



WOMBOURNE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the **FULL COUNCIL MEETING**

held on Monday 25th November 2024 at 7.00pm

This meeting was held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Gravel Hill, Wombourne, WV5 9HA.

Present - Councillors: Mike Davies, Jan Evans, Ed Hughes, Elizabeth Keeling, Dan Kinsey BEM, Vince Merrick (Chairman), Daisy Perry, Martin Perry (Vice-Chairman), Mary Roberts, Ian Sadler

Public - 10 members of the public

Clerk - Rachael Wright

160/24 - Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Barry Bond MBE, Mark Evans, Alan Peace and Matt Powell.

161/24 - Declarations of Interest

Councillor Dan Kinsey BEM declared he was a Trustee of Wombourne and District Community Association and Wombourne Best Kept Village Committee.

Councillor Daisy Perry noted she was a member of Wombourne and District Community Association.

Councillor Martin Perry noted he was a member of Wombourne and District Community Association.

Councillor Mary Roberts noted she was a member of Wombourne Carnival Committee and Wombourne and District Community Association.

Councillor Ed Hughes noted he was a member of the Leadership Team at Wombourne Invictus Trust.

162/24 – Proposal for Battery Energy Storage System Facility

Representatives from Greenfield Developers, Tom De Grey and Katie Brown, attended the meeting to present information about the proposed 60MW Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) project at Canalside Farm, Wombourne.

Overview of Greenfield Developers

- Specialists in sustainable energy projects with over 60 years of combined experience
- Focused on identifying and implementing innovative and effective renewable energy solutions

Need for Renewable Energy

National Context:

- UK Government's target of net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050
- Renewable energy is vital to reduce reliance on fossil fuels, stabilise energy supply and create new job opportunities

Local Context:

- South Staffordshire Council declared a climate emergency in 2019, aiming for net-zero emissions by 2050
- Renewable energy development, including BESS, is a key priority outlined in the Strategic Development Framework (2021)

Canalside Farm BESS Project

- A 60MW BESS facility designed to support the local grid network and integrate renewable energy sources
- Provides consistent power supply to approximately 90,000 homes for two hours

Key Features:

- Ensures grid reliability by accommodating intermittent renewable energy sources such as solar and wind
- Minimizes carbon footprint and reduces power outages

Site Selection and Design

Site Criteria:

- Grid availability with a point of connection approximately 1km away
- Accessibility and fire safety considerations

Planning Considerations

- Located within a green belt area
- Potential visual and noise impacts on nearby residents
- Proximity to protected sites, including the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal and Awbridge Bridge (a Grade II listed monument)

Environmental Commitments

- The project includes a Biodiversity Net Gain commitment
- Planting 0.29km of species-rich native hedgerow with trees
- Establishing additional grassland areas for biodiversity enhancement

Planning Application Status

- Full planning application submitted to South Staffordshire Council (Ref: 24/00951/FULM)
- Consultation period open until 11th December 2024
- An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) screening opinion is under consideration (Ref: 24/00950/EIASCR).

Following the presentation by Greenfield Developers, the following questions were raised:

Question: Why are only two individuals named on the organisation chart?

Response: The presenters named themselves for simplicity when attending the meeting. The full organisational structure is available on the company's website.

Question: How many sites are too many in one area?

Response: This is not for Greenfield Developers to determine. As many sites as possible are required to meet energy demands.

Question: What experience does Greenfield Developers have in delivering and running sites?

Response: Greenfield Developers act as planners, rather than developers. The company has one approved scheme and while it is relatively new, the team possesses extensive knowledge and experience in this field.

Question: The image in the presentation is misleading, showing only 6 batteries when this site will include 15.

Response: The full site plan is available on South Staffordshire Council's website as part of the planning application.

Question: Given the proximity to the canal, how will cross-contamination be prevented in the event of a fire to ensure the water does not become polluted?

Response: The site incorporates both permeable and non-permeable surfaces. Any water used during a fire would drain into a lined attenuation pond equipped with a valve. This water would be tested before discharge to ensure it is not contaminated.

Question: What will be done to address access issues with the site?

Response: The Construction Management Plan has been approved by Staffordshire County Council.

Question: Is an Environmental Impact Report available?

Response: Yes, it is included in the documents submitted with the planning application.

Question: Given your aim to tackle climate change and achieve net zero by 2050, how long does it take for this project to offset the environmental harm caused during its development?

Response: Greenfield Developers do not measure the payoff period; they focus on the contribution of the project as planners. Developers may measure such metrics.

Question: How will noise concerns be addressed?

Response: All relevant information is included in the Noise Impact Assessment, submitted as part of the planning application.

Question: Have either of you visited South Staffordshire prior to working on this project?

Response: Yes, visits were conducted to meet with landowners.

Question: Why haven't the local public been informed about the planning application?

Response: Greenfield Developers have complied with South Staffordshire Council's requirements for public consultation as part of the planning process.

Question: Why was Wombourne chosen as the site for this project?

Response: The location was selected due to the available capacity on the local grid network.

Question: Will you be seeking permission to install wind turbines or solar panels on the site?

Response: There are no current plans to seek permission for these installations.

Question: What is the estimated time for the fire brigade to attend the site in the event of a fire?

Response: This information has not been provided by the fire brigade. Greenfield Developers will adhere to their fire safety plan and the batteries are equipped with a cooling system to manage potential incidents.

Question: If a fire occurs, does the system self-extinguish or is intervention by the fire brigade required?

Response: The battery system has its own cooling mechanism designed to prevent the need for water. However, a water tank is available on-site and accessible for use by the fire brigade, if needed.

Question: The Highways Statement does not address access for walkers or horse riders.

Response: Staffordshire County Council approved the access arrangements as part of the Construction Management Plan.

163/24 – Public Participation

- a) A resident from Apse Close informed members he attended the Licensing Sub-Committee meeting on 13th November, regarding an application to hold events on land at the junction of Bridgnorth Road and Wombourne Road. Despite representations being made by the Parish Council and 20 residents, he was the only resident to attend the meeting.

At the meeting he spoke about problems with traffic during Col's Car Boot Sales and that National Express had indicated the buses can be delayed for up to 20 minutes when the car boot sales are taking place. He asked that the applicant be requested to the Highway Authority to install a yellow box junction and enforcement cameras be installed. The applicant responded to confirm for each event an experienced Traffic Management Company with CSAS accredited personnel would be used.

The resident went on to say he has since learnt that the CSAS (Community Safety Accreditation Scheme) enables Chief Constables to give individuals certain powers such as to control traffic on the highway and to require names and addresses for road traffic offences.

The resident, therefore, asked for the Council to invite someone to attend a future meeting to explain the benefits of the Accreditation Scheme, who can be empowered and the types of offences which could be enforced.

- b) A resident from Brookside Close informed members he has written to the Express and Star to complain about the lack of action taken to repair potholes, especially when signage has been put out to inform residents of road closures or delays. He quoted signage had been put out on Poolhouse Road with no work taking place and likewise Ounsdale Road.

The resident also complained that the Parish Council had not taken on board his idea of issuing Christmas parcels to the over 70's as he suggested in January, despite his persistence in pursuing the idea or if not parcels, a Christmas dinner for the elderly, noting funding was available for such schemes through the National Lottery.

- c) A resident from Battlefield Lane raised concerns with the state of the lane, particularly at the junction of Rookery Road where 4 lock up garages previously owned by the Council had been sold off and the area is now overgrown and rubbish is consistently being dumped there, including mattresses and doors. The Police are aware. The resident asked members to attend site to see the state of the area and to try to ascertain what it will become in the future.

Councillor Dan Kinsey BEM informed the resident he had recently visited the site previously owned by the Housing Association. His understanding is that a private individual has purchased the land for development, although its questionable whether the site is suitable for a dwelling. During his site visit, he explained he took photographs and followed them up with the District Council's enforcement team, who said their hands were tied until a planning application is made. That being said, it is possible the Envirocrime team could get involved and he encouraged the resident to report any issues to him, so that he could follow it up.

164/24 - Approval of Minutes

Members **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the meeting on Monday 28th October 2024.

165/24 – Reports from Committees

- a) Councillor Dan Kinsey reported the Civic Centre Management Committee had met and noted two incidents in the accident book, noting they were both genuine accidents and not as a result of any negligence on the part of the Parish Council. He noted some damage had occurred to the flooring in the Wodehouse Suite after some roof work, which was being addressed by the roofing contractor. Terms of Reference were

approved for a Working Group to look at the future operating model of the Civic Centre and its staff. He had started a formal conversation with Wombourne High School who had set up a School Council and he was excited to see all Schools make use of the Council Chamber in 2025. Panto tickets were still available for 2024 and given the pace of sales this year, only one performance would be booked next year. Some issues had been found with the windows in the Civic Centre and members will have seen email updates from the Clerk on this. Finally, legal advice had been sought in relation to legal boundaries for the Civic Centre site.

- b) Councillor Mary Roberts reported the Finance and General Purposes Committee met on 4th November where an update was given with regards to the newsletter being published and agreement sought to issue the next one in January. Grants had been requested from South Staffordshire Council for a bus shelter in High Street and picnic benches around the public toilets in the village. The organisation for the Christmas Light Switch On was complete, with St Bernadette's School choir singing and two students from Cherry Trees School switching on the lights. Paul Maddox would be providing the PA system. There would be the usual firework display and mince pies would be handed out. The craft fair on the 7th December was fully sold out and Councillor Daisy Perry had set up the trail around the village for Small Business Saturday. Members agreed to host a meeting with schools and other authorities to try to resolve the parking issues. The budget wishlist had been agreed.
- c) Councillor Ed Hughes reported the planning applications had been dealt with outside of meetings. He encouraged members to respond to the Battery Energy Storage application by 4th December 2024.
- d) Councillor Martin Perry reported that whilst no Recreation and Amenities Committee meeting had taken place, work had commenced at Poolhouse Play Area which should take 4-5 weeks to complete.
- e) Councillor Mary Roberts reported due to the sensitive nature of the Staffing Committee meetings, she was unable to report on the last meeting. The minutes of the meetings are available on the Parish Council website.

166/24 - Report from Staffordshire County Council

Councillor Mike Davies reported pre-surfacing repairs to School Road, Ounsdale Road, Giggetty Lane and Brickbridge Lane had been referred to February. The roads would be surface dressed the following year.

167/24 - Reports from Members appointed to Outside Bodies

- **Wombourne and District Community Association:** Councillor Martin Perry noted no meetings had taken place.
- **Wolverhampton Business Airport Consultative Committee:** Councillor Mary Roberts noted no meetings had taken place.
- **Wombourne Carnival Committee:** Councillor Mary Roberts noted no meetings had taken place
- **Wombourne Charity Trustees:** Councillor Mike Davies noted a request had been made from a deprived family and the Trustees had agreed to donate £150 to them, so they could buy Christmas presents for their children. They have also been signposted to local food banks.
- **Wombourne Best Kept Village Committee:** Councillor Dan Kinsey BEM reported the committee had met and he had been appointed as the new Chairman. He was working on a new strategy for the group, as well as new roles and he would like to reintroduce some element of competition. It was noted there was a role for everyone whether that be something hands-on or behind the scenes and he had already had interest for positions of Secretary, Treasurer and someone to post on social media. The next meeting would take place in January.
- **Wombourne Retailers Liaison:** Councillor Elizabeth Keeling reminded members Small Business Saturday would take place on 7th December 2024. Local businesses had donated prizes for a hamper for the winner of the toy trail and they had eight prizes from five businesses, plus from Mike Wood MP. Fake notes had been reported as being used in the village, with the retailers sharing updates on their WhatsApp group. Congratulations was noted to Fierce Hairdressing for winning two awards recently. Councillor Daisy Perry informed members eight businesses had attended the High Street Boost event, three of which were from Wombourne and the others from Kinver. The team running the event offer mentoring, advice and strategy support. The Parish Council's support to retailers was noted at the event. The Chairman and Vice-Chairman have now judged the Christmas Window Competitors and the results would be announced at the Christmas Light Switch On Event.

- **Police Liaison:** Councillor Vince Merrick informed members he had attended various meetings, including one in Stafford. There were four unmarked Police cars in the village carrying out drug and drink testing. Finally, Sgt. Jason Dorrington retired from the Police force last week after 28 years' service. He had decided to get him a shield, which he would present at a future meeting.

- **Giggetty Action Group:** Councillor Vince Merrick informed members, the group would be taking a break over the Christmas period and would resume in February 2025.

- **Friends of Wombrook:** Councillor Ian Sadler informed members whilst no meetings had taken place, the group had been active following the flooding at the weekend and had been liaising with South Staffordshire Council regarding the illegal tree felling.

168/24 - Parish Council Finances and Administration

Members **RESOLVED** to approve the payments, bank reconciliations and petty cash for October 2024.

169/24 - Planning Applications

Members noted the submissions made to South Staffordshire Council in lieu of a meeting.

170/24 – Terms of Reference

Members **RESOLVED** to approve the Terms of Reference for the Civic Centre Management Working Group.

171/24 – Correspondence

None

172/24 - Meeting Schedule

- Members noted the following upcoming meetings:
- a. Full Parish Council Meeting - Monday 27th January 2025
 - b. Budget and Precept Meeting – Monday 20th January 2025

173/24 - Reminders

- a) Christmas Light Switch On Event – Friday 29th November – members to follow the rota they have been given
- b) Cool Yule Dinner Dance – Friday 6th December – pre-purchased tickets only
- c) Small Business Saturday – Saturday 7th December – members to follow the rota they have been given
- d) Panto – Saturday 7th December – pre-purchased tickets only

174/24 - Chairman’s Closing Remarks

The Chairman thanked Councillors for their hard work and wished everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

The meeting closed at 8.26pm.

Signed:

Dated: