



Extraordinary Meeting of Aspatria Town Council held on Tuesday 2nd July 2024 at 5pm at Aspatria Methodist Church.

PRESENT: Councillor S Maxwell (Chair)

Councillors: Cllr L Hunter, Cllr A Reay, Cllr J Marsh, Cllr R Gregory, Cllr A Maxwell, Cllr A Hankin, Cllr K Thurlow

Also in Attendance: Mrs K Cooper (Town Clerk)

The Council met on Tuesday 2nd July 2024 at 5pm to discuss the Battery Energy Storage Site (BESS) planning application to be located at West Farm, Aspatria.

Cllr Alan Maxwell informed the meeting of a similar site at Carlisle which plans have been approved for, however this seems to be on a much bigger scale to Aspatria. The plans for Aspatria are for 56 battery containers with a capacity of 50MW as opposed to the Carlisle site being 400MW.

The Councillors were all in agreement we require further information from Firstway Solar on the site and how things will be maintained and dealt with should the inevitable happen. One of the main concerns raised regarding the battery site was in the event of a fire. The Cumbria Fire Service have submitted documentation to Cumberland Council planning department stating they have no issues with the site, however as the town council, acting on behalf of the people of Aspatria, we wish to investigate if our own voluntary fire brigade are fully trained on tackling the fire, should this occur and what this would mean for the town. The level of risk with the aging of the batteries over the forty-year period are also unknown and this is very concerning.

The Clerk suggested another meeting be arranged with Firstway Solar for any questions which the councillors felt needed answering.

The Councillors have requested the Clerk to email the Chief Inspector of Cumbria Fire Service to enquire of their action plan for such events and their contingency plan for the future, including the training provided for existing and new additions to the local fire service if the temporary development runs for forty years.

Firstway Solar informed the Clerk via email of a Community Benefit Fund of £100k which is for the council to spend as and when they require. Further discussions must take place regarding the payments, including the amount and frequency of payments.

To be Actioned: The Clerk is to email the Fire Chief Inspector

The Clerk is to email Firstway Solar with questions from the Council
The Clerk is to arrange a further meeting with Firstway Solar

Questions from the Councillors to Firstway Solar:

1. What insurance do you have in the event of an explosion? And who is it with?
2. What make and model of battery storage units will you have?
3. What is the life expectancy of the batteries?
4. Will the local council be given the opportunity to view and copy all safety certificates required by law?
5. What security measures are in place for the site, for example: fencing, alarms etc
6. Does the CCTV have the ability to transfer live streaming to their command and control system?
7. Will the local police be alerted to any incursion onto the site?
8. Has Cumbria Constabulary been invited to comment and set in contingency plans in the event of a disaster or intrusion?
9. Has any other site been subject to an attack by environmentalists in view of the lithium used and its controversial extraction methods?
10. What lighting is going to be on the site? Light pollution is detrimental to the environment and not always necessary? Is passive lighting an option?
11. How often will a review take place as to the existing safety measures, benefits to the community and country at large?
12. What lessons have been learned from fires on similar sites in the USA? What lessons have been taken from those disasters?
13. Is their ongoing contact with international organisations to adopt best practise?
14. Will your organisation be able to adapt and change their policies/ site management and possibly equipment to reflect best practice in this sector?
15. What fire prevention method is used and how will residents be kept safe in the event of a fire?
16. What maintenance will the site require and how often?
17. What long term benefits the town will gain from such an installation, financial or otherwise.

Meeting ended at 6pm