

OULTON: ANNUAL PARISH MEETING: MINUTES

At the Annual Meeting of the Parish of Oulton held in the Old Congregational Chapel, Oulton on Tuesday 17 June 2022 the following were present:

Susan Mather – Chairman of Oulton Parish Council

Twelve members of the public

In attendance:

Wendy Murphy – Clerk of Oulton Parish Council

Heather Jermy (National Trust)

Stuart Banks (National Trust)

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from PC L Ward, Mr G Peck and Mrs Sue Catchpole (District Councillor)

2. Minutes

The draft minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting 2021, having been circulated, were accepted as correct and signed by the Chairman

4. Chairman's report

Oulton Parish Council (OPC) held 8 meetings during the 2021/22 period: -

8th June 2021

21st July 2021

7th September 2021

19th October 2021

30th November 2021

18th January 2022

22nd February 2022

5th April 2022

During that period Oulton PC has discussed and responded to 3 planning applications, along with one planning appeal.

Two applications were approved: a change of use of a residential outbuilding to an Airbnb, which was approved with conditions, and a revised application for a 28MW solar farm.

The original application for the solar farm has been submitted for appeal by the applicants, following the decision by BDC to refuse permission in 2021. OPC participated in the appeal in April 2022 and a decision is due in a few weeks. If the appellants are successful this would allow a potential change in the layout of the solar farm site.

A proposal for a large poultry unit with a new residential property was submitted to both North Norfolk District Council & Broadland District Council,

as the site crosses three parish boundaries: Corpusty with Saxthorpe, Heydon and Oulton. There has been considerable environmental concerns from the Parishes and North Norfolk DC. This has resulted in the need for further responses from the applicants. It is still awaiting a decision.

Broadland District Council (BDC)

20211112 Monks Cottage, Blickling Road, Oulton, NR11 6NX: Demolition of existing conservatory and conversion of existing outbuilding to create new Air B&B accommodation, including small side extension and raising existing roof level.

OPC Supported application

BDC APPROVED subject to conditions.

20211249/20211288 Land north of The Street, Cawston: Ground-mounted solar farm including associated infrastructure, namely inverters, transformer, a DNO substation and grid connection.

OPC Objected to application on grounds of the use of Best and Most Versatile land grade 2/3a and 3b land, cumulative impact with existing Solar farm and NSIP application SEP/DEP cable route accessing the same site
BDC APPROVED subject to conditions.

20210249 Lime Kiln Farm, Holt Road, Heydon, NR11 6RD: Proposed poultry unit to include poultry building, agricultural dwelling & new access
AWAITING DECISION

North Norfolk District Council (cross parish boundary application)

NNDC PF/21/0317 Lime Kiln Farm, Holt Road, Heydon, NR11 6RD:

Proposed poultry unit to include poultry building, agricultural dwelling & new access

AWAITING DECISION

APPEAL 20201776/ OPC attended appeal held on 5th April 2022.

OPC attended and participated at the appeal

AWAITING PLANNING INSPECTORATE DECISION.

National Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs)

The last twelve months has seen the conclusion of two National Infrastructure projects, **Vattenfall's Norfolk Vanguard and Norfolk Boreas projects**, which concluded with their final decisions.

The decision on **Norfolk Boreas** was announced on 10th December 2021, which saw the granting of their Development Consent Order.

The final decision on **Norfolk Vanguard** followed on from the project's previous permission being quashed at **Judicial Review**. Norfolk Vanguard had to go through a re-determination process, culminating in the Secretary of State for BEIS granting a Development Consent Order on 11th February 2022.

OPC has also participated in the **Sheringham and Dudgeon Extension Project's** consultations and a recent information day. **The Sheringham and Dudgeon Extension Project** held Phase 2 of their consultation in 2021 and Equinor added a further information day which was held in Aylsham Town Hall in March 2022, which OPC attended. Equinor have updated their cable route and locations of temporary compounds. Oulton PC have been told by Equinor that several of the previously proposed road closures and redirected routes have now been removed as they intend to use Horizontal Directional Drilling (HDD) under all roads and rivers along the cable route and will make more use of the haul road, which runs alongside the cable route.

OPC will seek to make sure this is implemented as part of the Examination process.

Oulton PC wrote a robust letter to Equinor on 26 th April 2022, reminding them of the suggestion that had been made at the Aylsham Town Hall meeting by at least 4 Parish Councils, namely that Equinor should return to National Grid and BEIS and vigorously request, in light of changed circumstances, a different and more rational grid connection point – **before** they enter the planning process.

A more strategic approach could be achieved in the case of SEP/DEP by a marine export cable running along the coast westward to The Wash and joining the national onshore electricity grid at Walpole. Alternatively, connection could be provided at the currently mothballed **Sutton Bridge power station** nearby, where there is capacity that could accommodate the projected output of SEP/DEP.

Equinor has not yet done us the courtesy of responding.

This project is due to submit its application to the Planning Inspectorate sometime in the next few months.

Orsted's Hornsea Three and Vattenfall's Norfolk Boreas were eligible to be entered into the **Contract for difference (CfD)** auction process which started on the 13th December 2021.

This is the mechanism whereby projects secure finance, including subsidy, for their projects and if they are successful will then proceed to construction. The results will be announced in July this year.

Norfolk Vanguard was not eligible for this year's CfD auction and will have to wait until the next one in 2023.

This will mean for Oulton **that Orsted's Hornsea Three Main Construction Compound** will be constructed potentially late 2022/early 2023, as pre-construction works require the use of the compound.

It was noted that survey work has been carried out on the southern end of The Street recently, for the Highway Intervention Scheme which is required to allow for two-way HGV movement to the Main Construction Compound. OPC

are still awaiting a response from Orsted on timelines and are disappointed by this lack of liaison so early in the construction process.

Vattenfall's Norfolk Boreas would also proceed; we are being told that pre-construction work will begin at the end of this year 2022. OPC is a little uncertain how the sister project **Norfolk Vanguard** will fit into the timelines, as it should have preceded Norfolk Boreas.

Vattenfall held a Community Benefit Fund meeting in Reepham on 11th May which OPC attended. This meeting was a fact-finding exercise, trying to gauge what communities are seeking in terms of funding, and who might be eligible.

The available funds are £15m over the 25 years of the project, which equates to £600,000 a year.

OPC did reiterate that Equinor should still be seriously considering the use of an OTN and that this Benefit Fund process is premature and inappropriate when there are so many major planning conditions and mitigations still unresolved - a suggestion was that they take their £15 million away and use it to contribute to the rapid evolution of an OTN.

Not all Parish Councils have had a meeting with Vattenfall, so at this stage it is unclear how this will work. Vattenfall will be having further meetings in July. Vattenfall propose to start the funding application process when they start pre-construction works at the end of 2022.

The funding eligibility criteria seek to promote sustainable living - ideas for potential projects are welcomed.

Offshore Transmission Network Review.

Alison Shaw has been very proactive in galvanising support from other Parish Councils for an Offshore Transmission Network and as part of the BEIS OTN Review Alison has attended online webinars and written responses. She gave an update as follows: -

The last year has been a turbulent, exhausting and difficult time.

However, since Christmas several more parishes have joined the Norfolk Parish Movement for an Offshore Transmission Network (OTN) – which is an offshore ring main scenario – and the group now has a truly impressive membership of 95 Parish and Town Councils spread across the whole of Norfolk.

Despite concerted, reasoned and well-informed opposition to the currently proposed method of connection of these wind farms to the grid, the government has however ploughed on wilfully with granting consent to individual projects under the present environmentally destructive arrangements.

Your Parish Council has worked hard on your behalf to try to *change* the situation over the past 5 years and this work has improved the arrangements in some important ways. Sadly, however, the current scenario will still significantly affect the quality of life in and around our parish for several years to come.

So, what are we facing now?

Norfolk is currently in the position of facing the onshore disruption from three enormous offshore wind farm projects – Orsted’s Hornsea Three and Vattenfall’s Norfolk Vanguard and Norfolk Boreas – all now with development consent. It is important to note that all three of the panels of Planning Inspectors – appointed to conduct a 6-month public examination process in each case – **recommended refusal**. And in each case that recommendation was **overturned by the Secretary of State**.

The latest OTNR update was hosted by the Dept. for BEIS by webinar on 31 st January 2022. We had already received before Christmas the disheartening news that the long-awaited publication of the **Holistic Network Design** (of the OTN) was to be delayed from January until May this year – but we now learned of further slippage until July. This sort of delay is not helpful to our cause. Emily Bourne, Director of the review, said that “it is clear ... that the meaningful change this Review needs to deliver ahead of 2030, through its Pathfinder Projects, must not just look at where infrastructure can be coordinated and shared connections taken forward but also seek to ensure that any shared connections ...do so in **the most appropriate place**.”

I wrote to our MP, Jerome Mayhew, in his capacity as Vice-Chair of the OffSET group of MPs established to scrutinise the work of the OTNR, to ask for his impression of the January OTNR webinar. He replied in the following terms: “...I am not sure that we have learned a great deal more than we already knew as a result of it. I think that the focus of attention should be to increase the political pressure to accelerate the timescales associated with the OTNR. It feels as though the system is relaxing into a comfort zone of process rather than outcomes.”

Sadly, many attendees had formed a very similar impression.

Defibrillator

OPC sought to raise funds for a defibrillator, with the recent generous donations from Councillors Steve Riley and David Harrison and local businesses, along with existing funds from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) held by OPC, we reached our target.

As Oulton is a dispersed village, two defibrillators would be ideal. The money raised was enough to purchase two machines, and a decision was made to purchase the second machine. OPC is now looking for another suitable location to site the second machine; the site needs to have an electrical connection, this would use a small amount of electricity.

Paul Killingback gave further details on the defibrillators and a training workshop is going to be arranged. Residents are encouraged to contact OPC if they would like to participate.

Covid Plaque

In October 2021 OPC responded to a request from the Lord Lieutenant of Norfolk, The Lady Dannatt, who had along with other benefactors set up funding for Covid Plaques. These plaques were to be presented to all Parish

Councils who requested them on behalf of their community. The plaque was in recognition of communities pulling together during the covid lockdowns. The logistics of getting the plaques to the Parishes proved a bit of a logistic nightmare, however in January this year Oulton received theirs, it was presented to me by our local Deputy Lieutenant Charles Barratt. The plaque will be installed in the churchyard. The National Trust have offered an oak stake to mount it on, this offer was gratefully accepted by the Chair.

Parish Councillors

OPC is currently down by two members, with only five members, it would be good to have seven people on the Parish Council.

The Chair made a request to residents for residents to consider joining and taking the Parish Council forward in the coming years.

Planning applications which have been challenging the Parish Council over recent years and indeed have taken over our lives may be putting many people off.

It is not expected that anyone volunteering would be thrown in at the deep end planning wise. It is hoped instead that the Parish Council could get back to doing more things locally, like walking rights of way and tree and hedge planting.

Volunteers

Besides Parish Councillors, we as a village are in desperate need of volunteers to help erect the marquee and help out at village events. The current volunteers are beginning to feel their age, some younger volunteers would be wonderful. The natural order of older volunteers being replaced by younger volunteers seem not to be happening. We all have busy lives, but this lack of volunteers could result in the loss of parish events, which would be very sad. Please consider making the contribution of a small amount of your time to your local community. Oulton is a wonderful place to live - let's keep it that way

5. Annual Report from the Police, District Councillors, County Councillor, National Trust, the Church

Police – No report given

District/County Councillors - No report given

National Trust

Heather Jermy, the General Manager at Blickling, and Stuart Banks both spoke. They confirmed that they would provide a wooden stake for the Covid Plaque. They confirmed that the team at Blickling have been working hard with the Hall and gardens open again after the pandemic. They confirmed that they were please that events were now going ahead with 3 concerts planned in July. A list of these had been distributed in the community newsletters. There is lots of conservation work being done and a grant for the Queens canopy has been accepted and this will go ahead in Blickling Park in due course. They confirmed they was keen on achieving

good relationships with the community and members of staff had been appointed for each parish. Stuart Banks would be Oulton's representative. Helen confirmed that she looking at reopening the Blickling school to be used as a community centre. They are engaging with residents in the surrounding villages regarding verge parking and will be promoting the overflow carparks with flyers and leaflet drops.

The Church

Rev Andrew Whitehead gave an update on what has been happening in the church, at Oulton and Cawston. It is hoped that funding could be obtained for a toilet and a servery extension to Oulton Church, this would make the space more practical for community events. How this will be funded is still being looked at, there was a suggestion that there may be an opportunity for funding from Vattenfall's Community Fund if the project meets the right criteria.

Sue Hall gave an update of upcoming events proposed over the coming year. Oulton Hall will be taking part in the National Open Garden Scheme on Sunday June 5th with the church providing teas, request for Cakes and help was made. The main fund-raising event for this year is Oulton Open Gardens which will be on Sunday 3rd July, again a request for help setting up, taking money at the gate and teas along with making cakes was made. This year's open gardens will be in Oulton Street.

Box day

Alice Martineau gave an update on Box Day 2022 which this year is later in the year as other events have conflicted with the usual date in June. The date has been moved to Sunday 4th September, the timing and other information will be announced nearer the time, but it is expected that Box Day may start earlier in the day and finish earlier in the evening, due to September days being shorter than in June. Paul Killingback requested help with setting up the marquee for Box Day as Paul will not be here and volunteers are urgently needed.

Hedge Planting

Alison Shaw asked for volunteers to be able to help on November 13th to look at planting hedges around the Playing field with a small group to maintain these.

6 Residents' questions

None

The Chairman then thanked everybody for attending and declared the meeting closed at 21.50