

IFA2 Granted Planning Permission at Daedalus

Fareham Borough Council has humiliated the Secretary of State and our local MP

On 10th April, Fareham Borough Council (FBC) announced that it had granted planning permission for National Grid's proposed IFA2 electrical interconnector at Daedalus and the high voltage cables connecting it to the substation near Chilling, Warsash (*copy attached*). This has happened despite the fact that the decision was actually up to the Secretary of State, Sajid Javid - or so we thought. Now it appears that there was a totally unofficial "gentleman's agreement" between Fareham and the National Planning Casework Unit which has pulled the rug from under the Secretary of State, our local MP Caroline Dinenage, 13 Councillors from Fareham and Gosport, the 3 local Residents' Associations and over 1300 local objectors. **Proper procedures have not been followed.**

Under the deal National Grid has leased land at Daedalus that will generate millions of pounds of income for FBC.

Fareham Council have now commissioned two new technical studies that will test whether the converter station and underground cables can operate without affecting the running of Solent Airport and its business parks. They say that the technical studies will need to demonstrate how the facility will safely coexist with the Airport before any construction work can start. Yet there were a raft of detailed technical reports by Arcadis, ARUP, TÜV SÜD and even National Grid issued last year that raised a whole series of questions on aviation and electrical safety that remain unanswered. They have yet to release the original Arcadis report. A Freedom of Information enquiry - which Fareham has answered only very late in the day, and only in part - revealed disquiet on the part of at least one officer in Fareham Council who had concerns in September regarding a draft 'expert' report, and who also said "there are also a number of points that aren't clear enough for (prospective) airfield users to be confident that the cables won't affect their flying, or for prospective tenants near the interconnector to be confident that their equipment and enjoyment won't be affected." (*Copy attached*). Fareham seem to think IFA2 is like the referendum issue in Scotland – keep having another report until you get the result you want!

The three local Residents' Associations were told by the National Planning Casework Unit (NPCU) that the result of the Application by them, eleven Gosport Councillors and the MP for Gosport for the decision to be "called in" by the Secretary of State could be expected in the week of 17th April 2017. But the Secretary of State's decision has been pre-empted by Fareham Council.

NPCU, when questioned, said that there was a “gentlemen’s agreement” on the issue. A senior officer at Fareham Borough Council said: “I am not aware of an agreement on those terms” – “We only agreed to have an active dialogue with NPCU” and “I am surprised that no Section 31 had been issued”. So am I! (*See note below on Section 31.*) Clearly Fareham think that the week before Easter is a good time to bury bad news.

In summary, FBC has:

- ignored aviation experts Britten-Norman who are based at the airfield
- ignored their own aviation expert councillor
- ignored the fact that there are clearly unanswered aviation safety issues
- ignored the clear policies in their own current Local Plan
- ignored the government’s National Policy Planning Framework
- ignored the objections from some 1300 residents
- ignored the adverse effects on the local community
- apparently influenced changes to an expert report which we infer from their reluctance to release the original version and the FOI document.
- ignored the concerns of the local MP, Caroline Dinenage, and the adjacent Borough that will be most affected by the proposal
- forced through planning approval while the Secretary of State was considering whether the Planning Application by National Grid should be called in to be determined by for the S of S himself to make the final decision.

Fareham Borough Council seem to be completely out of control and need to be brought to book for this appalling behaviour. Gosport Councillor Stephen Philpott called it a black day for democracy. NPCU have stated that if they have erred they will put their hands up to it. Yes, and no doubt they will learn lessons etc., etc. We’ve heard it all before! Much good that will do now! But will they do anything to correct the error, if there was one?

The sad fact is that the French electrical power generating system, which was to supply us through this link with dependable, cheap power, is in fact heading into very serious problems because of technical and financial difficulties in its nuclear power industry and the French "green transition" to rely on more renewable power sources by 2030. Add Brexit and the falling exchange rate and French power through the IFA2 Interconnector will be very expensive and it is not at all clear that they will have a surplus to export to us in the future.

This is not the end of the road for us on this issue - we have a plan.

Martin Marks OBE

Chair, Lee-on-the-Solent Residents' Association

Note on Section 31: In addition, it is possible for the Secretary of State to delay the grant of planning permission until he has decided whether or not to call-in an application, by what is sometimes called a holding direction. This power is set out in ***Section 31 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 (SI 595)***:

(1) The Secretary of State may give directions restricting the grant of permission by a local planning authority, either indefinitely or during such a period as may be specified in the directions, in respect of any development or in respect of development of any class so specified. If a planning application is called-in, there will be a public inquiry chaired by a planning inspector, or lawyer, who will make a recommendation to the Secretary of State, who genuinely takes the final decision.