

Firstly you should be made aware that a small unfunded group of mostly older Fylde residents from Blackpool, Squires Gate, Lytham St Anne's and Fleetwood have been organising community outreach events over the past 9 months or so in an attempt to disseminate information about Morgan and Morecambe's, (M&M), cable corridor planning application to local people. We have been doing this because when we were out in our communities sharing leaflets and speaking with Fylde residents last year it became apparent to us that few here actually knew anything about these plans and M&M were not taking any noticeable steps to improve this situation.

I think it's fair to say that we would have reasonably expected not to have had to do this and instead, for Fylde households to have been in receipt of regular written updates re the proposals in this application from both M&M, and once the consultation began, from the National Planning Inspectorate, (NPI), itself ... also ideally supported, for those able to access and use online resources, by a dedicated community information website written in plain English.

Given the seemingly vast amounts of money that have clearly been available to transport and sustain large groups of M&M employees and advisers to Blackpool to enable them to be here in blocks of 4 or 5 days at a time to present and support this application, and the similarly evident financial support that has been allocated to allow the NPI team to come here and conduct the consultation hearings, it doesn't seem unreasonable for us to have expected that some funding might have been directed towards making the consultation fully accessible to local people. We would have welcomed, for example, monthly drop-in sessions at community venues, to help residents make written and oral submissions; free community transport to and from hearings, to enable the disproportionate number of older and disabled residents here to attend and regular information bulletins and updates on local radio and TV channels to keep the fairly geographically widely spread groups of Fylde residents, fully 'in the loop'. As I've said previously, free tea and the offer of a hearing loop at far flung hotels miles away from where the proposed heavy work is being planned, quite simply doesn't cut it!

In the absence of any of these initiatives, a small group of self-funded local residents have been leading a campaign aimed at informing thousands and thousands of people along the Fylde of the potential impacts of the cable route and the associated construction of the two unprecedentedly huge substations needed for the project.

With none of these offerings mentioned above in evidence, I think it's fair to say that this consultation has been inaccessible at every level and as such, highly ineffective, and even though myself and others have consistently and repeatedly raised this in person at the hearings and in our written submissions over the past 6 months, little has been done to remedy the situation.

Despite the vast numbers of M&M people arriving here for their 4 days of input and the hundreds more behind the scenes driving this application, the content and related presentations and documents have appeared increasingly muddled, contradictory and inconsistent and have been characterised throughout by a marked lack of attention to detail, a point flagged more than once by members of the inspectorate. Crucial questions have remained unanswered and the phrases, 'we'll answer this by deadline 8', (or whenever), and, 'this will be decided post consent', have been used far too frequently, with both phrases becoming something of an increasingly unwelcome and unsettling mantra. This would be amusing if it wasn't so concerning. As the hearings have progressed, this mantra has even been applied to the highly serious, life threatening issue of the increased potential for bird strikes on aircraft flying in and out of Blackpool Airport and Warton Aerodrome. BAE Warton Aerodrome of course being the aerodrome that M&M apparently hadn't realised was even there when they drew their initial cable route line across what still looks like an outdated map of the area of proposed disruption. The same Warton Aerodrome, where high velocity aircraft are built and tested and where as a direct result of the expected excessive disturbance to the surrounding bird habitats there is expected to be an unquantifiable and considerable increase in the potential for bird strikes on jets being tested there due to the nature and intensity of the proposed 11 years of heavy work M&M are applying to carry out in the vicinity. This has been repeatedly referred to by both [REDACTED], in his representations for BAE Systems, [REDACTED] on behalf of M&M and members of the Inspectorate panel itself as, 'impossible to mitigate'. This fact becomes all the more concerning now that we know that BAE Systems at Warton Aerodrome will be building 20 Eurofighter Typhoon jets as part of an £8 billion Turkish deal, just been signed off by [REDACTED]. Given that the first of these jets are expected to be delivered by 2030, with assembly continuing for several years, it's clear that related test flights will definitely coincide with the estimated eleven year period of proposed cable work in and around the Warton area, should this application be approved. This alone should render the application unworkable and unacceptable.

Another underlying and worrying feature of this consultation, and one that I've witnessed and experienced regularly throughout is the [REDACTED] displayed by many of the leading M&M representatives towards local people. This has been particularly characterised by the [REDACTED] of our serious safety concerns and the regular, inappropriate [REDACTED] from both the applicant and the inspectorate in response to displays of emotion from local people who are fearful of losing their homes, businesses, livelihoods ... and indeed their lives. The atmosphere that has prevailed has been completely lacking in even a glimmer of empathy for residents who live along the proposed cable route, particularly those who came along and shared stories of alleged [REDACTED] from M&M representatives who had visited them in their homes.

Approving this application, not only upholds this [REDACTED] but sets a very low bar for future infrastructure planning applications of this nature, sending out a powerful message that inconsistency and lack of detail, [REDACTED] will always win over clarity, transparency, negotiation and fairness. This is a piece of very dark theatre indeed and allowing it to guide a decision of this magnitude is nothing short of a travesty. It will, if approved, cast serious doubt upon the efficacy, accountability and indeed integrity of the National Planning Inspectorate, further raising the question as to whether that institution itself is fit for purpose.

Myself and the few local residents who have managed to engage with this process over the past 6 months feel that what we have experienced is an intensive course in how NOT to conduct a National Planning Inspectorate community consultation.

At the very least this entire consultation needs to be restarted and conducted from scratch with a full and detailed Equality Impact Assessment as it's starting point, accompanied by a bedrock of practical initiatives like those suggested above to ensure the full and fair participation of all local people and full compliance with the recommendations of the Equality Act. Failing to do this places both the applicant and indeed the planning inspectorate itself not only in breach of the moral and ethical requirements of that Act but [REDACTED]

mores human beings have a right to expect from one another when taking part in a consultation of this nature. This in my view renders both this consultation and the application itself wholly inadequate and open to legal challenge.