

Statement to Parish Council Meeting 13th August 2024

Chair, Councillors

This statement is in respect of Agenda Item 7 - Planning Application 77576 Whitecross Offshore Windfarm onshore infrastructure

The National Planning Policy Framework's presumption in favour of sustainable development means that for the decision taker proposals must be approved if they accord with local plans, unless the application of policies in the Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provide a clear reason for refusing the development proposed.

These areas or assets are defined in the NPPF footnote 7 which lists habitat sites, SSSIs, AONBs, Heritage Coast and areas at risk of flooding or climate change. All of these types of areas are located in or adjacent to the proposed onshore cable route.

The Framework document details in Section 15 Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment - paragraphs 180 to 194, what development should consider. A number of paragraphs in this section provide grounds for refusing this application given its potential impacts.

Accordance with local plans for us means that applications should not only be compliant with North Devon and Torridge Local Plan but with Braunton Parish Neighbourhood Plan whose policies provide the specificity to our parish which the Local Plan cannot. The Neighbourhood Plan carries the same weight when determining an application as the Local Plan.

When this proposal is considered against our local planning policies its numerous adverse impacts significantly and demonstrably outweigh the claimed benefits.

The potential damage that will be done to the this highly designated landscape at national and world level, by the proposed top soil stripping, hedgerow removal, excavations, water drainage and installation of

infrastructure, does not accord with its claims of being a sustainable development.

The scale of this application has very significant implications for the parish and the wider northern Devon tourist economy which is based upon its outstanding natural environment.

This application does not comply with Braunton Parish Neighbourhood Plan policies. We are in the process of preparing a further submission to the LPA which will illustrate why, despite the applicant's Appendix X claims, this application is not compliant with Parish policies – policies that also conform/align with the National Planning Policy Framework and Local Plan policies.

It is a fundamentally flawed application driven solely by the applicant's granted request for a grid connection at Yelland – a site which in itself is problematic in terms of flood risk and visual impact on the estuary.

The applicant continues to state the impact of all aspects of construction activity is minimal or negligible with mitigation measures being embedded.

It is extremely naive to accept that the numerous potential impacts being identified could or would be managed through the use of conditions let alone that the proposed embedded mitigation will be monitored by the LPA during construction phases. Experience tells us that enforcing adherence to planning conditions does not have a good track record.

For our Parish this application does not meet the criteria of sustainability given its impact upon our economy, environment and social well being during the construction period which will be in excess of 24 months and with the potential for further construction activity should the offshore pilot project be successful.

This application must be refused.