

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

15 July 2020

Present: Councillor R Owens (Chair)

Councillor P Baker, Mrs D Clements, Councillor K Doolin, Councillor M Evans, Councillor P Harries, Dr M Havard, Dr R Heath-Davies, Mrs S Hoss, Mrs J James, Councillor M James, Mr GA Jones, Councillor P Kidney, Councillor PJ Morgan, Councillor A Wilcox, Councillor M Williams and Councillor S Yelland

[Virtual Meeting 10.00am – 11.20am]

1. Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Dr RM Plummer.

2. Disclosures of interest

The following Member(s)/Officer(s) disclosed an interest in the application(s) and/or matter(s) referred to below:

Application and Reference	Member(s)/Officer(s)	Action taken
<i>Minute 7 below</i> NP/19/0539/FUL – Apple Tree Gallery, Saundersfoot	Councillor P Baker	Personal interest disclosed, so remained in the meeting.

3. Minutes

The minutes of the meetings held on the 3 June, 10 June and 1 July 2020 were presented for confirmation and authentication.

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on the 3 June, 10 June and 1 July 2020 be confirmed and authenticated.

NOTED.

4. Right to speak at Committee

The Chairman informed Members that due notification (prior to the stipulated deadline) had been received from interested parties who wished to exercise their right to speak at the meeting that day. In accordance with the decision of the National Park Authority of 7th December 2011, speakers would have 5 minutes to speak (*the interested parties are listed below against their respective application(s), and in the order in which they addressed the Committee*):



Reference number	Proposal	Speaker
NP/20/0222/FUL <i>Minute 6(a) refers</i>	Installation of underground electricity cables (including below ground joining bays and one above ground link pillar) and underground fibre optic cables; temporary construction compound and construction haul roads, Linear site extending from the intertidal sand flats at Freshwater West to Neath Farm, Rhoscrowther, Pembroke	Mr Tom Brinicombe, applicant

5. Members' Duties in Determining Applications

The Solicitor's report had been updated and summarised the role of the Committee within the planning system, outlining the purpose of the planning system and relevant considerations in decision making, the Authority's duty to carry out sustainable development, Ecological considerations, human rights considerations, the Authority's guidance to members on decision-making in committee and also set out some circumstances where costs might be awarded against the Authority on appeal.

One Member sought clarification of the geographical extent of the Authority's area of responsibility as a planning authority. It was confirmed that the boundary of the National Park as established in legislation ended at mean low water; beyond that a marine licence from Natural Resources Wales was required.

NOTED

6. Report of Planning Applications

The Committee considered the detailed report of the Development Management Team Leader, together with any updates reported verbally on the day and recorded below. The Committee determined the application as follows (*the decision reached follows the details of the application*):



- (a) REFERENCE: NP/20/0222/FUL
APPLICANT: Mr T Brinicombe
PROPOSAL: Installation of underground electricity cables (including below ground joining bays and one above ground link pillar) and underground fibre optic cables; temporary construction compound and construction haul roads
LOCATION: Linear site extending from the intertidal sand flats at Freshwater West to Neath Farm, Rhoscrowther, Pembroke

It was reported that this project proposed a subsea and underground electricity interconnector linking the power markets in Ireland and Great Britain. Greenlink (the applicant) would provide a new grid connection between County Wexford (Ireland) and National Grid's Pembroke substation. The power would be able to flow in either direction, depending on supply and demand in each country.

At the previous meeting of the Committee, it had been resolved to carry out a virtual site inspection for this application and the minutes of that meeting had been agreed earlier in the meeting (Minute 3 refers). The application was before the Committee as the development required an Environmental Impact Assessment, was classed as a major application and was also of public interest.

The report explained that the cables would be laid by a mixture of underground horizontal directional drilling and trench cut and fill, with the initial section between mean low water and the landfall compound to be done using underground drilling as this area was particularly sensitive in landscape terms. It went on to outline the key issues to be considered and concluded that taking into account National and Local policies and having regard to all material considerations, the development was considered to provide an energy scheme while maintaining the special qualities of the National Park and would not impact on privacy or amenity of neighbours. As such, and subject to a schedule of suitable conditions, the development was acceptable. It was recommended that, subject to no material objections arising from outstanding consultation, that the application be delegated to officers to grant planning permission subject to the conditions outlined in the report.

At the meeting, the Officer advised that consultation responses from Cadw and Angle Community Council remained outstanding. It was confirmed that both were aware of the application, Cadw having commented at earlier stages of the process, and Angle sending an email seeking clarification regarding the directional drilling. With regard to the concerns expressed by Valero, the agent had confirmed that the cable route would not cross any operational pipelines. Nevertheless the cable



would be laid in ducts and would be thermally controlled to manage the dissipation of heat. It was not anticipated there would be any effect on crops in the vicinity. Measures would also be undertaken to control soil compaction and bio-security.

With regard to issues raised by Members at the virtual Site Inspection, the officer advised that the local AM and MP had been advised that the application would be considered by the Authority that morning. Discussions with the agent had confirmed that small marker posts (a maximum of 600mm above ground) would be needed to show the location of the underground cables at key crossing points and indicative drawings and map of locations had been submitted. However a condition would be included with any permission to cover their final design and location. The Agent had also confirmed that the link pillar would be a secure, lockable structure which would not require any security fencing. Finally it was anticipated that on completion of the work, the land subject to trench cut and fill would be returned to the landowner as bare land, for their ongoing management, rather than re-seeded.

With regard to the conditions set out in the report, the officer advised that additional conditions were required regarding an archaeological scheme of investigation and requiring details of the link pillar and marker posts to be agreed.

There was one speaker, Mr Tom Brinicombe, the applicant. He explained that from the outset the company had adopted an open approach to communication with statutory consultees and the local community, and he considered the proposals to be sensitive and well designed. Once Freshwater West had been selected as the preferred site, stakeholder consultations had commenced, and several issues had been raised as a result, particularly the importance of maintaining access along the B4320 road and the sensitivity and importance of the beach and dunes for wildlife and recreation. As a result, and following geotechnical and geophysical surveys, the company had committed to complete these sections using Horizontal Directional Drilling, as well as using this method beneath a small wooded area. They had also agreed not to undertake any work during July or August.

Concerns had been expressed that the cable could become exposed on the beach, however it was very important to the company that this did not occur, as it was considered nationally important infrastructure. Two topographical surveys had been undertaken, one following a storm which had removed material from the beach, and these had informed the decision regarding the depth of the cables and the applicant was confident that they would not become exposed.



Acknowledging the importance of Valero as a local employer, Mr Brinicombe reassured Members that the high pressure pipeline would be protected throughout the construction process and the companies were in the process of finalising an asset protection agreement; there would be ongoing communication with the company.

In terms of the timescale, it was anticipated that the compound would be in situ for three months, however the weather would be one of the factors which determined how long the work would take. The directional drilling would take approximately two weeks and there would be a rolling construction programme for the cut and fill trenches. However the company would continue to communicate with local stakeholders and would take care to protect the quality of the National Park throughout.

Members asked a number of questions regarding the safety of beach users while underground drilling was taking place, particularly as the project could generate significant local interest and Mr Brinicombe reassured them that due to the depth of the drilling, there would be no need for the beach to be closed and that no vibrations would be felt on the surface. He anticipated that staff would be present when the cables were being pulled through to ensure that the public maintained a safe distance. He added that the company was open to suggestions for maximising the educational opportunities of the project. Referring to the 10m depth of the cables, one Member sought reassurance that this was referenced to a datum point.

Another Member asked about the employment potential of the project and Mr Brinicombe replied that it was anticipated 250 full time equivalent jobs would be created during the construction phase of the project, and that Welsh Government were keen that the benefits of the project be felt in the local economy.

The recommendation of delegated approval was moved and seconded, and those Members confirmed that their motion was subject to the amended conditions referred to by the officer. Before any voting took place, the Solicitor reminded the Committee that in order to vote, Members must have been present for the whole debate; even if they had gone out of camera shot, they had to have been able to hear everything that was said.

Some Members wished to be reassured regarding the robustness of the condition relating to the written archaeological scheme of investigation and the action that would be taken should any significant finds be made, suggesting that an archaeologist should be on site while the trenching work was being undertaken. Officers explained that Dyfed Archaeological Trust would be involved in assessing the written scheme of investigation



and this would include the contingency in the event of a significant discovery.

DECISION: That, subject to no material objections arising from outstanding consultations, the application be delegated to the Chief Executive / Director of Planning / Team Leader to grant planning permission subject to conditions relating to timing, accordance with plans and documents, Construction Traffic Management Plan, Landscape Ecological Management Plan, Construction Environment Method Plan, lighting, mitigation, landscaping scheme, contamination, de-commissioning, written scheme of archaeological investigation and details of the link pillar and marker posts.

7. Appeals

The Development Management Team Leader reported on 3 appeals (against planning decisions made by the Authority) that had recently been determined by Welsh Government, and copies of the Inspector's decisions were appended to the report.

NP/19/0530/FUL Meadow Farm, North Cliffe, Tenby had been allowed (not dismissed as stated in the report), while NP/19/0539/FUL Apple Tree Gallery, The Ridgeway, Saundersfoot and EC/19/0097 3 The Glen, Little Haven had been dismissed.

Expressing concern at the decision to allow the appeal at Meadow Farm, one Member urged officers to closely monitor the conditions forming part of the permission, particularly those in respect of landscaping, given the prominence of the site.

NOTED.

