

2021 - 2022 Chairman's Report for AGM of Protos Community Forum 13th July 2022

INTRODUCTION

- Welcome to the Annual General Meeting of the Protos Community Forum, which is the 13th after the group was first set up. Since Covid, the Forum has agreed meeting online works well as members are based in different locations. We have applied the same principle to this AGM, which is open to members the public and press, and I'd like to thank you all for attending.
- For those that may not be aware, the Protos Community Forum consists of voting members representing the parish and town councils of Ince, Elton, Frodsham, Helsby, Little Stanney and District, and Thornton-le-Moors. Since our last AGM, Cllr Mark Parry has become the representative for Little Stanney and District Parish Council. The Frodsham Town Council rep has also changed recently, with Cllr Felicity Davies being replaced by Cllr Ian Anstice. There have been no other changes and I'd like to thank all parish councillors for being regular attendees at our meetings over the last year. And also for the unseen and unpaid time they spend on Protos-related activities to support their local communities.
- The other voting members of the Forum are Cheshire West and Chester Councillors for the wards adjoining Protos. They remain unchanged with Cllr Paul Bowers representing Helsby, Cllr Chris Basey for Frodsham, and Cllr Graham Heatley for Gowry Rural. The final voting member of the Forum is Justin Madders, the MP for Ellesmere Port and Neston (or his representative). Again, thank you to those members who have made the time to attend our meetings, and worked behind the scenes to understand and help with Protos matters affecting residents.
- The non-voting members of the Forum consist of officers from Cheshire West and Chester Council, the Environment Agency and reps from Peel L&P. Thank you in particular to Lois Kay, who administers the Forum, and is our main point of contact with Peel. Joe Harper from Sisk and Andy Smith from Covanta have also been regular participants this last year, keeping Forum members informed about infrastructure works and construction of the Energy from Waste facility.
- Since the AGM on 14th July last year, the Forum has met on 3 occasions – 13th October, 19th January (which included an interesting presentation on Hydrogen) and 6th April. We have improved the meeting format by circulating updates in advance, and then discussing any questions on those reports. All the updates and minutes are available on the Protos website www.protos.co.uk The Community Benefit Fund, which is a sub-committee of the Community Forum, has met 4 times since the last AGM and I'll speak about that later.
- But first, I'm going to give a summary of activities at Protos since the last AGM.

PROTOS ACTIVITIES

- The most noticeable activity has been the construction of the Energy Recovery Facility (ERF, previously termed the “Energy from Waste” or “Refuse Derived Fuel” facility) which has been ongoing since our last AGM.
 - The plant is owned by Covanta and Biffa but construction work is being undertaken by an EPC (Engineering, Procurement and Construction) joint venture between Mytlineos and Standardkessel Baumgarte – MSBG for short. In November, MSBG held a “meet the buyer” event for local companies interested in future supply-chain opportunities. They are currently setting up a local liaison committee group to connect directly with residents during the construction and commissioning phases of the plant. Anyone can apply (the deadline is 29th July) to join the group by going to the MSBG website at protoserf.com. The site has lots of other info and updates about the ERF project, including a video clip of construction progress.
 - Thankfully, the piling which ran from July to November last year, and then on to into February when ground conditions dictated additional support, has finished. A grand total of 6,450 piles are now in place!
 - Construction of the fuel storage bunker is well advanced. There are 2,000m³ of concrete in the foundation slab, and the walls are continuing to rise steadily above ground level.
 - The foundations for the main building are also progressing, with 21,000m³ of concrete poured so far and structural steel/precast concrete structures being erected.
 - Key pieces of large equipment, like the main electricity transformer, have arrived and others will be delivered as the construction continues.
 - The facility should be operational in early 2024 and will process about 400,000 tons a year of non-recyclable waste to provide up to 49MW of electricity; that’s roughly equivalent to the demand of 90,000 homes. A very timely development given the present UK energy supply situation.
- Sisk building contractors have also been busy undertaking the Phase 2 infrastructure work needed to support the ERF and other parts of the Protos site, which should all be finished by the end of this year.
 - Nearly all the site internal roads, ditches and services have been completed.
 - Groundworks (including 104 piles!) are complete for a bridge over the Tang drain which will connect Protos to the Manchester Ship Canal are complete and the bridge deck will be installed soon.
 - 3 additional ecology areas have been formed and are ready for seeding, which is planned for September. Like Snipe Haven, they won’t be open to the public but you can see clips of the wildlife there on Twitter (@thisisprotos), and Goldfinch Meadows is still available for nature-lovers to explore.

- Less visibly and more slowly, construction has progressed for two electricity substations which will eventually provide 124MW of total export capability and 57MW of import/supply for the Protos site. Switchgear and other equipment has been installed - system commissioning and adoption of one station by SPEN is ongoing. The first phase to enable 50MW export and 6MW import will be available soon, with the remainder due to complete in October 2023 ready for the ERF plant going online.
- A very recent milestone is CWAC Planning Committee granting permission last week for a Plastics Park, which encompasses several development plots at Protos. The Plastics Park will comprise:
 - A Material Recycling Facility (MRF) to sort, process and separate 75,000 tons per year of dry mixed recyclable materials arising from general waste such as kerbside collections
 - A Plastics Recycling Facility ('PRF1') to separate 200,000 tonnes of mixed plastics waste into different types for further processing
 - Another Plastics Recycling Facility ('PRF2') to recycle 90,000 tonnes of pre-sorted waste plastics
 - A Polymer Laminate Recycling Facility ('PLRF') to recycle 2,500 tonnes of plastic aluminium laminates (like crisp packets) by splitting them into aluminium and oil for re-use in plastics
 - A refuelling station for hydrogen-powered HGV's
- The Park also includes two plots which already have planning permission for:
 - First, a facility to recycle PET plastic, which was granted to a company called Enviroo. Work on that site is expected to start in Autumn this year.
 - Second, a facility to convert plastic waste into hydrogen (which could supply the refuelling station) or to generate electricity for local commercial users. Permission has also been granted to change the number of HGV movements for that facility.
- Speaking of vehicle movements, Forum members – especially those representing Elton and Ince - have been keeping a close eye on reallocation of HGV movements allowed for each of the different Protos plots. Peel have reassured us that the total number for the whole Protos site will not go beyond the originally consented limit of 718 2-way HGV movements per day. And that in due course they will share a Green Travel Plan for the site with us.
- There has been no news on the approved plans for a plant to produce Bio-Substitute Natural Gas (BioSNG) from either waste wood or refuse derived fuel.
- Also in the background, the biomass plant which started operation about 3 years ago has continued to generate 22 MW of electricity from waste wood, supported by the timber recycling facility also on site.

- The British Geological Survey “Geoenergy Observatory” project, which originally included boreholes on Protos land, is no longer being considered by this Forum. Investigation of the ground conditions showed construction would be very difficult and costly. So BGS is now going ahead with a much smaller scheme wholly located within Thornton Science Park.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

I'd like to end with an update on Protos-related activities within the local community – air quality monitoring, newsletters and the Benefit Fund.

- There is an Air Quality monitoring unit at a residential location in Helsby, on land owned by the Parish Council. In line with planning conditions, it gathered data for a year before and after the biomass plant became operational and has operated continuously since July 2019. The aim is to gather data which – we hope – will allay public perception that developments at Protos are leading to increased levels of pollution.
 - I mentioned at last year's AGM that a report covering all of 2020 would soon be available. That report was shared with Forum members and posted on the Protos website soon after the AGM. The draft report for 2021 has just been completed and circulated to Forum members. As for 2020, it indicates no concerns and everything was below limits. It did detect a high level of PM10 particulates when there were strong winds from the northwest. This may be related to pollution from the M56 - or possibly farther afield, which could include the Protos site. The effect was much less for the smaller PM2.5 particulates and at low wind speeds, all particulates appear to be from sources much closer to the unit.
 - Unfortunately, there have been difficulties this year at the laboratory which analyses the samples for Toxic Organic Micropollutants (like Dioxins and Furans). That data is expected around August and an updated version of the report will be shared on the Protos website then.
 - The report will be available as a pdf document, and also an interactive version where you can play with the graphs to show different comparisons.
- Peel have prepared three community newsletters since the AGM (in November, March and just now in July). These are now shared electronically and are on the Protos website. There is also a sign up form on the website so people can be notified directly about community updates
- The newsletters mention some of the community projects that have been funded by the Protos Community Benefit Fund. If anyone is not aware, the Benefit Fund Panel is a sub-committee of the Community Forum and allocates the money provided each year by Peel. In 2021, and again in January 2022, Peel kindly donated £50,000 which is available to organisations which provide community benefits in areas covered by the Forum's constituent Parish and Town Councils (Ince, Elton, Frodsham, Helsby, Little Stanney, Thornton-le-Moors). The Panel consists of one member from each Council. We've met online 4 times since the last AGM (in September, December, March and June) and approved a total of 8 new projects. We've

noticed more applications where Protos money is going towards a specific small piece of a bigger project so we have now increased the grant limit from £4,000 to £5,000. Since the last AGM, we have funded or helped to fund:

- CCTV for the play area at Helsby which has suffered a lot of vandalism in the past
 - Development of a Forest and Eco school scheme at Elton Primary School
 - Renewing the fencing and railings round the HQ building for 4th Frodsham Scouts
 - A new roof for the hut where Helsby Village Produce Association store their bulk supplies of fertilisers and gardening sundries
 - An upgrade to the audiovisual equipment at Frodsham Main Street Community Church, which provides a no-charge location for various local community groups and activities
 - Play equipment at Green Gates Community Park in Frodsham
 - Various items such as a screen, projector, internal fire doors and external lighting which will Elton Community Centre rise to the challenge of post-Covid loneliness, especially amongst pensioners.
 - New playground markings at Hornsmill Primary School in Helsby to improve the children's physical and mental fitness
- As usual, it's a wide variety of projects across different geographical areas and benefitting different sections of our local community. If we take into account committed expenditure for projects that are still in progress, we have about £36,000 left to distribute this year. The Fund accounts for 2021 that were prepared in January this year show we spent all the £50,000 from that year. We have 2 further meetings scheduled in 2022 to review applications so I expect it'll be the same story with the £50,000 allocated for this year. If Peel would like to continue their generosity in 2023, we'll continue to distribute it to benefit our local communities!

I'll wrap up with a final thank you to all the councillors who have been involved in the Community Forum and Benefit Fund panel over the year; to Lois, and also Richard, at Peel; Phil at the Environment Agency; and to folks like Andy and Joe for keeping us informed as everything progresses at Protos.

Thank you.