

**COLTON PARISH COUNCIL MEETING, WEDNESDAY 3rd FEBRUARY 2021
AT 7:00 PM BY ZOOM VIDEO CONFERENCE**

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (Maximum of 20 mins at the beginning of the meeting to hear public questions and comments)

Presentation from company called Spring on proposals for a solar farm project at Colton Mill Farm and Cawarden Springs Farm –

Presentation given by Hugo House, who is a founder and director of the company, and was a summary of information on their website at <https://www.springche.com/cawarden> Also information in January parish magazine.

To be known as Cawarden Solar Farm and be a 40 year project, to help address the climate emergency declared by UK and Staffs County Council. To cover 60ha, currently growing cereals and grass, and to generate 50mW, enough electricity for 15,700 homes. Suitable site as can connect on-site to Rugeley overhead power lines and brownfield, previously landfill, with no heritage and low ecology. Public footpath will be retained. Will include a wildlife corridor to boost potential wildlife habitat including increased hedgerow, a wildflower meadow and various ponds. Visualisations of how the solar panels and other features will appear, after installation and after 10 years, are on the website. Company have been consulting locally since December (site falls into Mavesyn Ridware parish too) and questionnaires completed by public so far are generally supportive. Planning application to be lodged soon.

Flooding – Dave Hughes from Environment Agency joined the meeting to update on his progress investigating causes of flooding on Blithbury Rd near The Yorkshireman, including how Moreton Brook might contribute. PC had recently supplied information about flooding by the brook bridge and that SCC had been to clear gulleys near the bridge and by the school. However former now blocked again and latter had been blocked by tree roots for a long time. Dave Hughes said he would contact Highways again and a non-return valve on pipes from the gulleys might help. Also recommended the PC and parishioners report blockages again. Gully by railway station opposite Yorkshireman is also blocked and floods across road when it rains heavily. Mary Lee had said that unblocking that gully had been listed as one of her 6 priorities for SCC Highways action. Recent heavy rain and high level of Trent had caused brook to back up. Dave Hughes had found that drainage from rooves of terrace of houses at end of Blithbury Rd is all piped back and drops in to Moreton Brook channel. When water is high there, it backs up and wells out of the gutters, which was why residents had recently needed to pump out from their gardens. He plans to put dye down those rain spout gulleys to see where it comes out and possibly put a non-return valve there. Thinks what happens in Blithbury Rd is dictated not just by level of Trent but combination with water coming down the brook. Next step is to model the brook and its structures, looking at the contributing catchments, different water flow intensities, where it will spill out and effect of different levels of the Trent at the end. They would then also consider the impact of de-silting, improving culverts and a cost-benefit analysis. It would be helpful for the model to be shared with locals for review. Dave Hughes also said that he had been liaising with Blithbury Rd residents, signposting them to means of checking rainfall and river levels to help them anticipate flooding danger.

Parishioner – Re item 10 a) viii) on Flooding under Bellamour Lane bridge. Despite reports to Highways of blocked drain going back 11 months, getting no useful response. Currently lane had been blocked for nearly a fortnight. Unable to receive deliveries or have refuse collected. Appreciates that flooding may occur but water does not drain away as quickly as river falls. All it needs is a site visit and action to unblock 1 drain.

Parishioner to send photo and **Clerk** to contact Mary Lee seeking urgent action.

(No member of public may address meeting hereafter).

BUSINESS AGENDA

1. To note attendance and receive apologies for absence

In attendance were Chairman Emma Godwin, and councillors Sarah Plater, Steve Jenkinson and Noel Talbot, district councillor Shirley Barnett and Clerk Alison James. Also in attendance were Richard Birkin, Richard Cox (Conservative candidate for forthcoming County Council elections) and 4 members of the public.

2. To receive declarations of interest

Emma Godwin – items 8, 9 a) i), 9 d) and 15 b)

3. To approve minutes of meeting held on 13th January by video conference

Approved and signature to be obtained at a later date (Clerk)

4. To co-opt new councillor(s)

Richard Birkin was co-opted into one of the seats which had been vacant since the May 2019 elections. He was welcomed to the council and explained that he had lived in the village for 25 years. Another councillor would be co-opted at the March meeting.

5. To receive Declaration(s) of Acceptance of Office

Richard Birkin had previously supplied his signed Declaration of Acceptance of Office to the Clerk, who then signed as Proper Officer. Clerk to supply details and Register of Interests form to LDC and check confidentiality arrangements.

6. Chairman's Announcements

Parishioners to line the streets for the funeral of Nev James the following day.

7. Payments

- a) To ratify the following payment (approved in principle at last meeting subject to confirmation from Internal Auditor):

- i) 1837 St Mary's School PTA (*payee name t.b.c.*) – £600.00
Donation in support of various projects, due to
Covid lockdown

Shirley Barnett said that she had taken 2 Chromebooks to the school that day, a donation from LDC of refurbished computers. Chairman explained that the PC did not have the power to donate money to the school for equipment (such as Chromebooks) to support the National Curriculum, as that was the responsibility of SCC as the education authority. However SPCA had advised, and the internal auditor had confirmed, that a donation could be made to the PTA as a charity, for the advancement of education and if in the public benefit, especially given the current circumstances due to Covid. The PC had therefore agreed the donation for school projects to show support during the difficult times for the school community.

- b) To approve the following payment:

- i) 1838 Alison James – Clerk's salary, February (239.82);
Home working expenses, 3 weeks, 16 Jan – 5 Feb
(12.00); Re-imburement for Zoom licence 26 Jan
- 25 Feb (14.39); Re-imburement for 2nd class
stamps (3.96); BGC Clerk salary, 3 mths, 1 Oct
- 31 Dec (137.50) less tax (27.50) £380.17

(Total new payments above, for approval this month = £ 380.17)

The above payment was approved.

8. HS2

To consider any developments and agree any action required – Clerk had received email that day about HS2's annual meeting with affected parish councils and would circulate. The PC had not felt there was value in attending itself.

Clerk was asked to email Liz Davis to report that the fence at Hamley Fields had fallen into the road.

9. Planning Matters

- a) To note the following application and any more recent applications and make observations to the Planning Authority:
 - i) 21/00037/FUH – Bellamour Hall, Colton Road, Colton – Single storey extension to side and rear to form ancillary accommodation/granny annexe – No comments were made by councillors
- b) To report on any recent decisions of the Planning Authority - None
- c) To consider any further action required on application 18/01303/FULM – Proposed gas fired power station on Land North of Bellamour Lane – At the last meeting, it had been agreed that a further response would be sent to Claire Billings about dissatisfaction with transparency and accuracy of documents on website. However, in response to further information from Andy Chappell, it had been agreed that it was a battle not worth fighting with LDC at this time so no response was pursued.
- d) To consider any action required concerning proposed solar farm project at Colton Mill Farm & Cawarden Springs Farm – Presentation at start of meeting had proved valuable. **Emma Godwin** to put website link on village Facebook page. Circulars had been sent by the company to houses local to the site and it would be interesting to hear how many of the responses came from them (**Clerk**)
- e) To consider any other current planning/enforcement issues – Re works at The Yorkshireman, LDC Enforcement had written to owners but not received a reply so would chase. However, PC agreed LDC should be asked to make a site visit (**Clerk**).

10. Highways & Footpaths

- a) To report on progress and agree any action required:
 - i) Flooding including Blithbury Road and Colton Road by the Yorkshireman and discussions with Environment Agency – Covered during Public Participation.
 - ii) Enquiries into possible dredging of Moreton Brook below weir – It was commented that de-silting may be a more appropriate description and Dave Hughes appeared to be considering de-silting under the brook bridge. Staffs Wildlife Trust had been approached and a response was awaiting from their Rivers Restoration team (**Clerk** asked to chase up in 2 weeks' time). Noel Talbot confirmed he had offered to meet SWT if they wanted to make a site visit. It was suggested that follow up contact should be made with Dave Hughes after March meeting re modelling of brook flow, if nothing concrete heard (**Clerk**).
 - iii) Footpath alongside Colton Rd – Enquiries made with a local contractor about cost of works on footpath, following such expensive and completely unfeasible costs quoted by SCC Highways. It was thought there was scope for a community effort to clear the footpath and that SCC might be supportive and give permission. **Clerk** to contact Liz Davis to see if HS2 Community Fund might support.

- iv) Any other footpath issues – Waiting for update on Footpath 11 gate from SCC so remove from agenda until further report received (Clerk).
- v) Further concerns about safety of Blue Wall – LDC Building Control inspected wall and agreed it was unsafe but have just said they will not be closing the footpath.
- vi) Safety on corner at junction of Blithbury Rd and Hollow Lane – Reports received of 2 vehicles having gone into the hedge, possibly when icy. Clerk had reported online to Highways requesting signage on bend.
- vii) Update on clearing of drains on Bellamour Way and
- viii) Blocked drains under Bellamour Lane bridge – Both items covered during Public Participation
- ix) Offer from parishioners to litter pick along Colton Rd if PC provides appropriate equipment – Standing orders revoked for wider discussion: Litter is also a problem in other areas of the parish and there may be other volunteers prepared to help e.g. if there was a community effort once a month. LDC had confirmed they would supply bags and collect them when location is reported on their website. Richard Cox, as Cabinet member, said that he was keen to support community action and would provide equipment if possible, as he had for other local parishes. Clerk to email to formally request support.
Sarah Plater said that she had again reported the missing bin near the brook bridge. Clerk to include in email to Richard Cox. Also TGM had quoted a cost of £45 per occasion to grit High Street.

11.To consider progress and further action required on proposed new village gating/signs

Sarah Plater had measured and photographed the signs at Abbots Bromley and circulated with parishioner's revised designs. PC agreed preference for smaller design without wings used by Abbots Bromley. Clerk to check on requirements for pre-application advice from LDC. PC agreed that revised design should be included in parish magazine to keep parishioners informed (Clerk/Sarah Plater).

12.Correspondence

To note items of correspondence received and agree any actions required:

- a) SCC - Regular updates on community testing for Coronavirus (Emails)
- b) Community Foundation of Staffs – Covid-19 lockdown appeal for donations to help community organisations supporting those affected by Covid-19 (Email)
- c) LDC – Council proposing tighter regulations for dog owners (Email) – Shirley Barnett said LDC had successfully taken a Tamworth dog owner to court recently for failing to clear up after their dog. It was agreed there was a problem around the village and on the Martlins. Clerk to ask PLT if they would replace current faded signs with something more prominent. It was noted that there was already an article going into parish magazine on this.
- d) Staffs Police – 'Your police. Your voice.' survey, to give feedback on crime and policing in Staffordshire by Monday 8th February (Email)
- e) Staffs Fire & Rescue – Various community safety flashes about fires in the home and risk factors to avoid (Email)
- f) CPRE – Invitation for anyone to take part in Star Count 2021 between 6-14 February (Email) – Clerk to send again to Emma Godwin to put on village Facebook page, as may be a good activity for children.

13. Committees

To receive any update from Burial Ground Committee – TGM had cleared leaves that morning and Sarah Plater had done a general tidy up, with remaining Christmas decorations left till the end of the month provided in good condition.

14. Finance and audit

- a) 2020/21 – To receive any update from Clerk on arrangements for interim audit – Hoped it would go ahead the following Friday morning (Clerk).
- b) 2021/22 - To note request submitted to LDC for precept of £11,739
- c) To receive update on amendment to bank mandate – PC agreed this should be deferred to next meeting to include new councillors (Clerk).

15. Parish Council matters

- a) To discuss progress on filling vacancies on the parish council – Positive response received with 1 new member this time, another agreed for next meeting and a further expression of interest. Clerk to follow up latter.
- b) To update on progress with renewal of Heathway grazing licence – PC had agreed last time to type up own document. However, as there may be changes to legislation references e.g. post Brexit and Hinson Parry had quoted cost of only £25 plus VAT, PC agreed to instruct them again (Clerk). Clerk to also set reminder to put next renewal on agenda for September 2021.
- c) To consider suggestion of possible duck race in village in 2021 – Noel Talbot confirmed that plastic ducks could be obtained at reasonable cost via the internet and so PC agreed it would be good to run this event in the summer, subject to Covid developments. Clerk to keep on agenda.
- d) To update on request from parishioner as to whether there is any land in the parish that could be made available for allotments – Two councillors had spoken to a parishioner about a previous suggestion of suitable land. Clerk to follow up with PLT Clerk.
- e) To register any interest in SPCA training courses, including Risk Assessment and any suitable for new councillors – Clerk to send Richard Birkin the link to SPCA's training database. Shirley Barnett mentioned that the Parish Council Toolkit might be useful to look at too. The Good Councillor's Guide was already sent by Clerk to anyone expressing interest in becoming a councillor. Sarah Plater on waiting list for SPCA's free risk assessment course.
- f) To note date of next PC meeting – Wednesday 3rd March at 7.30pm