

RIVER VALLEY WIND FARM AT WELHAM BRIDGE REFUSED BY SECRETARY OF STATE ERIC PICKLES

Spaldington Parish Council together with residents of Spaldington and neighbouring villages are celebrating the announcement that the Appeal by RWE Innogy UK for 6 wind turbines at Welham Bridge has been refused. The decision was made by the Secretary of State Eric Pickles following the recommendation of Planning Inspector John Woolcock who held a Public Inquiry in Goole during May.

Howdenshire Ward Councillor Victoria Aitken who spoke at the Inquiry in support of Spaldington Parish Council's case said "I am so pleased that all the time and effort which Rob Hare, Vice Chair of Spaldington Parish Council, and the Clerk Wendy McKay put into ensuring that the Parish Council presented the best possible case has been worthwhile. The Parish Council identified the key issues, formulated an objection based on valid planning reasons and defended those reasons at the Inquiry. They were instrumental in ensuring that the application was originally refused by the Councillors on the East Riding of Yorkshire Planning Committee, contrary to the planning officer's recommendation. The unanimous decision of my fellow Councillors who serve on the Planning Committee has now been proved correct"

Parish Councillor Rob Hare said "The most important point is that the Inspector and Secretary of State have dismissed this Appeal on cumulative impact – they have agreed with us that there is no room for any more wind farms in this area. This not only stops the 6 turbines of the River Valley wind farm, but also presents a significant deterrent to other developers submitting applications for any more large turbines in this area. We have shown that local opinion is right - Enough means Enough! The decision also establishes the importance of the views of Howden Minster and its setting in the surrounding landscape, the case for which was made at the Public Inquiry solely by Spaldington Parish Council"

Clerk to Spaldington Parish Council, Wendy McKay added "We understand that Eric Pickles decided to recover the decision on this Appeal, because the "turbines could be held to have an impact beyond the local area". The decision to dismiss the Appeal therefore has a significance far beyond Spaldington. It sets a precedent such that other communities facing excessive wind turbine development in the East Riding and beyond now have a case to refer to. We have established where the line should be drawn."

Local MP, Rt Hon David Davis who, during his robust defence of the local landscape at the Public Inquiry, had clashed with the barrister representing RWE Innogy, stated "This Government has ensured that far more weight in the Appeal's process is now being given to local opinion and the valid objections of local people. Fighting appeals is no longer a futile exercise or waste of money; it is vital to protect people's lives, their homes, the countryside in which they chose to live. Here in the East Riding we already have a vast number of wind turbines; the highest density in England. We've made our contribution to renewable energy. It is time for the relentless march of the wind turbines to come to an end and I congratulate Spaldington Parish Council on this achievement"

Chair of Spaldington Parish Council, Kath Westin said "I would like to thank all those in Spaldington, and the surrounding area who have supported us. The advocate and expert witnesses who we engaged to present the best possible case have been paid for entirely by donations; there has been no cost to parish funds. I am so pleased that we can now let people know that their investment has been worthwhile. This decision will actually save the parish money in future. We know all too well from the problems

being caused by the development of Spaldington Airfield wind farm, the huge burden which is imposed when a wind farm is consented in the parish.”

The proposed River Valley wind farm was to be sited at Welham Bridge between Howden and Holme on Spalding Moor in East Yorkshire. It was to consist of 6 wind turbines, 128m tall, with 3 turbines on the south side of the River Foulness in Spaldington parish and 3 turbines on the north side of the river in Holme on Spalding Moor parish.

RWE Npower Renewables, now RWE Innogy UK, initially announced their intention for a wind farm at Welham Bridge in 2011, the news breaking just after Spaldington residents had learned that their 3 year battle against the Spaldington Airfield and Spaldington Common wind farms had resulted in the defeat of the Spaldington Common scheme, but that the 5 turbines of Spaldington Airfield wind farm to the west of the village were to be allowed. The proposed RWE River Valley scheme was to be in the east of Spaldington parish, effectively sandwiching the village between the two wind farms.

Taking note of information presented to them by Spaldington Parish Council, the Councillors on the East Riding of Yorkshire Council Planning Committee took the decision to refuse the River Valley wind farm in July 2013, even though the Council's own planning department had recommended that the scheme should be approved. At that time there were 42 wind turbines already operating or consented within a 6 mile radius, and another 10 large turbines in planning. The Planning Committee agreed with Spaldington Parish Council and local residents that the time had come to say “Enough is Enough”; that there was no room for any more turbines in the area.

When RWE appealed against the decision, Spaldington Parish Council decided to register as a Rule 6 party and so take a full part in the Inquiry, supported by an Advocate, Tina Douglass, and expert witnesses, Michelle Bolger (landscape and cultural heritage) and Steve Arnold (planning). Spaldington Parish Council were determined to establish that the area had reached saturation point with respect to wind turbines, the aim being that this would not only stop the 6 turbines of the River Valley wind farm, but should also present a significant deterrent to other developers submitting applications for any more turbines in the area.

The Public Inquiry was held in Goole during May 2014. At this time the number of turbines operating or consented within a 6 mile radius of Spaldington had increased to 44, with another 11 in planning. Spaldington Parish Council's case centred on the cumulative impact of this large number of turbines on the landscape character and visual amenity of the area, together with the impact on the setting of Howden Minster. The Planning Inspector agreed with Spaldington Parish Council's case, and recommended to the Secretary of State that the River Valley wind farm Appeal should be dismissed because in the planning balance, the benefit of the renewable energy that the scheme might generate did not outweigh the harm caused.

Adding to the evidence presented by the expert witnesses, Councillors Kath Westin and Rob Hare, Chair and Vice Chair of Spaldington Parish Council and the Clerk Wendy McKay, also spoke at the Public Inquiry, highlighting the importance of the local landscape, the Public Rights of Way, the concern over construction traffic and fears over noise from the turbines, particularly in combination with the Spaldington Airfield scheme. Local MP, David Davis, in addition to giving a robust defence of the local landscape, emphasised that the intent of Government policy was for the opinion of local communities, when supported by valid planning reasons to be heeded. Victoria Aitken, Ward Councillor for Howdenshire pointed out in her presentation to

the Inquiry that the East Riding already had more than a fair share of the country's turbines, with more than 7% of all the turbines in England but less than 2% of the area. Several local residents also spoke at the Inquiry together with Dr Peter Ayling, Countryside Officer for the East Yorkshire & Derwent Area of the Ramblers Association and Margaret Cockbill, Chair of the East Riding Branch of CPRE.

At the Public Inquiry, Dr Peter Halkon gave an inspiring presentation about the rich archaeology of the Foulness Valley and the importance of its preservation in situ. In his Decision the Secretary of State agreed with the Planning Inspector "that the risk to archaeological remains tips the balance even further against granting permission".

This was a "David and Goliath" battle; a small rural Parish Council facing up to the might of one of the largest energy companies in the UK. Spaldington Parish Council knew that the record of East Riding of Yorkshire Council, which at that time had lost 9 out of 11 wind farm public inquiries, was not good. So having armed themselves with the knowledge needed to defend their case, the determination, resolution and tenacity of Spaldington Parish Council succeeded where in the past the East Riding of Yorkshire Council had failed.

Attached photograph shows Rt Hon David Davis MP for Haltemprice and Howden, ERYC Howdenshire Ward Councillor Victoria Aitken and prospective Conservative Howdenshire Ward Councillor Nigel Wilkinson celebrating with Spaldington Parish Council and residents from the surrounding area