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## **WP/20/00692/DCC Portland Port, Castletown Portland**

This matter was discussed at Planning and Licensing Meeting 17 November.

Members voted to OBJECT to the Application, by a majority of 8 to 1.

Representatives from Powerfuel and from Stop Portland Waste Incinerator addressed the committee. There were many representations from members of the public, and from local businesses and organisations, including the Portland Association, Coalition Against the Burner, and Portland Port.

A note of the full minute is attached. A summary follows.

### **Relevant local policies**

#### **Dorset Waste Plan 2019**

#### **West Dorset Weymouth and Portland Local Plan 2015**

ENV 1	Landscape, Seascape and Sites of Geological Interest
ENV 2	Wildlife and Habitats
ENV 10	The Landscape and Townscape Setting
ENV 12	The Design and Positioning of Buildings
ENV 13	Achieving High Levels of Environmental Performance
ENV 15	Efficient and Appropriate Use of Land
ENV 16	Amenity: Pollution
ECON 1	Provision of Employment
ECON 2	Protection of Key Employment Sites
ECON 5	Tourism Attractions and Facilities
COM 7	Creating a Safe and Efficient Transport Network
COM 11	Renewable Energy Development

#### **Material planning considerations:**

Considerations in favour of the application:

1. Brownfield site
2. Jobs
3. Seeks to supplement Dorset Waste Plan
4. Supports cruise ship industry
5. Reduces landfill

Considerations against the application:

1. Dorset Waste Plan 2019: recently finalised waste plan for Dorset, does not need this facility.
2. Dorset Waste Plan 2019: Collocation: waste management facilities should be collocated with ash processing facility to reduce traffic
3. Dorset Waste Plan 2019: Proximity: locate close to where waste is created
4. No provision for carbon capture and storage
5. No guarantee on the origin of feedstock
6. Dorset Waste Plan 2019: "*Waste management is well regulated. Consideration of impacts on health should therefore be in the context of whether the location is appropriate for the proposal.*"
7. Location: close to houses, hospital and prison. Stack at the same height as homes.
8. Location: UNESCO World Heritage Site. Policy ENV1 West Dorset and Weymouth & Portland Local Plan.
9. Location: AONB, Heritage site
10. Traffic generation
11. Amenity: pollution impact on health, from facility and from traffic
12. Amenity: pollution impact on environment, habitats, aquaculture
13. Scale and setting: visibility
14. Economy: tourist industry

One member who voted in favour of the Application recommended that should the Planning Application succeed, then there should be planning obligations (1) to limit the source of waste to the UK and (2) to maximise the amount of ERF arriving by sea.

In summary, it was felt that the disadvantages outweigh the advantages.

A full minute is attached.

Lucy Hamilton  
Chair, Planning and Licensing Committee  
Weymouth Town Council

Extract from minutes of Weymouth Town Council Planning and Licensing Committee held on Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> November 2020:

### **WP/20/00692/DCC Portland Port, Castletown Portland**

#### **Powerfuel Portland:**

A presentation was given by Steve McNab, Powerfuel Portland, and Tim Hancock, Terence O'Rourke.

Portland Port had invited Powerfuel Portland in to look at providing for its energy needs. In addition, Dorset does not currently have a waste treatment plant for the recovery of residual waste, with most Dorset waste going out of county which is costly and unsustainable. Most local authorities have their own plants to manage waste in line with the proximity principle. The government waste hierarchy has set out that energy recovery is a better option than landfill, which leaves it for future generations. Landfill has a bigger impact on the climate and environment. The energy from a low carbon plant such as this can be used locally and, despite an increase in recycling, there will still be 320k tons of refuse waste that could be used in a facility such as this.

Mr McNab highlighted that Portland Port has a successful cruise ship business in addition to receiving ships from the Royal Fleet Auxiliary, and these customers need shore power. The port has more cruise visits planned for 2021 than in 2020, despite the Covid 19 pandemic. Without the ability to provide shore power, the area will lose out on business which brings £4 million tourist spend and provides 45 jobs.

The brownfield industrial site is in a designated employment zone however nobody has been employed there for 20 years. The proposed plant has been called an eyesore which will cause a plume of pollution. However, there will be no visible plume as it comprises water vapour. The plume will operate 52 hours in a year. Great lengths have been gone to in designing the facility to try and blend in with the cliffs behind and will be hard to see from Weymouth.

Public Health and the Environment Agency have undertaken extensive studies and found no significant risks to health.

With regards to traffic generation, there will be considerably less than 40 vehicles a day and there is a proposed travel plan to reduce traffic in peak hours in order to mitigate the impact, especially around school hours.

The planned plant is a £100 million investment that will bring 300 short term jobs during the construction phase and approximately 100 direct and indirect jobs after construction, and will provide year round economic benefit to the area.

The proposed plant has been sized to deal with Dorset's residual waste and commercial waste, and will help Dorset meet its target for reducing carbon emissions. The plant will use tried and tested technology that complies with legal requirements. Allocated sites at Canford Magna and Parley have a role to play but only Portland can host one of the size needed to meet Dorset's needs. The proposed

plant and location has the capacity for sustainable transport by road and sea, and prevailing winds mean that emissions will be concentrated on open sea and not land.

The location is close to major users of power and heat, and reuse of heat is a major benefit from these facilities. The ability for ships to use low carbon power generated by the plant is a unique benefit, and the area will become attractive to green technology companies. Shore power will significantly reduce the emissions from visiting ships, and the shore power from the proposed plant is the only source of shore power at the site. Portland Port have confirmed that other means are unviable.

In addition to waste and power benefits, the development will generate business rates to Dorset Council of £600k, as well as the employment opportunities already mentioned. Local businesses in the port are also interested in being supplied with low carbon power.

### **Stop Portland Waste Incinerator Group:**

Lucy Grieve gave a presentation on behalf of the Stop Portland Waste Incinerator Group and challenged some of the claims put forward by Powerfuel. Powerfuel have claimed that the plant would not be a carbon polluter. However, for every tonne of waste incinerated, a tonne of carbon dioxide is emitted into the atmosphere. Similar claims were made in another application and Wiltshire Council commissioned a study in conjunction with the University of Exeter which discredited the claim and resulted in a request for a holding objection. The figures given for the composition of waste have been rejected and it has been insisted that all new waste incinerators must install carbon capture and storage equipment. The Powerfuel Portland application excludes carbon capture and storage equipment.

Lucy Grieve highlighted comparative carbon emissions from other sources of energy and said that only coal powered power stations produce more than the proposed plant. Therefore, she felt that Powerfuel's claims regarding the carbon benefits should be disregarded in any decision making.

Powerfuel claims that the plant could provide a district heating network. In Sweden, this has been planned and implemented over decades and on sites that have housing and industry all around them. The proposed plant is bordered on one side by the sea, and on the other by steeply rising terrain and a vertical cliff face that has been designated for protection. Powerfuel has claimed that The Verne and YOI could be potential customers but given the strong objection by the Ministry of Justice, this is unlikely.

It has been claimed that the facility would meet local need for dealing with waste and that 100% of Dorset's waste goes out of county. It does not and waste is taken to the plant at Canford Magna. What cannot be used is made into waste fuel that will be incinerated in Somerset as part of a long-term contract.

It has been suggested that RDF should come from Dorset but RDF arriving by sea would come from farther away. The suggested conditions that the RDF be mostly brought in by sea and mostly from Dorset waste are incompatible. The Powerfuel proposal reduces incentive to recycle.

It was highlighted that Eco Sustainable Solutions have announced plans to build an incinerator at Parley, which is one of the allocated sites. It would be smaller but would have more than enough capacity to deal with Dorset's waste. It would also be closer to the BCP area which produces more waste.

It has been claimed that Portland Port needs this facility for ships. However, the application concludes that there would be no significant economic benefit to the area. The projected uplift in cruise ships will happen without shore power and the Royal Fleet Auxiliary only needs a fraction of the power produced, which could be achieved by the use of solar panels.

Lucy Grieve concluded her presentation by saying that there is a democratic mandate for objecting to the proposal. Over 2000 objections have been lodged as well as a petition of over 6000. There are also concerns from many consultees, the AONB and parish councils who are concerned about visual impact. The proposed plant would blight the UNESCO World Heritage Site and would be in contravention of the Jurassic Coast Partnership Plan. None of the visuals show the emissions plume, which would be visible for much of the day and night. The plant would also have a detrimental impact on the already congested roads. The harm caused from the construction of this plant would outweigh any benefits and there are grave concerns regarding the increased air pollution for Portland to Studland, and the Chesil and Fleet area of conservation.

Members of the Committee then posed questions to Powerfuel Portland.

**Questions:**

Cllr Bergman understood that there was another site with planning permission available in East Dorset and asked whether Powerfuel had considered establishing a facility on that site.

Mr Hancock responded that the site at Canford Magna had been considered but was not big enough to accommodate a plant of the size that has been proposed.

Cllr Hamilton felt that the site at Canford Magna fits with the co-location and proximity principles mentioned in the Dorset Waste Plan and asked Powerfuel to comment on how the application relates to those principles.

Mr Hancock responded that the plant has been sized to deal with Dorset's waste as a priority and will work in conjunction with others in the area at Parley and Canford Magna. Any RDF created by those sites can be transported and treated at Portland, and it is felt that this is a better alternative to exporting RDF to Somerset or Hampshire.

Cllr Hamilton asked what the plan is for dealing with bottom ash as there is a shortage of processing facilities nationally. It has been suggested that it would go to environmentally sensitive uses.

Mr McNab responded that there are a number of facilities that deal with this, including one at Avonmouth in Bristol. It can be blended with virgin aggregate and used in building processes such as road building. About 20% produced in the UK is

treated in this way and the remainder goes to landfill as it cannot be used in all environments and has to be carefully approved by the Environment Agency.

Cllr Winter asked who the customers of any power produced will be and who will benefit from it apart from cruise ships as he assumed that the power would have to be sold.

Mr McNab responded that the power produced can be used in a number of ways. Tenants of the port and customers of shore power can use it. Power not used close to the plant will run through a local connection where it then enters the national grid. Power will be contracted to an electricity company who buys the electric and forwards the onward supply to customers.

Richard Knights, ARUP, added that the benefit to consumers is that it reduces losses in the transmission system and has benefit to all users in that it has a reducing effect on transmission costs and reduces bills.

Mr McNab highlighted that it may be possible to have private wire facilities where new cables have been run to a nearby heavy user. In this case the only feasible operation would be the prisons. A group could club together and buy the power but there has to be an energy supplier that participates in that.

Cllr Northam asked what proportion of waste is planned to come by sea and whether that could be increased.

Mr McNab replied that there is not a fixed proportion and this will change through time. However, the expectation is that Dorset will feed the plant. The proportion coming by sea could be increased but it is impossible to say by how much.

Cllr James was concerned that Dorset's waste will be transported by road and asked where waste arriving by sea would be coming from. She also asked how bottom ash would be produced and how often it would be taken away. Cllr James also recalled Mr Hancock mentioning that the facility could not go to Canford Magna due to the impact on wildlife and highlighted that Portland has a number of SSSI sites.

Cllr James highlighted the recent fire at Crookhill Depot and was concerned that if there was ever an incident such as this at Portland Port, emergency vehicles may have difficulty accessing the site as there is only one road on to the island.

Mr Hancock responded that he is certainly not suggesting that the natural assets around Portland are less significant than wildlife around the conurbation. The dispersal modelling shows that any emissions from the plant will be landing on the sea. This will be in contrast to any of the sites in the conurbation adjoining the other areas.

With regards to bottom ash, Ian Awcock (AWP) said that bottom ash produces approximately 10 lorry loads a day that are taken away from the plant. With regards to Fords Corner, the transport assessment will be looked at by Highways. In all, it has been suggested that there will be 40 lorries each way per day. Mr McNab added that the figure of 40 vehicles each way is a worst-case scenario as required by the

environmental impact assessment. Bottom ash will be stored in specialist vessels within Portland Port, reducing traffic by 27% from what has been quoted in the transport assessment. These vessels have been produced and ventilated for this purpose. This would then be moved on to another location.

Councillors not on the Committee and members of the public then addressed Committee members.

**Public Representations:**

There were concerns regarding air pollution issues along Rodwell Road and Boot Hill, which has been highlighted as a pollution hotspot, and regarding air pollution coming from the stack. Additionally, no plans have been made for carbon capturing storage and the carbon released will continue to contribute to global warming for hundreds of years.

It was highlighted that local residents enjoy everything that the area has to offer, and visitors choose to visit the incredible scenery for all manner of activities. However, visitors may be deterred from visiting the area if there is a waste burning plant on the landscape. The stack will be visible from the Rodwell Trail, Overcombe and along the coast.

There was concern that a chimney, with associated noise and vibration, would be put at the bottom of the hill with housing and businesses above, and that people will be subjected to many pollutants, all known to have significant effects on health. Powerfuel have claimed that particulates will be removed but there were concerns that these will enter the sea, air and the food chain.

There was concern that the developer has no commitment to servicing Dorset's waste and would be free to import it from anywhere in the world. Additionally, there were concerns that residents would not be able to open windows or enjoy their gardens due to odour from the plant.

It was highlighted that the government is expected to bring forward the elimination of new petrol and diesel engines by 2030 due to emissions, but Powerfuel appear to be moving in the opposite direction, which will blight any other great development ideas for the area for decades to come. It will be a merchant plant therefore is not being built to manage residual waste from Dorset and the wider South West.

Members were reminded that WTC has declared a climate and ecological emergency and has set an ambition to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2030. In declaring that emergency, WTC agreed that all planning comments would be consistent with that approach. The building of this facility will increase emissions on the roads and emissions from the plant will blow across the water to Weymouth. Additionally, the mass extinction of species is well underway and this is caused, in part, by carbon emissions. There are no plans for carbon capture.

Members of Coalition Against the Burner, made up of around 80 local businesses opposing the application, were acutely concerned about the detrimental impact on their sector. Businesses are reeling from the Covid 19 pandemic and many members on Portland noticed a new demographic of visitor this Summer, spending money on

quality food and drink. There is now a real opportunity to market Weymouth and Portland as a foodie destination due to the excellent fish and shellfish on offer. These fish and shellfish come from the very waters close to the proposed plant. A local charter boat company feels that the plant would have a detrimental impact on its business as it would be seen from the vessel. The massive plant means big money for big businesses but there are many small and medium businesses who are reliant on clear waters, fresh air and tourism.

Concerns were expressed regarding the building of a plant close to the Fleet Lagoon which is a special area of conservation, a RAMSAR area of importance and a SSSI. Additionally, Portland Harbour is the feed source of the lagoon and emissions from the plant will pollute the water that feeds the lagoon, with associated risk to eelgrass beds. There will be a significant detrimental impact on wildlife and sea grasses which are part of a fragile eco-system. It was noted that no surveys have been undertaken regarding birds and bats around the cliffs, and it was highlighted that Portland provides a habitat that some creatures have uniquely evolved to live in.

In support of the application, Bill Reeves, CEO Portland Port, highlighted that there is very little spare capacity in the power supply to this island. For Portland Port to continue to grow, it needs more electrical power, and neither Portland Port nor the local authority can afford the multi-million pound investment required if the power station is not built. The port will not be able to provide shore power to the ships, which will mean no visits from cruise ships. Portland Port are confident that the facility can be delivered and comply with the requirements of regulatory bodies.

A business owner located in Portland Port also spoke in favour of the application. It will attract new and green businesses to the port.

The planning application was then considered by Committee members.

### **Consideration of Application:**

Cllr Northam had been struck by the argument that landfill is one of the worst producers of greenhouse gasses and that avoiding landfill is beneficial, and said that the other benefit of the facility is generating electricity with direct shore power, enabling modern ships to turn off their generators and plug in. However, he was concerned about the impact on road traffic and wondered whether there could be a planning condition to limit the source to the UK and for waste to be brought in by sea. Cllr Northam felt that the development has merit and that it should proceed to the next stage.

There were concerns that waste would be brought in from other areas/countries, and that the amount of electricity that could be generated by solar and wind power may not be enough to support the needs of Portland Port. It was noted that the site is not identified by the Dorset Waste Plan. The impact on all roads approaching and in Weymouth was thought to be significant and there were also concerns regarding the feed stock.

It was acknowledged that the benefits to the economy were evident in terms of the jobs created but there were significant concerns from small and medium businesses that jobs will be lost in the food, drink and tourism industries. There were also



concerns regarding the environment, wildlife, air pollution, and the potential detrimental effect on school children.

Cllr Hamilton highlighted that facilities such as this are legal and therefore could not be excluded for reasons of pollution. However, they can be excluded if it is felt that the location is sufficiently sensitive. Cllr Hamilton felt that if shore power is needed then tidal, wind and solar power should be considered. These industries also create well-skilled jobs.

Cllr Hamilton summarised that the Committee has heard some positives. The site is a brownfield site, the development will create jobs and it is an opportunity to augment the Waste Plan set out by Dorset. It allows shore power and reduces landfill. However, she would suggest that the negatives far outweigh these.

The Waste Plan is detailed and does not envisage the need to augment waste management in this way and asks people to concentrate on the waste hierarchy. There should be a focus on reducing waste: reduce, reuse, recycle. If facilities such as this are legal then location is the issue. Most compelling are the residents of Portland who live at the same level as the chimney stack. Nearby homes, prisons and schools are “sensitive receptors” identified by the Waste Plan. Plume plotters show the impact of this development across Weymouth. Residents and local schools have registered concerns for impact on health.

Secondly, Local Plan ENV1 specifically requires consideration of the World Heritage Site. This is a unique World Heritage Site. Agencies responsible for the coastline, for area of natural beauty, and historic heritage, all raise concerns regarding the proposal. As well as the World Heritage site, in close proximity are national and international ecological sites and the proposal poses challenges to the habitat, shellfish and aquaculture.

The Committee has heard that whilst facilities such as this are legal, pollution is an issue. There is a lack of carbon capture equipment and the origin of the waste is uncertain. There are concerns regarding traffic generation and, if avoided at certain times, will concentrate traffic at other times. The scale of the development is extraordinary and will destroy the visual setting of an internationally recognised location that should be protected. As well as being a playground for local residents, the area also has a tourist industry, fishing and shellfish industries. Co-location and proximity must be considered as outlined in the Dorset Waste Plan. This means that waste management facilities should be put where most waste is arising. If producing ash, the plant should be built close to where it can be managed. Weymouth Town Council has declared a Climate Emergency. Businesses continue to offer innovation and enterprise, but this is not the right application in the right place.

**Resolved:**

Proposer: Cllr Hamilton      Secunder: Cllr Orrell

Members voted by a majority of 8 in favour, with 1 against, to object to the proposal.

Cllr Northam requested that proposed planning obligations be minuted: firstly, limit sources of waste to the UK, secondly stipulate waste be brought in by sea.