Present : Cllr.D.Mitchem - Chair (DM), Cllr.B.Thrussell - Vice Chair (BT), Cllr.C.Jones (CJ), Cllr S.Walton (SW) & Cllr C.Edwards (CE).

Devon County Council - Cllr Sara Randall-Johnson (SRJ)

East Devon Council - Cllr Eleanor Rylance (ER)

There were 21 parishioners present to discuss item (9.2). As a result, the Chair decided to move item (3) to item (6),as a courtesy to Cllrs.Randall Johnson & Rylance and then on to items (5)/(9.2) so that the Open Session could take place without further delay.

1. Apologies - Cllr Henry Gent.

2. Risk Assessment - this was carried out by the Chair and approved by all. In addition to the usual assessment, all attendees were required to wear face masks, use the hand sanitiser provided and sign in their names and addresses on the door.

3. Declarations of Interest/requests for dispensation - CJ declared that he had family ties to some of the land affected under item 9.2 21/3120/MFUL proposed solar farm via his links with Twynhayes & Heathen Hill Farms and would therefore attend the Open Session but not participate.

4. Minutes - To receive and resolve to approve the Minutes of the last meeting as a correct record and signed by the Chairman - these were circulated to all members. Resolution proposed by DM,seconded by SW - all agreed that they were correct.

5. Open Session

5.1 The Chair opened the floor to discussion of the proposed Paytherden Solar farm (see 9.2. 21/3120/MFUL). Various questions and answered can be summerised as :

Floor "How will the Council form an opinion on support or rejection of the proposal?"

DM - It is up to the individual councillors to form an opinion which will be produced in 7-10 days time.

Floor "Surely the Parish Council should be representing a democratic vote?"

DM - We will do it.

Clllr S Walton stated that he had received a letter from the council inviting his opinion on the proposal and wished to know if others had received the same.

The reply from the floor was that few others had.

Floor : It was asked why we couldn’t have more housing in the area rather than a solar farm.

DM : We have been rated as 'unsustainable' and receiving planning permission for new builds is unlikely.

It was suggested that we formed a Community Land Trust and selected land to be designated for council housing.

DM : Stated that as a Parish Council we have no ability to change Planning Law but encouraged those present to voice their opinions on the Council Website.

Floor : Hailed the result of the opposition to the proposed solar farm at Langford as "great". Further stated that the Government White Paper on Energy does not include the use of solar energy in its recommendations. It was stated that solar generation produces only 11% of it's estimates and that Paytherden would produce not 49MW but closer to 4.9MW. Further stated that battery storage was a mere 5-6 hours. Objected to the use of good agricultural land for solar and said, "Ultimately we must decide what we want for East Devon." People feared a 'domino effect' if all the proposed solar farms went unopposed affecting the lives of agricultural workers, feed and farm machinery merchants and vets who would "fall by the wayside." The conclusion was, "We must preserve our environment.

Floor :  Stated that our roads were already in bad condition which will be worsened still by the proposed site traffic. A Resident at 'The Old Manor' with children attending the Primary School sees the proposed site traffic as "a threat to life" for all those children crossing the road to and from the school.

Questions were posed as to the structural strength of the little bridge in Clyst Hydon over which the site vehicles would pass and it was stated that it was Grade II listed.

It was stated that there were no less than 82 heritage assets in the vicinity of 'Farrantshayes Farm' which will be directly affected by all the proposed activity.

It was asked by the floor if their views be expressed by the PC in their response to planning.

DM : Confirmed that the PC would meet and discuss the matter within 10 daysto meet the deadline of 21.1.22"

It was asked why new house builds do not have to include solar paneling.

Cllr Rylance : Stated that "the National Planning Framework does not require photovoltaics on rooves."

Cllr S Walton stated that he had recently filled in the Council 5 Year Planning Form which is so designed that it took him some 4 1/2 hours to complete.

DM : Recommended that all objections sent to East Devon County Council regarding planning proposals should be polite and concise.

Floor : Recommended that when contacting the Planning Committee, every member of the committee as listed on the East Devon Council website should be included. Alternatively, if people do not wish to use the EDDC website, a draft letter could be used as an alternative (copies circulated to those interested)

Floor : It was stressed the impact on the landscape would be felt not only by those in close proximity to the proposed site but would be clearly visible from Roach Hill. It was stated that solar panels generate heat as well as electricity through their reflections. Whilst people were strongly opposed to the scheme, we should have a fallback position in case it all went through. For example, screening of the site or planting of trees.

It was suggested the problem of site traffic through the village could be bypassed by the creation of an alternative route through Nick Gibbins at 'Wrights Farm'.

It was asked if the chairman DM had been approached for the building of solar panels on his own land?

DM : Replied that he had not for solar panels but for had for the building of a sub-station. This for a separate development.

It was pointed out that this proposal is some ten times larger than any of Lightrock's previous projects bar those built on ex-RAF sites, ie 'brownfield', and that they have very limited experience of a project of such magnitude.

It was further stated that Lightrock would 'flip' the project to someone else, if approved, and that we would no longer be dealing with them.

Floor: Don’t be fooled by the 'window dressing' in the proposal regarding concern for the environment, protection of wildlife etc. The Council are highly unlikely to enforce it if it is not undertaken.

Floor: Wished to make it clear that, while they were totally opposed to the proposal, farmers are struggling at the moment with some working 90 hour weeks. His anger is not with the farmers concerned but with the solar company.

A show of hands was called for to gauge peoples views :

For the solar farm proposal - Nil

Against the proposal 21 plus 6 written votes (provided by villagers who could not attend for health reasons and handed to CE) making a total of 27

Other business

5.2 There were grass cuttings left by the riverside after the mowing of the green at the end of Yarde Lane. BT assured Mr.Thompson that those responsible would no longer leave them by the riverside.

5.3 There has been cleaning of the ditches along Yarde Lane. Mr.Thomson noted that half the ditches had been cleared and BT assured him that the rest would dealt with.

6.0 County/District Councillor Reports.

Cllr Sara Randall-Johnson :

a) Budgets. SRJ stated that the books must balance and the budget will increase by 1.99%, with 1% for for Social Care, the main pressures coming from adult and child social care. The total increase in Budget will be £48.7 million. SRJ suggested that we should try some road maintenance, ie potholes ourselves using funds available. This was not accepted by members of the floor but SRJ explained that the budget would simply not stretch to cover them

c) Carers. SRJ stated that the County is short of some 2,000 carers needed in care and nursing homes and appealed for volunteers to become carers to help fill the void.

DM introduced Cllr BT as our contact with the Highways department.

Cllr Eleanor Rylance :

a) Potholes. ER stated that pothole fillers must undertake approved training before undertaking any filling and should refer to BT.

b) Budget. Most of the local budget passes straight to County. EDDC runs on a budget of £150/household p.a. which has to cover housing the homeless, recycling, river cleansing, the licensing of taxis and pubs etc.

c) Broadclyst Food Bank. ER appealed to all present to contact her if they were aware of anyone living in 'dire circumstances' and needing assistance as there is an active foodbank.

d) Public Toilets. 1/8 of the budget has been spent on cleaning the toilets during Covid to keep them open. Most blocks are unsuitable for such undertaking and need to be renovated. They will no longer be free except to those with a relevant disability.

7. Local Issues.

7.1 'The Twinnies'. Cllr CE asked whether we had received a reply to our letter requesting a visit by the Enforcement Officer. BT replied none to date but will pursue.

7.2 Erection of a lamp near the bridge.BT stated that Highways have no objection to our positioning a lamp near the bridge. DM suggested we make it a Queen's Jubilee Light.

7.3 The Queen's Jubilee. DM suggested we approach people at the forthcoming Village Breakfast on Saturday, 15th January seeking suggestions for, and participation in, a village celebration. It was noted that Mr.Ben Wadsworth is donating a sapling to be planted at the Cricket Club field on Tuesday,8th February.

8.Highways. The problem of potholes in the village and the ditches along Yarde Lane has been discussed in (5) & (6) above.

9. Planning.

9.1 21/2974/ful Ratclyffe House & 21/2975/ibc. Erection of an entrance wall. Unanimous approval.

9.2  21/3120/MFUL - Land adjacent to Peradon Farm - Construction of a 49MW solar farm with permission being required for 40 years, comprising solar arrays, equipment housing, sub station,fencing,CCTV,ancillary and associated development. See above (5.1) for account of discussion. DM stated that we would meet in the next few days to draft a planning letter to the EDDC.

10. Finance. DM has received an invoice for the hire of the Village Hall which he will forward for settlement.

11. Correspondence. DM has received a letter from his mother on behalf of the W.I. who would like to donate a bench to the village to celebrate the Queen's Jubilee. A site next to the bridge was discussed. Request unanimously approved.

12. Any Other Business. Mr. Barry Thompson, in his capacity as Secretary of the Village Cricket Club, said that their pavilion was falling apart and was to be rebuilt on an adjacent site. DM said that the Parish Council will support them.

Meeting Ended ; 21.35

Next Meeting : Monday, 7th March.