

Llanfechain Community Council Newsletter

Proposed Solar Park in the Llanfechain Valley

On 14th January Greenswitch Solutions Ltd submitted a Screening Opinion to Powys County Council (PCC) Planners. This Screening Opinion seeks agreement to deposit a Planning Application for a 55 acre site alongside Ystryd Y Ceunant, Llanfechain, which may include 42,500 4 metre high Solar Panels and an Electrical Substation. PCC responded by informing Greenswitch that if they wished to proceed with a Planning Application the application had to be accompanied by a full Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). We understand that for Planning Applications that are accompanied by an EIA, the consultation period for statutory consultees (including the Community Council) and those adjacent to any development is 42 days. Any Planning Application with an EIA will also be advertised in the County Times and a number of site notices will be placed near the location of the proposed construction. All those near a development will also have consultee letters inviting comment on the submitted application. At this stage no Planning Application has been submitted for the site.

The Community Council has asked PCC for their policy for such development and will be consulting Planning Aid Wales who advise on planning issues. It will then debate how best to manage this issue at its next meeting. It can invite Greenswitch Solution Ltd to a Council Meeting, probably once the Planning Application has been received, or leave it to the Company to promote its plan separately, presumably by laying on a presentation. The former option may provide a more Community Council controlled option; the latter suggests no support from the Community.

Of note, the current UDP does not mention solar farms specifically. However, we have been advised that there have already been several applications in different parts of Wales. Some have been approved others refused.

Whatever, the Community Council is required to be objective in its judgement of this or any other Planning Application. We anticipate lobbying both for and against this application if and when made.

Footpath Gate

As you will know a gate has been put back on the footpath that joins the main road to the playing field. The Rights of Way Officer has acknowledged the need for a gate because of the busy road and the dangers of people, particularly children, running onto the road. He points out that The Rights of Way policy is to seek the least restrictive option that gives preference to providing a gap over providing a gate and also gives preference to providing a gate over providing a stile. It was this policy that had informed the earlier decision to remove the gates at either end of the footpath. We have registered our gratitude for the re-establishment of the one gate.

The Playing Field

The Council will now be paying an annual rent/lease for the playing field of £100. It is also now responsible for the cutting of the grass. To that end a number of local companies were asked to submit a quote for 26 cuts a year during the Spring/Summer months. As time was against us, the Council chose Benbow at a cost of £40+VAT a cut; about £1200 a year. It is possible that we do not need all 26 cuts and if so, the cost will be reduced. This contract will be reviewed annually. A consequence is that the Council will need to recover some of this expenditure from those who use the field; a policy will be discussed in the next months.

A Bit of History

When, Where, Who and Why?



Broadband

We have been advised that the Welsh Government Broadband Support Scheme has been extended for six months.

Safety on the B4393

Accidents continue to happen. Please report any accidents as this increases the pressure on Powys County Council to do something. They have installed road monitoring strips and are awaiting delivery of new warning signs which, when erected, may help.

AGM

The Community Council Annual General Meeting is scheduled for the 7th May. The Council encourages attendance and again urges people to consider applying to be a Councillor.

Your Community Councillors are: Phil Williams 828931, Brian Ellis 648202, Leigh Kellaway 828210 & Sue Chaloner 648121. The Clerk to the Council is Dianne Crecraft 828542. Your County Councillor is Gwynfor Thomas: 828103 M:07952775402. **The next meeting is: Tuesday 2nd April @ 7.30pm.**