuous works program to enhance the motorway for holiday makers, plus continued maintenance works, much of which is carried out at night. In addition there are plans to build a biomass power station on the docks, leading to more overhead power transmission routes and local road disruption during the building phase and then subsequent operational fuel movements. The final nail in the Portbury coffin, are the plans by the docks company to use a certificate of lawful consent to build 16 x 70m high, wood pellet storage silos on the docks, the silos being higher than the deck level of the M5 motorway bridge over the River Avon.

As a community we have accepted the need for a pylon route through our parish and we have worked hard to minimise its' impact on us by working closely with NG. It appears that NG now believe that our lack of outright objection to the original proposals indicates that we will accept the new proposals with little complaint, our last meeting shows how wrong they are.

In closing, we appear to be a forgotten rural community who seem to be constantly having to punch well above our weight and are under siege from external organisations who do not wish to respect our rights or listen to our concerns.

Anything that you can do to help us with our pylon campaign will be very much appreciated and we look forward to receiving your considered reply.

Yours sincerely

P Cooke

Peter Cooke

Chairman

Portbury Parish Council

Cc Cllr. Nigel Ashton

Encl: Pages 26 and 27 of the Autumn 2012 Hinkley Point C Connection Project, Draft Route Overview Report.