**PRESENTATION BY DAVID ECCLES CBE AND ANDREW GOODCHILD – EDF**

**WED 14 AUGUST 2019**

**David Eccles CBE (Head of Stakeholder Engagement) and Andrew Goodchild (Planning Manager, HPC)** of **EDF Energy** addressed the parish council and members of the public to explain the increase in the optimum number of non-home based HPC workers living in the parish.

There was a strategy set out in the original Development Consent Order (DCO) of how non-home based workers would be accommodated. In the strategy used to address the private rented sector, Somerset was broken down into clusters. In each cluster, the capacity was assessed to see what the market was doing, the number of home based workers and non- home based workers was established, as well as the type of accommodation (campus, bought, caravan) workers lived in, the location of workers, and whether accommodation was available for rent.

The information is used to procure 6 monthly reports to the socio-economic advisory group (SEAG) and the data is used to establish whether they are above or below the threshold. Every worker above £5k for every worker out of contingency fund.

As a result of this research, in the ‘Stogursey/HP cluster’ (which includes Holford, Kilve and other small places in-between), the optimum number for the whole cluster was set at 44. This legal agreement also stated that EDF would make a one off payment of £5k per worker in excess of this number, to the relevant local authority.

In 2018, WSC therefore received a payment of £25k to the housing fund, due to an increase of 5 workers above the optimum level. The 5 workers are added to the previous total of 44, therefore optimum number was raised to 49.

However, in their latest review of workers accommodation, EDF calculated that as there had been a substantial increase in available accommodation in the area, the optimum number of workers was raised to seventy. However, Somerset West and Taunton and Sedgemoor District Councils questioned the mechanisms used to calculate these changes and are proposing to review this with EDF as soon as possible.

All Parish councillors and members of the public in attendance were given the opportunity to ask questions and/or make comments on issues of concern. Comments and questions included:

* By increasing the optimum numbers the amount being paid to the parish is decreased and there is less benefit to the parish as there are more HP workers – HPC appear to be economically benefitting
* Availability of rented accommodation affects local people as the rents are so high.
* The housing fund maximises use of existing accommodation (flats, empty properties), help with new builds, and provides landlord and tenancy support. It also increases the capacity of local accommodation to be used by all, however seems to increase the optimum number of HP workers
* There are a number of housing applications where developers are open in saying that it is on the back of HPC project. The situation means that there are a lot of workers in the parish. Residents were aware that this would be a big deal, however it is causing dissent in the parish.
* The payment of £5k were negotiated in 2012 but has not been updated. Every time the number of workers are increase over the optimum, this is a one off payment (to the local housing authority to increase additional housing capacity and use in the most effective way) and does not benefit the parish – the increase in optimum numbers decreases any potential payment to the parish.
* There is a low take up of campus rooms – an under occupancy of 15% has been reported. Why is it not being used more? Is this because they have to move their belongings out?
* There were comments on the increase of mental health on the campus – a large part based on incorrect information. HP are carrying out work to support mental health, there is a problem in society with mental health but there is no more on site than in the rest of society as a whole.
* There are a large number of empty buses running through Stogursey
* No thought appear to have been given to the residents of Stogursey
* There are an increased number of cars and this brings additional danger. This does not seem to have been taken into account.
* The cost of campus accommodation has risen to £30 per night and that has resulted in some workers moving out of the campuses and staying elsewhere (e.g. in caravans). Initially the parish council / local residents were assured that no more caravan sites would appear in the parish, however this has subsequently happened.
* At what point does the optimum number, for which HP pay £5k per worker, stop?

EDF Responses to questions comments included:

* EDF are not in a position to dictate or direct where their workers live, however they are doing and will do their best to encourage their workers to use the campuses on HP site and in Bridgwater. They are not submitting planning applications for HMOs, they know there is an impact, and are doing what they can
* EDF expect there to be more take up of campus accommodation when the numbers of workers increase (peak expected end 2021). EDF are trying to increase the usage. At the moment they are in a crossover period, until the workforce ramps up. There is expected to be a pickup towards end of year – those already living in the area have not moved to the campus. It has been seen that some people are initially happy to live on the campus short term, however in the long term they prefer a more ‘homely’ environment.
* EDF are working within the DCO as agreed to
* Type of accommodation workers use often depends on length of time working on site - 57% live on campus if working there short time; 73% live in private rented sector if working there long term.
* The vast majority of workers are living in Bridgwater, and hopefully Sedgemoor housing fund is benign used to accommodate them. When workers numbers decrease there will be a large number of accommodation available.
* It may be appropriate to ask SWT to also speak to the parish.
* Meetings with residents will help to inform EDF of the issues which affect the parish. EDF are willing to revisit the parish at a separate meeting from the parish council meetings to discuss the issues residents are facing.
* There are a number of people who have rented out their spare rooms and bed spaces and are benefitting – their voices should also be heard. B&B/local hoteliers have reported that their bookings decreased when the campus opened.
* There is a finite capacity of houses / bed spaces, and therefore there are only so many for workers to use. In addition the £5m allocated will eventually run out, although however, based on the figures available, this is unlikely.
* The number of buses have been reduced by 55% - now 24 buses per day.
* There a number of issues raised by the Guardian newspaper – not always the truth and some of it exaggerated. The small print stated it is not supported by evidence. EDF has asked for any incidents to be reported and action will be taken.

**Lisa Redston (SWT)**

The district council have a remit to ensure the funding is used effectively, and reminded attendees about EDF funding – CIM and community fund is still available. The Housing fund must be spent to combat the pressures of housing demand and to create new bedspaces. SWT can speak to local residents about planning and how they can help.

Lisa reiterated the words of David Eccles, they cannot control where people choose to live, and only encourage them not to. However, SWT District council are interested in how they can help and support parishioners, and are also willing to return to the parish at a separate meeting to discuss any issues residents are facing.