

Necton Parish Council Representation re Local Open Floor Hearing Cancellation

Necton Parish Council (NPC) have had discussions with a number of Necton residents about their concerns regarding the planned Boreas substations. Many of these centred around the possibility of residents airing their views and concerns at the Open Floor Hearing which was scheduled to be held in Dereham on 15th April 2020. Residents much further afield have also expressed their concerns because they can see the significantly smaller Dudgeon substations already built into the rural landscape. A particularly visible feature is the National grid infrastructure that shines brightly in the sun and shows no sign of the dimming over time promised by National Grid. The proposed HVDC substations for Boreas (and Vanguard) will be so big that no paint can camouflage them since they are scheduled to be placed on the highest point in the landscape around Necton.

All the PINS hearings so far have been held in Norwich, a venue too far for Necton and surrounding area residents to easily attend. Many people were planning to speak at the Open Floor Hearing in Dereham on 15th April.

The Boreas substations are the only significant items that will be left on shore after the construction phase of the project has been completed. Vattenfall have admitted that the screening currently agreed with Breckland Council will not be effective. Necton Parish Council believe it is vital that residents are given the opportunity to give their views to the Planning Inspectorate Examining Authority. The only option open to local residents was through the Open Floor Hearing that the Planning Inspectorate has been forced to cancel because of the Covid19 pandemic. This has effectively silenced the voice of Necton and the surrounding area.

NPC believe that Breckland Council is not acting to represent the parish of Necton and has taken the unusual step of writing to them asking for justification of their position. This will be followed up but their response to discussion has been negative thus far. Therefore, the only place where the views of Necton residents can be heard in the National Infrastructure planning process is at the cancelled Open Floor Hearing part of the examination. If the decision is not taken to extend the examination so that an Open Floor Hearing can be held later in 2020, Necton Parish Council are concerned that the examination process will penalise the Necton area by not allowing residents to express their views during a process that is supposed to be fair, open and transparent.

NPC would like to emphasise that they have asked for the substations to be placed on an available lower piece of ground with earth banks that would shorten the cable run and promote mitigation. NPC have also asked for specific ground datum and specific earth banks to be part of the DCO if the alternative position is not taken up. Since none of these reasonable requests have been agreed by Vattenfall, Necton residents wish to speak to the PINS Examining Authority to ensure their views are heard. This will only be possible if the examination timescale is extended to allow an Open Floor Hearing to be held.

Necton Parish Council.