

## **FECKENHAM PARISH MEETING.**

**23<sup>rd</sup> of July 2024.**

**7.30pm Back room, Feckenham Village Hall.**

### **Agenda:**

#### **Welcome and introduction.**

#### **1. Apologies.**

Cllr Rob Oaten, Cllr B Clayton and Cllr Mike Rouse.

- 2. To approve draft minutes from the last parish meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> April 2024.** The minutes of the meeting was accepted as a true record.

#### **3. Innova BESS Application.**

A “pop in” meeting had been arranged by Innova on Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> July between 15.00- 19.00 hours, followed by a Parish meeting at 19.30 hours. Innova sent posted details to all households in the Parish and advertised the meeting in the parish magazine. The parish meeting was advertised on the PC website, Facebook, Feckenham News magazine, FPC noticeboard and a house-to-house leaflet drop.

Innova would be adjacent to Statkraft and opposite to Immersa. Innova have declared 1025 megawatts of BESS and Solar which leaves 625 megawatts undeclared. If all the connections with National Grid are realised, they amount to 11,000 acres of BESS and solar farms in and around Feckenham. The PC advised National Grid’s forecast for nett zero by 2050 has already been achieved. The basics behind BESS stations is they purchase electricity cheaply from National Grid when they have surplus to balance the grid, store it and then resell it back to National Grid for a profit.

Approximately seventy people attended the parish meeting, at which a presentation was given by the PC, regarding the possible BESS (26 acres adjacent to National Grid) station being applied for by Innova, setting out information regarding the safety of electricity storage in Lithium batteries.

Parishioners asked a variety of questions or checked their thoughts which included:

1. Fire Risk. (There have been one hundred fires worldwide).
2. Lack of water (it would take 18 Olympic swimming pools as a minimum to control fires).
3. One of the measures mentioned to a parishioner by Innova that should there be an outage at any time, the village would be advised to close their windows. This measure does not factor in listed buildings who often cannot close their windows due

to their age. When a major incident did occur in Liverpool the Norway team who were monitoring the site were unaware of the problem.

4. Release of toxins into the air or water table should a battery ignite.
5. Loss of greenbelt. In law greenbelt can only be used should there be significant exceptional circumstances.
6. Disruption to roads / the village.
7. Would the bridge on the B4090 be strong enough for the HGV's as it is already cracked.
8. Damage to properties caused by the vibrations from the HGV's travelling to the site.
9. Reduction in agricultural land.
10. Cumulative effect from all BESS Sites on the Parish.
11. Ongoing high-pitched noise from the inverters. Innova had advised a resident the containers could be cooled which would reduce the noise. Best guess on the noise level is around eighty-three decibels per container but this question was not put to Innova. There are four hundred shipping containers on the planned site.
12. Will the batteries be new. No, they will be reused hybrid batteries from cars.
13. Waste implications of replacing batteries and the entire site at the end of the project.
14. What grade agriculture is the land. It is thought to be 3A & 3B.
15. Will Innova own the land. No, they will pay the landowner per year.
16. Redditch planning department should request an Environmental Impact Assessment on all BESS applications to ensure the cumulative effect is considered. The earlier BESS applications have not been asked to provide these.

Previously the PC had met with Hereford and Worcestershire Fire and Rescue service when Immersa submitted their planning application. There is one suitable fire appliance within the two Counties which has a hose of the required width (9 inches) to tackle the fire, but Feckenham have no suitable water supply. For more information on fire risks, please see [www.hwfire.org.uk/advice/bess](http://www.hwfire.org.uk/advice/bess)

It is unlikely the project would start before 2028. By this time technology will certainly have moved on and lithium iron phosphate batteries will not be used and will be replaced by liquid sodium. Hydrogen and wind power will also be increased.

The current guidance from central government is that the LPA are to ignore local objection and approve all such schemes. It would be inadvisable to feel that the LPA may not simply follow this advice. Experience over the past years lead us to believe that the LPA are likely to follow the guidance from government.

Yes, there is a case that this is a national problem and should be spread over the whole of the National Grid framework, that existing approved facilities, and those in the planning process already will provide more than what is required for "net zero." This then puts into question whether the application is appropriate in the GB, and if it is deemed an exceptional circumstance.

It is important, therefore, to be aware of all implications of such an application.

A scheme of this nature, at the earliest, will not be able to connect to the grid until 2032. Technology is moving with increasing speed. There may be a safer system before then, who knows. Will nuclear fusion be viable, will hydrogen become the way forward, will government finally realise roof top solar panels are the way forward, reducing the need for electricity from the grid.

At the meeting with Innova the Chair had had a lengthy conversation with the Team Leader regarding what was the benefit to our Parish. Innova have offered a £20,000 per year

contribution to the parish and a further £8,000 to village charities would nowhere near make up for the inconvenience and disruption the scheme would cause. The Chair's idea for free electricity for the Parish, fell on "stoney ground." However, the possibility for subsidised electricity did not. In principle, a charity, set up by the parish into which funds could be deposited and then granted back to parishioners. Obviously, this recompense is not guaranteed currently other than the figures above.

The audience were asked to a show of hands to assess those in favour of the application and those who were opposed to it. The approximate vote was ten in favour, sixty opposed. Whilst this was a significant majority in favour of opposing the scheme, we must be clear that this is less than 10% of the residents in the parish. There was also hostility shown to the presentation expressed to the Chair following the meeting. The PC will act in accordance with the view shared by the Parish.

The PC also asked for interested parties, who may be able to help in dealing with this application, to leave their details with the Clerk. Several parishioners expressed an interest in getting involved. The parishioners were also made aware if they chose to object against this application, it would take considerable time, and money would be needed to pay for such a campaign.

It is essential that the PC has a mandate to follow whatever course of action parishioner's wish them to follow, and for the PC to have that mandate if challenged.

The meeting closed at 9.30pm.