



**Dacorum Environmental Forum
Full Meeting Thursday 27.08.2015**

MINUTES

Attendance

Name	Organisation
Gruff Edwards	Chair DEF
Steve Wilson	Vice Chair DEF
Paul Davies	Guest Speaker
Chris Ridley	DEF
Mike Ridley	DEF
Janice Marshall	DBC
Paul Harris	Great Gaddesden Parish Council
Tom Raftery	Transition Towns Berkhamsted
Cllr. Garrick Stevens	Berkhamsted

Apologies

Cllr William Wyatt-Lowe	DBC/HCC Councillor
Siva Niranjana	DEF/WHAG
Dennis Harvey	DEF/ Population Matters

Meeting started at 7:30pm

1. Apologies

See above

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting held

No corrections suggested.

3. Matters arising

3.1 Reducing Litter in Dacorum

GE said that the DEF Steering Group's Street Champions should continue to assess and report their experiences.

MR reported that he had been waiting since June 24th for his Street Champions kit. He also reported that some while ago, he had reported a dog poop bin missing from its support, with filled poop bags hanging on them. Subsequently he had been told that it had been replaced, but that in fact the whole structure and adjacent bins had been removed. (*Subsequent Note: Cllr Janice Marshall has contacted MR to say that she has chased up DBC about his being a Street Champion, and to enquire further about the poop box problem, saying also that DBC had just started to review the existing placement of such bins and whether there should be any changes.*)

GE and CR spoke of problems with using the DBC general telephone line, which uses voice recognition, to contact Clean, Safe and Green in order to enquire about the status of littering incidents that had been reported on the DBC “portal” recommended for use by Street Champions, but available to anyone, using the incident numbers supplied when the reports are made. CR said that “Clean, Safe and Green” was not recognised by the system, and that she was sent to a general help desk who were unable to help.

GE said that despite initial difficulties, involving correspondence with Joe Guiton (Neighbourhood Action Team Leader, Resident Services, DBC) and subsequent system amendment, he had been able to get through to someone with access to the relevant system, but that there had been two instances of littering reported by him, where the operator had said that the relevant records were not showing as “cleared”, whereas by his own observation the dumps had been cleared some weeks previous, i.e. the system gave “false negatives”. Following further correspondence with Joe Guiton both incidents had now marked on the system as cleared. (*Subsequent Note: Of two further dumps reported by GE on Aug 8th, one has now been cleared. Their status on the system according to his recent enquiry had been “Passed to Enforcement”.*)

GE said that he had recently heard from Cllr Andrew Williams, saying that he would enquire about the three litter bins originally reported missing by him in June 2012.

Garrick Stephens suggested that some equivalent for Berkhamsted’s Town Warden would help co-ordinate the efforts of Street Champions in areas of Hemel Hempstead and make them more effective. GE said that he would pass the suggestion to Joe Guiton.

3.2 LA3 Housing

Following a suggestion in March 2014 from Laura Woods of DBC Strategic Planning, that the developers of LA3 should be invited to a DEF meeting, GE had contacted Ben Coles of Taylor Wimpey, who kindly copied the E-mail to his counterpart at Barratt Homes, Carrick Casson-Crook. However in reply Mr. Coles, while confirming that they had received and reviewed a copy of DEF’s representation to the Local Allocations as well as the LA3 Master plan, and whilst saying that both housebuilders would appreciate the opportunity of meeting with the Dacorum Environmental Forum, said that while the Local Allocations DPD (Development Plan Document) was still subject to examination he thought such a meeting would be premature, and that our detailed comments would best be considered when proposals were more advanced, at a pre-application stage in the lead-up to a planning application, which would be prepared assuming that the Inspector endorses the Council’s Local Allocations, and following adoption by the Council.

GE said that in the meantime the “Site Allocations Pre-Submission Focused Changes Consultation 2015” was available to view and comment between 12th August and 23rd September. See: http://consult.dacorum.gov.uk/portal/planning/site_allocations_2015

A letter to DEF from Laura Wood concerning this consultation (7/8/2015) explained that:

“This consultation is on a limited number of amendments, referred to as ‘Focused Changes’, that we propose to make to the Pre-Submission version of the Site Allocations DPD. .. The Site Allocations (DPD) ... supports the Core Strategy, which was adopted in September 2013 ... by forming detailed proposals and requirements for sites and areas. ... It allocates sites for future development, defines the boundaries of planning designations; and ensures .. infrastructure is identified and delivered .. . (It is made up of a written statement and a map book.”

GE, CR and MR had experienced some difficulties in navigating the consultation portal, in particular failing to find references to LA3. Following correspondence with DBC Strategic Planning, a link was added on the front page of the consultation, taking one to a list all of the changes by reference number and the changes that apply to them.

A request by GE to have the end date of the consultation correspondingly extended was declined. In reply to the request, Laura Wood said that the changes being proposed to LA3, in which she knew DEF had taken a particular interest, were very limited in nature. She added that her team were currently considering what changes needed to be made to the draft Master Plans that were consulted upon last year alongside the main Site Allocations document, that these changes would be reported to Cabinet on 20th October, and that they expected to recommend changes to the LA3 Master Plan (and other LA Master Plans) far greater in number than those proposed to the Local Allocation policies in the Site Allocation document, reflecting the fact that the Master Plans provided a far greater level of detail.

GE invited DEF members wishing to contribute to a DEF response to the current consultation to E-mail him (gruff.edwards@tiscali.co.uk) with their comments for him to collate.

3.3 Population

GE remarked that, though this was primarily a Global problem, Dacorum’s environment was impacted by the ever-increasing World population (*Note: which has doubled since about 1969*), just as is was affected by another related Global problem, Climate Change.

SW said that the population density in west and south Herts. including Dacorum was well above average for the South East, which created challenges for water companies.

As agreed at the May 14th DEF meeting, the set of policy proposals produced by Population Matters was used as a template for a letter which, following consultation with DEF membership, was sent to Dacorum’s MP Mike Penning on June 9th. This elicited a positive and detailed written reply from Mike (dated June 10th!), a summary of which, collated with the policy proposals suggested, is attached to these minutes.

Janice Marshall pointed out that such letters should also be sent to David Gaulke, MP for South West Herts. , part of which is in Dacorum. GE said he would send him an introductory E-mail on DEF’s behalf.

4. Halsey Field (Roman Snails etc.)

Chris Ridley reported that The Chilterns Society Hertfordshire Conservation Volunteers had agreed to write a date in their Autumn or Winter programme in order to help manage the field and

that Barry Watson, one of the organisers of the group, was going to meet up with her to discuss the work to be tackled on this occasion.

The Halsey family have agreed for their name to be used for the field, i.e. 'The Halsey Field', and CR will contact Hertfordshire County Council to check that the use of this name is acceptable.

CR also reported that early in July, David Kirk and Dennis Furnell of the Boxmoor Trust came to look round the field with herself, Maureen Flint and Mike Ridley. They had been impressed with the variety of flora growing there, and had provided further insight into its value to wild-life. David had said that he might be interested in completing a moth survey in the field later in the year, and Sarah Bell from HCC has already given permission for this. There was some talk of the possibility of the field being taken over by the Boxmoor Trust, but there has been no further news of either of these proposals.

CR is currently carrying out a butterfly transect for Butterfly Conservation, which involves a weekly monitoring of the butterflies in the field and surrounding fields and woods. An additional species of butterfly has been found flying in the field this summer, the Brown Argus.

The Borough has proposed adding to its development plan two newly designated wildlife sites: the Halsey field and Little Hay Golf Course – (reported in this Autumn's Dacorum Digest). These new designations appear in the Site Allocations Pre-Submission Focused Changes Consultation 2015 document (see 3.2 above), where the Halsey Field site is at present termed "former Halsey School, Hemel Hempstead"

Maureen Flint is of the opinion that a 'Friends of Halsey Field' group should be started as soon as possible, as it will give the site added protection. CR has designed a poster to inform people about the group, and to invite them to become members. Quite a few people have already expressed an interest in belonging to such a group, and some small donations (adding to £135) towards the up-keep of the field have already been given.

GE suggested that in view of the licensing and insurance issues still to be resolved, the question of 'Friends of Halsey Field' and its relationship to DEF should be the subject of a separate meeting.

SW proposed, to general approval, that Mike and Chris Ridley be thanked for all their work in getting Halsey Field designated as a Nature Reserve, pointing out that DEF's efforts were rarely rewarded with such a clearly tangible result.

5. Solar power and heat pumps

5.1 General Issues (Mike Ridley)

Mike Ridley gave an illustrated presentation of the thermodynamic principles underlying energy generation and consumption, highlighting the key indices used to compare Solar power and heat pumps with conventional alternatives. A summary follows:

When a pump is used to move heat from one place to another, it is known in thermodynamics as a "Heat Pump". Usually, a Heat Pump uses electrical energy to move heat from inside a "box" to outside, e.g. for a fridge or air conditioning, or from outside a "box" to inside e.g. for a domestic air source heat pump.

Most commercially generated electricity comes from a “Heat Engine”. Heat naturally flows from hot to cold, and a Heat Engine converts a proportion of this energy, typically to electrical energy in a fossil fuel burning power station. The proportion of energy converted to electrical energy by a Heat Engine is limited by thermodynamics, and cannot exceed a percentage of the heat put in, this percentage being determined by the hot and cold temperatures. For Thermal Power stations it is typically 40%, though there are substantial improvements in recent innovations.

Consequently, grid electricity produced by a gas-fired power station and then used directly for heating would need about 2.5 x the amount of gas compared to a good gas boiler. However, if the electricity is used to drive a heat pump, the pump is able to recover the waste energy (and more) for domestic heating purposes.

Typically, a heat pump can transfer about 3.5 times the electrical energy paid for to provide the house with hot water and space heating. This factor is called the “Coefficient of Heating.”

In summary, based on figures provided by the National Energy Foundation, Mike presented the following estimates:

To provide 1kWh of heat:

Using National Grid electricity for an electric heater would cost 12.93p and result in the emission of 462 grams of CO₂

Using gas would cost 4.3p and result in the emission of 184 grams of CO₂

Using an air source heat pump would cost 3.75p and result in the emission of 132 grams of CO₂

In conclusion he said that:

- There are running cost and environmental advantages to air source heat pumps compared to Gas Central Heating.
- There are considerable advantages to air source heat pumps where grid electricity is the only easily available source of heat (e.g. rural locations without a gas supply).
- These advantages will increase if the proportion of grid electricity derived from non – fossil fuels is increased.

5.2 Domestic example (Paul Davies)

Paul Davies had installed solar panels and then an air source heat pump at his Varney Road house, and had recorded and collated consumption and cost data over a year. He gave an illustrated presentation about his experiences and findings, including photographs of the various components of equipment, and his presentation (.pdf) will be available on the DEF website alongside these minutes.

The 10 photovoltaic panels with a total capacity of 2.5 kilowatts peak had cost £13,250 including installation in November 2011, and no subsequent maintenance had been required.

The total cost for the heat pump and installation had been £13,950 (in Feb 2014), and Annual Maintenance (2015) cost £195.

Paul summarised the Pros and Cons of his installations thus:

Pros:

- He now paid little or nothing for energy
- There was constant heat in rooms where needed
- There was constant hot water, but see Cons below
- New users could possibly expect lower capital costs

Cons:

- The large capital outlay would not all be recovered
- If someone had a full bath others had to wait for a shower
- If there was a power cut he lost all heating and all solar power generation
- There had been one teething problem with the supply of hot water cutting out
- New users would get lower rates from Feed-in Tariff (and possibly Renewable Heat Incentive)

5.3 Discussion and implications for LA3 etc.

GS and TR pointed out the consultation on a review of the Feed-in Tariffs, that “proposes a set of measures to control costs under the Feed-in Tariff, Scheme” that had been announced earlier in the day. They saw this as the end to mass take-up of energy efficiency measures such as those described, because of the high initial costs, which would not now be recouped in a reasonable period.

GE suggested that a reduction in Feed-in Tariffs might be compensated for by ever-decreasing installation costs. TR was dubious on this point, and said that for instance scaffolding costs were unlikely to come down. GE proposed that DEF should try to find out what if any installation cost advantages there were in installing energy-saving devices for a large scheme such as LA3, as part of their forthcoming input to the Master Plans. DR said that placing such specific conditions on developers was very difficult, normal practice being for them to choose from a range of energy-saving options.

GE and PH thought that individual efforts to reduce carbon consumption in the way described was of value, irrespective of whether it saved money, and that it was worth responding to the above consultation. No proposal for DEF to make a collective response was made, but recipients of these minutes should consider doing so individually.

Note: The consultation and Impact Assessment can be found on the Department of Energy and Climate Change’s website: <https://econsultation.decc.gov.uk/office-for-renewable-energy-deployment-ored/fit-review-2015>

GS and TR invited anyone interested in the subject to attend a meeting organised by Transition Towns Berkhamsted in the Green Room of the Kings Arms, Berkhamsted at 6:30pm on Sept 16th where an invited panel of experts will answer questions on energy efficiency

6. Any Other Business

GE said that he had heard from David Ashton and John Webb, of Herts. Without Waste, who had addressed DEF on the subject at their 4th Sept. 2014 meeting, that planning permission for the proposed Recycling and Energy Recovery facility (including Incinerator) at New Barnfield, Hatfield, had been refused on July 16th by Greg Clark, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (CLG). Herts. Without Waste say “CLG’s decision effectively removes a limit

of 70% or so on diversion of materials from waste, and allows proper application of the Waste Hierarchy in this county toward a Zero Carbon / Circular Economy. “ It was agreed that GE should congratulate David Ashton and John Webb on DEF’s behalf.

TR told the meeting of a Community Owned 5 megawatt Solar Farm at John’s Lane Farm, near Ashley Green proposed by 3C Energy, who were keen to enlist support for the project from local communities and groups such as DEF. According to 3C Energy’s website, the Proposed Generating Capacity is 5 MW (peak performance in optimum conditions) representing enough energy to power over 1,360 homes, the site area is 12.5ha / 30 acres and the CO2 saving: 2,435 tonnes per annum. Recipients of these minutes are invited to check up on this and send their views to GE for discussion at the next DEF Steering Group meeting.

PH reported that Luton Airport has asked its owner, Luton Borough Council, to change a condition attached to the planning permission it granted in 2013, because it fears airlines will be penalised for failing to meet noise limits. *Note: At a St Albans District Council Planning Referrals meeting on 24/8/15 councillors agreed to lodge an objection against the proposed variation of the condition with the Luton authority. DBC Councillor recipients of these minutes are invited to respond to GE saying whether a similar objection from Dacorum has been made or is forthcoming.*