

**DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
(Site Inspections)**

2nd April 2012

Present: Mrs G Hayward (Vice-Chair – in the Chair)
Messrs A Archer and D Ellis; Councillors M James and PJ Morgan.

(Site Inspection: 10.30a.m. – 1.50p.m.)

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Ms C Gwyther and Mrs M Thomas; Councillors JS Allen-Mirehouse, JA Brinsden, RR Evans, HM George, SL Hancock, RM Lewis, WL Raymond and M Williams; Mr EA Sangster.

2. Chairman's Introduction

The Vice-Chair welcomed Members, the applicant and interested parties to the meeting and reminded them that the purpose of the visit that day was to enable Members to acquaint themselves with the application site. No decision would be made until the planning application was considered by the Development Management Committee at its meeting scheduled to be held on the 16th May 2012.

3. NP/11/527 – Installation of 15kw wind turbine and associated foundation pad & underground cable; Philbeach Farm, Dale, Haverfordwest

The Planning Officer reminded Members that the above-mentioned application had been deferred at the meeting of the Development Management Committee held on the 21st March 2012 in order that a site inspection could be undertaken.

The applicant proposed to erect a 15kw wind turbine on his land and, to aid Members in their deliberations, he had erected a pole to the exact height of the extended blade and had also placed a flag at hub height. The height of the structure had been verified by the Planning Officer.

The Planning Officer stated that he had no more to add to the report that was presented at the previous meeting of the Committee, and which had been reproduced for Members' information for the site visit. He added that Members would go on to view the site from various public vantage points once the site inspection proper had concluded.

Members asked the applicant, Mr Smithies, to explain why he thought the proposed location was best for his turbine, to which he replied that he had looked at many different locations but decided that the other sites would be more visible. He was of the opinion that the camp buildings on



the former Dale airfield were already visible on the skyline, therefore the turbine would be less intrusive with those buildings as a backdrop. He added that he had also taken into consideration the possible impact the structure would have on the biodiversity of his holding, and had concluded that the site put forward was the best as it struck a balance between protecting biodiversity and getting enough wind to work the turbine.

Mr Smithies went on to say that planning permission had been granted for a telephone mast with satellite dish at Dale Hill House, which would reach the same height as the camp buildings and would be higher than the proposed structure. He added that 90% of the wind blew from the south-west; by erecting the turbine in this particular area he would be sacrificing a lot of southerly wind, but the other alternative would be to erect it on the other side of the road to his farm, which would be far more visible.

In response to a question from Members about how the turbine would be erected, Mr Smithies answered that he had a right of access along the camp road, therefore it would be no problem to bring the relevant components on to the site for erection.

Community Councillor Jessop informed Members that the planning application had been widely publicised throughout the area, and Dale and Marloes Community Council had held a Question and Answer session on the matter. No objections had been received from anyone in the community, while several letters of support had been submitted by immediate neighbours. He went on to expand on Mr Smithies' explanation for choosing this particular location by saying that there was a very sound reason for not going lower down in to the valley; to get maximum payback a turbine needed to be erected as far away as possible from large buildings because they created a vortex effect. He calculated that a decrease in efficiency of approximately 20% would be experienced if the turbine were erected further down the valley.

Pembrokeshire County Council's Highways Officer informed Members that the Highways Authority had no objections to the application. Their only concern was whether the turbine would arrive whole or in sections, although the applicant's agent had not confirmed one way or another. Having said that, the Officer stated that a 50m length would not be an issue as articulated lorries frequently visited the site in connection with the farm's current potato growing operation.

Mr H Davies of the National Farmers' Union stated that the NFU supported the ability of farmers to produce renewable energy. He expressed concern that National Park Authorities across Wales appeared to be trying to prevent farmers from benefitting from renewable energy.



He added that it was against the ethos of the National Park to try and change an area that had traditionally used more modern techniques in farming.

Mr Smithies then referred to the ruins of two windmills that could be seen from his property, one of which had been restored by the community including the Friends of the Pembrokeshire National Park.

In response to a question from Mr Walmsey, School House, the Director of Park Direction and Planning stated that the Development Management Committee had to take into consideration national and local planning policy when determining planning applications. Landscape character assessments, undertaken by the Countryside Council for Wales, also had to be considered and the Marloes peninsula was classed as a moderately sensitive area with rolling lowland.

The Vice-Chair then thanked everyone for attending the site visit that day, adding that their comments had been noted and would be taken into consideration when the Committee considered the planning application further at its meeting scheduled to be held on the 16th May 2012.

Officers considered that it was important for Members to see the site, particularly in its wider context, from the surrounding area and Members concluded the inspection with a tour around the Marloes/Dale peninsula to assess the proposed wind turbine's impact on the surrounding landscape.

