2324-34

Rackenford & Creacombe Parish Council

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There was Annual Rackenford & Creacombe Parish Council Meeting on Tuesday 23rd May 2023 at 7.30pm held in Rackenford School.

Members Present: Parish Councillors Graham Lucas; Sarah Child; Peter Jones; Fred Phillips; Ian Lucas; Scott Ware & Jenny Cox.

Also Present: County Cllr. Jeremy Yabsley (From 7.53pm to 7.57pm)

In attendance: Rob Martin, Clerk

Others: Two members of the general public

MINUTES

2324-01 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN FOR 2023/2024
On a proposal by Cllr. Child, seconded by Cllr. Jones, **Cllr. Lamb** was elected as **Chairman** for the coming year.

2324-02 RECEIPT OF THE DECLARATIONS OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE
The declarations of Acceptance of Office were received from all councillors present.

2324-03 APOLOGIES
Apologies had been received from Cllr. Warne.

2324-04 ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRMAN
On a proposal by Cllr. Lamb, seconded by Cllr. Child, **Cllr. Jones** was elected as **Vice-Chairman** for the coming year.

2324-05 RECEIPT OF REGISTERS ON INTEREST
The clerk received Declarations of Acceptance of Office from all councillors present.

Councillors were reminded that the Election Expenses form should be returned, even though it might be nil, within 28 days of the date at which they became councillors, that being 5th June 2023.

2324-06 RECEIPT OF AGENDAS ONLINE
The parish council has for some years been receiving agendas and minutes online and it is required that this method is reaffirmed for this council.

2324-07 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (PECUNIARY AND NON-PECUNIARY)
No declarations were submitted.

2324-08 GENERAL POWER OF COMPETENCE
On a proposal by the Chairman, seconded by Cllr. Jones it was **Resolved** to adopt the General Power of Competence for the coming four years.
four years.

2324-09 SIGNATORIES

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On a proposal by the Chairman, it was **Resolved** that former Cllr. Tamsin Hyland be removed from the list of signatories and that Cllr. Scott Ware be added.

The signatories would be Robert Martin, Sarah Child, Fred Phillips(Not Online), Stewart Warne and Scott Ware.

2324-10 TRANSFER OF CLASSIC ACCOUNT BALANCE TO THE BUSINESS ACCOUNT

The Classic Personal cheque account had a credit balance of £13,420.86, which needed to be transferred to the Online Business Account. It was **Resolved** to draw a cheque for this amount and to reduce the Classic balance to zero, and eventually close the account. The clerk would try to ensure that all transfers into and out of the old account were redirected.

2324-11 FINAL ACCOUNTS

On a proposal by Cllr. Jones, seconded by Cllr. Lucas, it was **Resolved** to:

a) Adopt the Bank Reconciliation Statement as at 31st March 2023.
b) Approve and adopt the 2022/23 Annual Accounts for the Parish Council
c) Approve the analysis of the Reserves at the year-end

2324-12 INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT 2022/23

To receive and adopt the attached Internal Audit Report from Mulberry & Co., which has concluded that the accounts are in good shape. The only caveats in the report are that the Standing Orders need to be reviewed, which will be brought to a future meeting and that the reserves look a bit high, which will be covered as part of the budget process for the 2024/25 financial year.

2324-13 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN (AGAR) 2022/23

On a proposal by the Chairman, seconded by Cllr. Jones, it was **Resolved** to

a) Approve the AGAR Section 1, the Annual Governance Statement for 2022/23.
b) Approve the Certificate of Exemption on the basis that the turnover for the year was less than £25,000.
c) Approve of the AGAR Section 3, the Accounting Statements for 2022/23.

2324-14 ASSET REGISTER

On a proposal by Cllr. Child, seconded by Cllr. Jones, it was **Resolved** to approve the Asset Register as at 31st May 2023 in order to ensure that the Insurance Cover detailed below was on a consistent basis.

2324-15 INSURANCE RENEWAL

The parish council was still within a Long-Term Agreement (LTA) with BHIB for insurance cover.

On a proposal by Cllr. Child, seconded by Cllr. Jones it was **Resolved** to accept the policy offered by BHIB, the insurer being Aviva for the next year with a premium of £937.98 which the clerk would pay before it was due on 1st June 2023.

2324-16 REPRESENTATIONS ON OUTSIDE BODIES

The following councillors were elected to represent Rackenford Parish Council for the coming year:

a) Rackenford School – Cllr. Child

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a) Batsworthy Cross – Cllr. Lucas
b) Community Shop Committee – Cllr. Lucas

2324-17 COUNCILLOR RESPONSIBILITIES

To elect councillors to lead on the following subjects:

a) Snow Warden – Cllr. Phillips
b) Tree warden – Cllr. Phillips
c) Footpaths – Cllr. Warne
d) Play Area – Cllrs. Warne and Jones
e) Highways – Cllr. Phillips
f) Planning – Cllrs. Lucas and Graham

2324-18 MINUTES

On a proposal by the Chairman, it was **Resolved** to approve, as a correct record, the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 7th March 2023 and these were signed as such.

2324-19 CLERK'S REPORT

The clerk outlined what a great deal of work had occurred since the last meeting highlighting the facts that:

a) The accounts had been prepared,
b) The Annual Return had been drawn up,
c) The accounts had been internally audited requiring a great deal of input from him,
d) The parish council elections had taken place with Tamsin leaving and Scott joining Rackenford PC.
e) The gazebo had been bought and delivered and used at the celebration event.
f) The Coronation celebration event had been organised and had taken place.

2324-20 PUBLIC AND OTHER BODIES' SESSION

The Chairman to declared the meeting closed, to allow questions for District and County Councillors and to take any questions from members of the public.

County Council

County Cllr. Yabsley briefly updated the parish council with the news that DCC now had a new Chief Executive, Donna Manson, and that first impressions were that things look likely to change for the better.

District Council

District Cllr. Peter Jones was beginning to realise the commitment he had made when he was elected and would need some time to get his feet under the table.

Public Session

The parish council heard from Toby Denno, aged 11, who had written the following letter:

Dear Parish Council,
I have a request to get 1 new football goal on the common as the old one is rather small and it is rotting. Without a net when we play the ball always rolls onto the road which is

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dangerous for both drivers and us. I like playing football with my family and my friends in the village but I find it hard when there isn't a good goal for us to use. Being outside and active is really important and if you as a parish council can help us do this more that would be very good for us all. It is great that we have a park but the equipment is for more younger kids. It would mean we played more on the common if we had a better goal to use. I thought a good size goal would be 16ft (along) by 7ft(up) with a net because this prevents the ball from going on to the road. It can be a goal for every junior football player because this is the biggest junior goal that is played in. I have found a goal for £684.99 the link is at the bottom of the page. This goal is aluminium and can survive longer than just getting a new wooden goal. It also has two locking sockets; they get put in the ground and locked on to the goal. The goal can be taken out every time some one is mowing, leaving only the sockets to put the goal back in after the grass has been mowed. I have also emailed Earthwrights to see if they might make a wooden goal with a net so it would be like the rest of the park/common. I can let you know the price when they reply.
We could help to fundraise for this goal and maybe for improving the net for tennis and putting somewhere to store it all on the common.
Thank you for reading this letter. I look forward to hearing from you.
Yours sincerely,
Toby Denno (11)

Toby reiterated the points made in his letter and requested that the parish council consider his request. Toby was thanked for this and was told that the parish council would consider it in item 2324-23 below.

2324-21 THE COMMON

The War Memorial grass was shortly due to be cut by Ed Nicholson.
The recent car accident had demolished a road sign, which would be down to Devon County Highways to sort out. The clerk would email Cllr. Yabsley to express concern about the re-erection of the sign.

The Common is being cut in accordance with the contract. There was a need to remove an unstable wall revealed when the conifers were removed and the chairman would get a digger down to the site to remove this. Cllr. Cox asked whether whilst the digger was there, could the scrapes be done at the same time. She also wanted to get the wooden benches already bought to be installed as soon a s possible.

Cllr. Cox also reminded the parish council that it had been agreed to install a picnic bench down by the river. She had investigated options and had concluded that it would be good to have a recycled plastic bench, such as those supplied by Devon Contract Waste (DCW) of Exeter, which would provide a vandal-proof option.

On a proposal by Cllr. Jones, seconded by Cllr. Cox, it was **Resolved** that a Plymouth Picnic Table be purchased from DCW the cost of which would £474 (incl VAT) and would be sited next to the river, as discussed.

2324-22 PROPOSED MEETING ROOM/SHOP EXTENSION

The chairman reported that there would be a preliminary meeting with an architect the following morning just to chat through the options available.
Cllr. Jones questioned whether the idea of surveying views on whether a Village Hall would

be the project that residents prefer rather than just a small addition to the Shop. Cllr. Child stated that there were concerns about the need for volunteers to run it and whether it would cover its costs.

2324-23 FOOTBALL GOALPOSTS

Cllr. Jones said that this request highlighted the fact that in addition to the request for goalpost(s) the rest of the equipment on the MUGA needed replacing as well and that it completely fitted the requirement for a DCF windfarm grant.

It was **Resolved** that the parish council would put a project together involving the goalposts with a refurbishment of the MUGA and its equipment alongside some storage. In order to make a bid for DCF money it would be necessary to have consulted with users on what was needed. Toby was requested to put together a petition for young children to sign requesting that the equipment be provided by the parish council.

The clerk pointed out that the goalposts would need to be positioned so that there was no interference with the Air Ambulance Landing site which Cllr. Jones believed could be achieved by adjusting the orientation of the pitch.

2324-24 KING CHARLES CORONATION CELEBRATIONS

This had been a very good event which was enjoyed by all especially since the weather had been kind on the day.

There was a surplus from the day which would be paid into the parish council account. When the organisers had dealt with the various costs a statement would be produced to support the income banked.

2324-25 2023/24 BANK RECONCILIATION AND BUDGET MONITOR

The Bank Reconciliation Statement and Budget Monitor as at 30th April 2023 were adopted.

2324-26 RECEIPTS & PAYMENT SCHEDULE

On a proposal by Cllr. Ware, seconded by Cllr. Lucas it was **Resolved** to approve the payment of the invoices on the schedule below for the period since the last meeting:

Payments

Payee	Services	Amount £	Payment No.
2023/2024			
R. Martin – Surf & Turf	Gazebo	1,506.00	Card
Playsafety t/a ROSPA	Annual Inspection	94.20	2324-02
DALC	Annual Subscription	111.54	2324-02
Rackenford Shop	Barbecue	624.72	2324-02
Clyst Honiton Parish Council	SLCC Subscription Share	39.00	2324-03
FA Phillips	Winter Maintenance 2022/23	1,080.00	2324-03
Peter Jones	Turbify Emails	129.50	2324-04

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Peter Jones	Uncleared Cheque 2021/22	36.94	2324-04
RJ Martin	Salary May 2023	288.39	2324-05
HMRC	Tax Deduction May 2023	72.20	2324-05
RJ Martin	Salary June 2023	288.39	2324-06
HMRC	Tax Deduction June 2023	72.20	2324-06
Lucy Lastic Band	Coronation Entertainment	260.00	2324-07
Pharaoh Print	Coronation Tickets	57.60	2324-07
Heywood Bars	Coronation Drinks	466.92	2324-07
BHIB	Insurance Premium	937.98	2324-07

Receipts

Receipt From	Services	Amount £	Reference
2023/2024			
North Devon Council	Precept	7,500.00	BGC
HMRC	VAT Refund	712.65	BGC

2324-27 PLANNING APPLICATIONS

To consider the following Planning Application and to agree comments:

Reference	Location	Proposal
76839	Barn at Higher Thorne Rackenford Tiverton Devon EX16 8ED Grid Ref: 284379; 117934	Prior approval for conversion of agricultural building to one dwellinghouse Class Q(a)(b) **Already approved by NDC.**

2324-28 OTHER PLANNING MATTERS

The Chairman announce that he believed that the Prices Tractor application would be going to Appeal shortly. It was **Agreed** that the parish council continue to press the case for refusal based on its original **Objection.**

Application 75212, Rackenford Cross had still not been determined or withdrawn and was therefore still live and could be allowed. Cllr. Jones would ask what the current situation was by talking to the planner involved.

2324-29 COUNCILLOR REPORTS

a) **Chairman's Report**

The chairman wished to thank everybody involved for the three events on the common.

b) **Reports from Other Councillors**

Cllr. Lucas reported that Cllr. Phillips is donating a section of the field to the shop for

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the extension. By way of consideration, he would like access to the field via a new gate on the corner next to the MUGA. He would need to cross a small strip of Parish Council owned land to get to the field. Because of some unusual wording on the Land Registry Title deed the simplest solution would be to grant him a licence. It was agreed that this would be acceptable and a licence for this would be prepared.

Cllr. Jones brought up two planning enforcement matters matters, firstly for the training centre at Stonelands Cross and secondly the 'Boat Builder'. The advice from the chairman was to approach the Enforcement Officer(s) and ask what was being done, as these had been reported before.

Cllr. Phillips was concerned about the drain between common and trinity well which needed to be re-set to avoid flooding there. He also said that there were a number of potholes in that area which should be reported to Highways.

He was also concerned that dog waste was being dumped in the salt bins and believed that further dog bins should be installed. The clerk pointed out that it is no good just installing bins without checking how the waste was going to be disposed of. The clerk would contact MDC and ask how this should be arranged, and what it would cost.

2324-30 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next scheduled meeting of Rackenford & Creacombe Parish Council is on Tuesday 11th July 2023, at 7.30pm.

2324-31 MEETING CLOSURE

Chairman's Signature:

Date:

2324.A2

RACKENFORD & CREACOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

BANK RECONCILIATION

As at 30th June 2023

FUNDS HELD IN BANK ACCOUNTS	£	£
Lloyd Classic Account Balance		1,897.00
Lloyds Business Account Balance		40,948.29
		42,845.29
Less Unpresented Cheques	£	
Royal Mail - Postage	2.95	
		2.95
Total Funds less unpresented cheques		**42,842.34**
CASHBOOK BALANCE @ 01.04.2023	39,755.81	
Plus Income Received	10,109.65	
Less payments made	(7,023.12)	
		42,842.34
Unreconciled Balance		-

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LLOYDS BANK

04 July 2023

Rackenford Parish Council
14 STATION ROAD
YEOFORD
CREDITON
DEVON
EX17 5HU

Your Account

Sort Code 30-90-89
Account Number 39081463

TREASURERS ACCOUNT

01 June 2023 to 30 June 2023

Money In	£0.00	**Balance on 01 June 2023**	£41,632.88
Money Out	£684.59	**Balance on 30 June 2023**	£40,948.29

Your Transactions

Date	Description	Type	Money In (£)	Money Out (£)	Balance (£)
19 Jun 23	EXMOOR LUXURY LOOS 200000001148020762 INV 5346	FPO		324.00	41,308.88
20 Jun 23	HMRC - ACCOUNTS OF	BP		72.00	41,236.88
20 Jun 23	RJ MARTIN	BP		288.59	40,948.29

Transaction types

BGC	Bank Giro Credit	**BP**	Bill Payments	**CHG**	Charge	**CHQ**	Cheque
COR	Correction	**CPT**	Cashpoint	**DD**	Direct Debit	**DEB**	Debit Card
DEP	Deposit	**FEE**	Fixed Service	**FPI**	Faster Payment In	**FPO**	Faster Payment Out
MPI	Mobile Payment In	**MPO**	Mobile Payment Out	**PAY**	Payment	**SO**	Standing Order
TFR	Transfer						

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Rackenford & Creacombe Parish Council Budget Monitor 2023/2024

2022/2023		2023/2024				
Outturn	Description	Budget	Actual	Pecentage	Remaining	As at 30th June 2023
£		£	£	%	£	
13,300.00	Precept	15,000	7,500.00	50%	7,500.00	
3,135.00	Grants	-	-	0%	-	*P3 Grant for Strimmer + DCF Grant for Gazebo and Barbecue*
-	DAA Lighting Donations	-	-	0%	-	
-	Community Building Donations	-	-	0%	-	
4,600.00	Jubilee/Coronation Event Income	-	1,897.00	0%	(1,897.00)	
-	PROW P3 Grant	500	-	0%	500.00	
950.00	Interest & Other Income	400	-	0%	400.00	*School use of Playing Field & Fireworks Event Income*
21,985.00	**Budgeted Receipts**	**15,900**	**9,397.00**	**59%**	**6,503.00**	
1,099.80	VAT Refund	-	712.65	0%	(712.65)	
23,084.80	**Total Receipts**	**15,900**	**10,109.65**	**64%**	**5,790.35**	
3,225.00	Common Maintenance	4,000	-	0%	4,000.00	
-	Grass Mowing	300	-	0%	300.00	*I am not sure what this is for*
101.85	Playground Inspection	120	78.50	65%	41.50	
810.00	Common Playground Project	-	-	0%	-	
-	Common Community Building	-	-	0%		
-	Hard Court maintenance	400	-	0%	400.00	
405.00	Salt spreading / snow ploughing	2,000	900.00	45%	1,100.00	
175.00	Trinity Well	200	-	0%	200.00	
382.87	Audit fees	450	225.00	50%	225.00	
4,301.65	Clerk Salary	4,585	1,081.77	24%	3,503.23	
208.65	Clerk Expenses	150	2.95	2%	147.05	
42.96	Website & IT services	200	166.44	83%	33.56	
888.56	Insurance	1,000	937.98	94%	62.02	
-	School Room hire	100	-	0%	100.00	
163.99	Memberships/subscriptions	175	137.00	78%	38.00	
-	Air Ambulance Landing Lights	100	-	0%	100.00	
-	Election	1,000	-	0%	1,000.00	
2,412.10	Jubilee/Coronation Event Expenditure	-	967.10	0%	(967.10)	
500.83	PROW Expenditure	500	-	0%	500.00	
-	Defibrillator	1,800	-	0%	1,800.00	
-	Gazebo & Barbecue	2,435	1,775.60	73%	659.40	*Paid for by grant in reserves*
358.33	Non Section 137 Grants & Other	300	-	0%	300.00	
-	S137 grants & other	500	-	0%	500.00	
13,976.79	**Budgeted Payments**	**20,315**	**6,272.34**	**31%**	**14,042.66**	
1,173.77	VAT Expenditure	-	750.78	0%	(750.78)	
15,150.56		**20,315**	**7,023.12**	**35%**	**13,291.88**	

(7,934.24)	**Total Net Payments/(Receipts)**	**4,415**	**(3,086.53)**
31,821.57	Balance 1st April	39,367	39,755.81
23,084.80	Plus Receipts	15,900	10,109.65
(15,150.56)	Less Payments	(20,315)	(7,023.12)
39,755.81	Balance	34,952	42,842.34

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Rackenford & Creacombe Parish Council

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App/X1118/W/23/3317058 Land at Stonelands Cross Rackenford; provision of an Agricultural Hub

Rackenford Parish Council Comments on the James Pryce Tractors Appeal Statement

Rackenford Parish Council continues to object to the proposal and in this statement, it refers additionally to the following documents:

1. Our objection of 8 March 2022 which is included in the Application Report for the North Devon Planning Committee (NDPC) of 19 October 2022, and our further objection of 2 December 2022 which was included for the meetings of the NDPC on 14 December 2022 and 11 January 2023.
2. The minutes of the Rackenford Parish Council of 19 August 2021 (extract below).
3. Letters of objection from the Devon CPRE, Pete Grugeon of the Bulworthy Project, which is close to the site, and other local residents.
4. The James Pryce Planning Statement
5. The two reports of 22 February 2022 and 21 September 2022 provided to the Committee by the Devon Highways officer and included in the Application Report for their October 2022 meeting.
6. The Consultation Response from Planning Policy provided for the 11 January 2023 committee meeting.
7. The minutes of the NDPC for the three meetings mentioned.
8. NDLP policies ST01, ST07, ST11, DM14

Appeal Statement

Paragraphs 3.6 - 3.31

The issue of alternative sites It is noted that in pre application the Local Planning Authority (LPA) required additional information on the suitability of the site and whether there were alternatives . It recommended a "light touch" sequential test to include sites in South Molton and Witheridge. There was no definition of what size of site was to be searched for, i.e. whether one sufficient for James Pryce Tractors to move to on its own, which would need to be on a business park or other land defined as commercial, or whether this was to be one for an "agricultural hub" to include the other two businesses expected to join in which would have been expected to open up a very much wider field of possibilities. The applicants believe that their demonstration that no suitable alternatives are available establishes a material consideration to weigh in favour of a departure from Policies ST07 and DM14 of the Local Plan.

Comment The Stonelands Cross site of 27,000 m^2 is owned by James Pryce and said to be geographically central to its current business. The Planning Statement (6.1.4) indicates that James Pryce would occupy 5,513 m^2 of the site and the other two businesses 2,617 m^2. This of course leaves much space unaccounted for other than for parking. Objectors queried the limitations of the sequential test at and before the October planning committee meeting and it was agreed to include Tiverton in the area of search. No suitable site was reported as identified.

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In the Rackenford Parish Council's (RPC) second objection letter (2 December 2022), it asked again what area of space had been searched for and pointed out that the James Pryce business has already expanded into Somerset and Mid Devon both of which have not apparently been searched this time. There have been no answers provided to these questions.

No evidence has been provided as to why the James Pryce business needs to be concentrated on one site whilst noting that it is currently on two. Tractors are normally serviced on farms, so that some regional distribution of engineers and showrooms might seem to be more supportive of expansion.

The argument that "there are simply no other suitable sites" (3.29) may well be a material consideration, but where it seems to overrule all other planning considerations appears to RPC to be unacceptable.

Paragraphs 3.11-3.27

The Planning Committee concentrated upon transport and highways matters to the exclusion of "legitimate policy grounds"

Comment It is not surprising that councillors were anxious to understand the very unusual position that had arisen. The Highways Officer had initially, on 22 February 2022, recommended refusal of the application in no uncertain terms, based on the dangers of doubling the use of an exit onto the A361 which is a right hand turn across high speed traffic, defining the application as "severely unsafe".

The applicants had not at this stage supplied traffic data for the Stonelands Cross junction, other than to forecast that movements in and out would double at peak hours. On receiving the Highways report, the applicants commissioned a traffic survey which showed sufficient capacity at the junction to bear the additional traffic calculated and noted that there had been no personal injury collisions recorded for that site over the previous 10 years. This caused the officer to change his recommendation on 21 September 2022 with district councillors consequently receiving two conflicting Highways recommendations at their October 2022 meeting.

It was however subsequently established that there had been a serious personal injury accident in 2018 at this junction which had been inaccurately recorded as having occurred elsewhere, calling into question the conclusions of the later report.

Objectors, including parish councillors and others familiar with the junction, were astonished by this reversal and continued to review the data provided. We found it to be inadequate in that it took no account of the extreme seasonal variations caused by the tourist traffic. The parish council continued to object both on these grounds and also because the application took no account of the traffic implications for the C road on which the proposed entrance for the development is sited.

The second objection letter provided more detailed information based on publically available data. The applicant has at no time provided the community with all of their traffic data, despite a promise to do so.

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The Highways Officer was not present at the December 2022 meeting to provide answers to the new questions . RPC suggests that it was entirely reasonable for district councillors at this stage to ask for a survey on the junction arrangements and to be confident that they understand and remain informed on Highways issues.

The fact that transport remained a major concern does not however imply that councillors were unaware of the other policy considerations.

The developers Planning Statement noted the Planning Officer's pre-enquiry observation that the development was not policy compliant and then explains the assumptions used to argue support from various policies within the North Devon Local Plan, ie ST11 and DM14.

The Planning Policy Officer's report stresses the relevance of Para 84a of the NPPF and policies ST07, ST11(7) and DM14 of the Local Plan. The objections made by the Rackenford Parish Council, the CPRE and various individuals all include concerns around these and several of the individual objectors who spoke at the NDPC meetings also raised non- transport policy issues. These contributions were not minuted and it would appear that recording would be useful.

We suggest that it may be assumed that experienced members of the Planning Committee are reasonably familiar with the key policies of the NDLP and its relationship to the NPPF. In any case at the chairman's request, members had received prior to the January 2023 meeting, the Planning Policy Officer's addendum note on these matters.

Paragraphs 5.2-5.31

ST07 and ST11 (7) considerations

The applicant argues (5.6) that the proposal falls under section 4 of ST07, which allows for some development in rural areas outside the designated settlements where it is "enabled to meet local economic and social needs ....and is necessarily restricted to a Countryside location." The proposal is also said (5.22) to "clearly comply" with the intent of ST11(7) by delivering quantitative and qualitative improvements in job opportunities.

Comment The proposed site is some 2miles from the village of Rackenford , on the C road which connects the village and other small settlements to the east to Tiverton and to the west to South Molton. The area is otherwise one of scattered farms .

RPC cannot identify any local economic or social need which would be met by this proposal. James Pryce provides a very efficient tractor service on farms, as do the vets for farm animals, who usually bring medication with them. The Planning Officer has stated that small animal services could not be included in the hub as not being agricultural. The agricultural supply companies based in Tiverton and South Molton deliver any large orders. Further suggestions for material considerations (5.30) are not supported by information; "linked trips" to discuss tractor finance at the same time as calving problems or a fertiliser order are not likely to be of much significance . There is no evidence of plans for shared renewable technologies between the three companies.

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No evidence has been provided that demonstrates that the proposals are necessarily restricted to a countryside location (5.8). There is no evidence that James Pryce must share a site with other agricultural businesses other than as a means to circumvent the intent of the Local Plan to control dispersed development in the countryside.

Comment The text of ST11(7) is simply that proposals for economic development will be supported "where they do not conflict with other Local Plan policies".

Paragraphs 5.32-36

Significant benefits of the proposal The Appeal Statement repeats the list of economic, social and environmental benefits listed in the Planning Statement (para 666-669) and in the categories advocated by the NPPF.

Comment The **first** benefit identified is the possibility of the "provision" of 25-30 jobs in Phase 1 of the development, to be followed by 16 in Phase 2 and another 20 after that from the other two companies who have yet to sign up to the project and are not firmly identified. "Provision" is not defined; it is not clear how far these would be additional to the current jobs at Pryce's in Tiverton and South Molton.

No information at all is supplied to justify these calculations; we do not know how many employees there are at present, which might underpin the forecast of expansion on a larger site, nor the nature of the jobs concerned. Within James Pryce itself these should hopefully include skilled technicians and opportunities for apprentices. A few of these might benefit the small population of the surrounding community, but mostly they would have to be filled from further afield.

The **second** suggestion is that indirect employment opportunities would arise, benefitting the community; these are not defined, and we would note that unemployment is at a very low level in this area and also that there is absolutely no local public transport.

The **third, fourth and fifth** suggestions are all incorporated in the first two.

The **sixth**, that a move out of Tiverton would free a site for further development there, cannot be denied.

The **seventh** is that complementary landscaping and good quality architecture would enhance the landscape character of the site. Building three commercial and retail businesses and large areas of parking on an agricultural field at the side of a major road which otherwise has almost continuously green views on each side cannot be accepted as likely to achieve this end and seems in direct contravention of the Local Plan.

Remaining suggested benefits are an increase in Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), which on the updated information is insignificant, and shared renewable technology, for which no plans other than for electrical charging points are instanced.

A major **disadvantage** of the proposal is of course that virtually all employees on the site, and all customers and suppliers, would arrive by car, van or lorry.

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Summary RPC continues to believe that the decision to refuse this application on the basis of its conflict with the North Devon Local Plan was correct. A major element of the NDLP is its goal of conservation of a countryside which is not only of high value environmentally but also, via tourism, constitutes a very important sector of the local economy.

NDLP Policies ST01, ST07 and ST11(7) all target sustainable development and, as the Planning Policy Officer informed the committee, are in conformity with the NPPF, paras 84 and 85, which include the same goals. Provision is made under all these headings for exceptions to rural protection, but this application does not appear to qualify for any of these, and certainly not under DM14 as the application originally argued, as this exception relates only to very small developments, not one of this scale.

A proposal for a large commercial development in a wholly rural area, two miles from a settlement, inaccessible by public transport and likely to have an unacceptable impact on local roads, needs to offer substantial and well evidenced economic and social benefits to achieve a planning balance in favour of approval. This application does not do that in any way.

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Appendix A

Extract of Minutes 19 August 2021

2022-28 STONELANDS CROSS DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

Andy Pryce of James Pryce Tractors outlined the proposal to build an Agricultural Hub at Stonelands Cross, incorporating new premises for the company with additional units for other agricultural companies.

The present Pryce Tractors business has outgrown its premises in Tiverton and South Molton, which has generated the need for this 7-acre site next to the A361 road.

Questions related to whether this agricultural land in a bio-diverse area was the best place for this development and being realistic about highway matters, given the size of agricultural vehicles. A good deal of the traffic generated would not use the A361 exclusively, particularly if approaching from the north, so would affect the C road which links Rackenford to Tiverton. It was noted that traffic estimates would need to include those for the two other companies proposed for the site. These matters were currently being investigated and the results would be fed into the planning process.