

Puxton Parish Council

Clerk to the Council: Mr. Colin Hill, 84 Beach Road, Kewstoke
Nr Weston-super-Mare. North Somerset. BS22 9UQ.
Chairman: Cllr A McKenzie 07791 266 623

Mr P Bryant
Hinkley C Connection Project
Consultation Response
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P.O.Box 5689
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Dear Sir

Puxton Council decided not to write a parish wide letter of objection to the pylon proposal; this was because we faced a unique situation compared with many other parish councils – in that whatever overhead route is chosen it will impact upon our parish. This makes the Parish's councils position very difficult as to back any option is not in the interest of a part of the parish. However we are greatly concerned by many elements of this proposal and have set out below our views. I would stress at the outset we are well aware that the lack of forward planning and management of the base load power generation by government means that a crisis in supply may occur, but in the rush to address this we must not sacrifice the beauty and unique character of our countryside.

- Firstly we lack a complete understanding of the new IPC planning process and we don't understand exactly who will decide, what the intervention points are, if any note is really to be taken of local concerns; what about Section 106 agreements for example. If the IPC is a Quango, who is chosen to sit on it, by whom and what experience or interest, do they truly have at heart.
- The public consultation meetings and the councillors meetings the National Grid staff repeatedly talked about "that is the easiest option". Clearly something with such a long term and clearly negative impact (in terms of intrusion) on many communities should not be driven by what is easiest for National Grid.
- The options for undersea or underground were not fully explained and the costs were at times during the presentation dramatically overstated, the simple fact is that it should not be 10 times the cost to build ten cables was not made clear. We were told each 1 gig cable cost £200million per end and so 10 cables would cost £4,000 million to construct. Later we were told the project would cost "many billions" and that this cost would then be passed onto our bills as consumers. Compared with the costs to consumers of each Kw of energy generated by nuclear generation, it is not clear if in total projects costs terms this cost to the consumer is large or small. On further investigations it looks very much like the Electricity Alliance has an agreement of contracts and scheduled costs and we may be being misled on costs and complexity for commercial reasons. The whole costs structure of all options needs a much better and more open explanation, which should be subject to objective independent verification.

- If we are to have a new distributed supply base in the UK with wind farms etc the problem of the cost of connection will need to be addressed UK wide if we are to avoid changing the character of the country as a whole.
- It is not clear why EDF (a French government owned company) should having decided to build at Hinkley Point should not just add connection costs to their overall cost estimate. Frankly if they want to connect to Seabanks (which is next to Oldbury, another nuclear site) why not build at Seabanks.
- Ten minutes on the internet will provide many reports which suggest that overhead pylons are a health risk and although nothing conclusive is proven; other countries have decided that sufficient uncertainty exists and pylons should avoid population areas, always. We believe the UK, given the strength of Health and Safety culture we have adopted, should adopt a similar position. As a minimum we need to see an independently conducted full risk assessment, including risk minimisation strategies presented to the population. At the public meeting we were simply told that “we have both worked near them for many years and we have not been affected”. This is not an acceptable or indeed a professional answer. Our concern is that perhaps in the future it may be conclusively proven that proximity to pylons is dangerous to health and we need to take note of this in the early stages of the process.
- Lastly the solutions being proposed are old fashioned 1960’s technology and show a lack of flair and engineering excellence. Again the internet shows that traditional overhead carries approximately 30% loss; where as available superconductor technology has roughly a tenth of this as a transmission loss. National Grid are obliged by statute to choose the most efficient means of connection, why choose an inefficient transmission method, thereby increasing the required generation capacity.. increasing the need for pylons!! We need, given the timeframe to seriously consider if super conduction is viable either as is or with investment which would potentially lead to a much reduced impact on our and other community.

In summary Puxton Parish council on behalf of the whole parish object strongly to the lack of proper consultation for the following reasons:

- IPC route and rules of engagement not clear and understood.
- Very poor and incomplete/misleading costs of the options provided without independent verification.
- No thought given to a UK wide solution to the new generation network.
- Little time has been allowed to understand the proposal and reach an understanding of all options.
- Potential Health and Safety issues not being managed to a reasonably practicable level.
- No real “big idea” or innovation being considered?
- New technologies not considered, old fashioned “easiest” methods favoured by commercial companies.

This whole proposal cannot be fully considered in the short time allowed and we urge that:

Mr Ed Miliband develops a national plan to connect new generation in sympathy with the natural environment; Mr John Penrose call National Grid in and ask them to provide answers to the above including proper independent costings for all options, Health and Safety management plans and starts a discussion about significant Section 106 agreements for affected communities. Finally we must be allowed proper consultation beyond 8th Jan 2010. Puxton Parish council are expecting 3 replies to the letter.

Andy McKenzie
Chair of Puxton Parish Council
07791 266 623

Copy to Local MP – Mr John Penrose
Copy to Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change The Right Honorable Ed Miliband