

EAST STOKE PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF EAST STOKE PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON THURSDAY 16th SEPTEMBER 2010

PRESENT Cllr Rebecca Cady, Chairman
Cllr Karen Barnes, Vice Chairman
Cllr Neill Child
Cllr Damian Cullinane
Cllr Barry Quinn (District Councillor)

APOLOGIES Cllr Tib Axon

IN ATTENDANCE 9 Members of the Public
Mrs Julie Wright (Parish Clerk)

1 Public Participation Time

Letters were handed to the Parish Council from Mr Hearne, Beehive Cottage, and Mr and Mrs Topp, 1 Manor Farm Cottages objecting to the applications 6/2010/0534 and 6/2010/0535.

Mrs Sue Burden spoke about the additional information which is now attached to the plan. This focuses on how the fields from Holmebridge to Rushton can be made viable for entry into the Higher Level Stewardship Scheme. This entails raising the water levels to 25cm from 1st November to 28th Feb which is the wettest time of the year, and impounding the water with sluices and banks.

Local residents know that the river overflows into the fields to depths in excess of this during the winter anyway, but this is natural and naturally the water will drain away. Again, local residents have noticed that over the last two to three years the ground water levels have been getting higher so that it is taking longer for surface water to drain away. This has happened since sluices were installed at a Keystone project a little downstream of Holmebridge.

The Environment Agency and the Keystone Project have been unable to say that without doubt it is not the cause of the increased water levels.

Until this can be proved planning permission for any further projects should not be given.

Another comment made was that these planning applications could not be viewed online in the evenings of Tuesday 14th and Wednesday 15th September.

Mr Phil Thorkildsen commented that Ms Baker could not prove that the project already installed was working. What is the plan if the project is not successful? Need proof that the project does or doesn't work? If this project is to improve land management then why have the existing sluices fallen into disrepair?

The Keystone project plans for the River Frome are to improve biodiversity and enhance the grazing pasture. There has been no Public meeting to explain the benefits of the project.

Mr Paul Whitmarsh stated that a similar project in Cumbria to the ones proposed (6/2010/0534 and 535) had been abandoned.

Mrs Topp had a visit from Mr Maxwell of the Environment Agency and showed him the river and where the flooding occurred earlier in the year.

There is a drainage meeting to be held on Tuesday 28th September for those residents who have experienced drainage problems with their septic tanks and soakaways.

The water table is not mentioned in the reports for these applications by Footprint Ecology.

Household insurance by the NFU no longer covers ground water flooding if you live within a certain distance from a river. Purbeck District Council will have to pay for the damage caused by the schemes and they have liability insurance to cover this.

The main drainage channels must be kept clear (blocking these is against RSPB advice), allow the scrapes and depressions that would hold water for the breeding birds but do not have the sluices. There is no longer evidence of lapwings in this area. The RSPB website has been updated, its advice on sluices has been replaced by Case Studies. Mr Hartigan, Planning Officer, came out for a site visit but Mr Bird has declined a site visit with Mr Burden

The trees that have been removed have meant that bats are no longer seen in the area where the trees were. Was a bat check carried out prior to the removal of the trees?

The Chairman, Cllr Cady, read out a letter that had been received from Judith Baker, Biodiversity Project Officer from the Keystone Project which addressed the earlier comments made by the Parish Council on 6/2010/0069.

The Purbeck Keystone Project's Frome Valley Project has been set up to help manage water levels on the floodplain, especially in times of low flow. This means that as floodwaters recede, the sluices and bunds will hold back some shallow patches of surface water on the floodplain for the benefit of wetland biodiversity and the restoration of lowland wet grassland. No additional water is being added through this method. In times of flood the sluices and bunds make no difference and are overtopped or submerged, whereas as waters recede then a small amount can be retained in localised areas. To this end the project has support from a wide range of conservation organisations and land managers.

The schemes at Rushton and Holmebridge formed part of an earlier application which was withdrawn following local concerns. As a result a further detailed flood risk assessment was commissioned with guidance from both the District Engineer and Environment Agency Officers. This report has reiterated that there would be no flood risk to property as a result of the proposed schemes and that, in the case of Holmebridge, no additional water would be funnelled into the ditch that empties into the Frome as was feared.

The Environment Agency have strongly indicated that the flood risk assessments for this scheme are way above and beyond what would be required for this scale and type of work. They have also been extremely conservative in nature and have been produced by national experts in flood risk modelling. The works have been given land drainage consent.

In response to earlier objections from the Parish:

The hydraulic modelling, produced by independent consultants has been approved and assessed by the Environment Agency and the Purbeck District Engineer. Also an additional flood risk assessment has been produced focused in detail on local properties, which is available to view on the Purbeck Planning Website.

The threshold height of the nearest property at Holmebridge is 50cm higher than that of the proposed bund. Also, significantly, the bund and sluices are upstream of these properties and will impound water away from the properties.

Representatives from Natural England have helped steer and guide the Frome Valley Project from the start. They also administer the Higher Level Stewardship Scheme which farmers enter to manage their land for the benefit of wildlife, landscape and resource protection. They are not so much “marking their own homework” as endorsing and supporting the biodiversity benefits of the projects.

The Environment Agency has been a partner on the project to help deliver their biodiversity targets. They do however have a statutory role under the Land Drainage Act 1991 to issue or refuse Land Drainage Consents, which even applies strictly to the works carried out by their own departments.

This concluded Ms Baker’s letter.

Further comments from the public were the height of Forge Cottage is given 3 different heights in the reports (varies from 4.03m to 4.92M). This cob cottage would soak up water. The ground water level has increased through the valley not just at Holmebridge. The Keystone project has had 3-4 years to answer questions and finally want to speak 2 days before Purbeck District Council’s planning board on 30th September.

The Chairman closed the public participation period.

2 Apologies for absence

Apologies were accepted from Cllr Tib Axon.

3 Declarations of personal or prejudicial interest in any items on the agenda

None made.

4 Planning Applications

a) **Pre-application request for scoping opinion.** Proposal to develop a quarry plant site adjacent Hyde Pit.

No comments.

b) **6/2010/0534** - Area of Frome floodplain, land upstream of Holmebridge. Installation of water level control structure and low soil bund on agricultural flood plain land.

The Parish Council **objects** to this application.

There is an increased risk of flooding to properties due to rising ground water levels.

The supporting documentation does not refer to rising ground water levels.

The models used for have been verified but there is no evidence that they have.

There are errors in the data for example there are 3 different heights given for Forge Cottage.

The quality of the scanned maps on the internet makes them illegible.

There was no evidence provided that the project (6/2006/0666) has improved the bird population.

There has never been a problem for farmers getting grass from the meadows.

c) **6/2010/0535** - Area of Frome floodplain land below Rushton. Installation of water level control structures and low level soil bunds on agricultural flood plain land

The Parish Council **objects** to this application. **The same comments are to be submitted as those for 6/2010/0534 above.**

- d) **6/2010/0410** - Bindon Lane (Long Coppice), East Stoke. Erect extension to form rooms under new higher roof, erect replacement garage and stables and form new vehicular access to dwelling. Re-validated bat/barn owl survey and tree report
No comments.
- e) **6/1997/0492** - Masters South Sand Pit, Gallows Hill, Wareham. (East Stoke).
Determination of conditions for mineral site. **No comments on the Environmental Statement.**
- f) **6/1997/0493** - Masters North Sand Pit, Gallows Hill, Wareham. (East Stoke).
Determination of conditions for mineral site. **No comments on the Environmental Statement.**
- g) **6/1997/0494** – Hyde Sand Pit, Gallows Hill, Wareham. (East Stoke). Determination of conditions for mineral site. **No comments on the Environmental Statement.**

5 Matters for discussion and/ or inclusion on next Agenda

Septic Tanks and the Environment Agencies consent for discharge, newsletter, dog bins and Planter for War Memorial.

6 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Parish Council will be held on Thursday 7th October 2010 at 7pm.

Chairman:

Date: