

From: Bettws Newydd Campaign [mailto:info@parrog.org.uk]
Sent: 19 April 2009 00:13
To: Distribution
Subject: Bettws Newydd: CONSENT GRANTED. You are invited to a meeting.

Dear Supporter,

We regret to announce that on 15th April the Development Management Committee (DMC) granted consent for application 08/361. Those of us present at the meeting understood that this would be subject to several conditions (which have to be taken back to committee for final approval rather than dealt with by officers). Those conditions included growing additional hedging, planting trees and somehow altering the glazing to reduce the impact of the development.

The vote was 10 votes for and 6 votes against. Almost all of the committee members who spoke stated that the building was indeed more visually intrusive and words such as "mistake", "monstrous", "modern-day carbuncle" and "like a motorway cafe" were used.

Many members, including Newport's County Councillor Robin Evans, publicly apologised or stated that the 2006 consent should never have been granted in the first case. Robin offered to resign over the matter. So at least there has now been some admission that the whole thing was a dreadful mistake. Nevertheless, it was approved as "the only way to resolve the matter" given the existing planning permission.

It should be noted that only 8 committee members had attended the site visit; most of those who voted in favour of the application had therefore probably not been to see the building and its environs and to look at it from important viewpoints. It should also be noted that the pictures shown (presumably chosen by the officers) were either about a year old, or in one case was a misty view from the beach car park with the building scarcely visible. In moving to the vote, the committee chairman encouraged the committee to pass the motion by stating that the changes compared to the already agreed permission were minor.

This all helped tip the balance.

Our thanks go to all the people who attended the meeting and especially the many objectors who spoke. We plan to publish more details on the web site in due course.

STATEMENT BY BETTWS NEWYDD CAMPAIGN:

We think we have a right to be very angry. This has been a case of treating one applicant very differently from the rest of us.

There has been one administrative mistake after another since 2006. Requests to put things right and for better management of the development have not been treated with the respect they deserved.

And now the Park have not followed their own counsel's advice as well as procedures laid down in the Planning Act to judge the latest application against the Development Plan. The Committee, many of whom did not even come to see the building before casting their vote, have ignored their own planning policies, worked out over years of public expense, time and effort. Had they applied them, the application would have been refused.

The National Park should be hauled over the coals for this. They are responsible for this "modern carbuncle" spoiling Newport's landscape. The Bettws Newydd Campaign will continue ..."

INVITATION TO A MEETING: We are meeting to discuss our options for appealing or contesting this decision. This meeting will be held in the Committee Room of the Newport Memorial Hall this Tuesday 21st April at 2:30 pm. We would like all of you to have the opportunity to be involved, so are issuing a general invitation. However, we do understand that won't be possible for most of you. The Town Council are also being invited.

"FIGHTING FUND": We have already had several unsolicited offers of large donations for a "fighting fund" to contest this decision through a judicial review. This item will be on the meeting agenda. An appeal must be initiated within 3 months of the decision.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST? One of our supporters wrote to us to point out that the Developer's Agent, Richard Banks, who represented him at the DMC and the Site visit (and was widely quoted in the media) had previously worked as a paid consultant for the National Park Development Management Organisation. We now have copies of the announcement (in "Park Post" dated October 2006). His work involved processing planning applications. Thus he would have worked with, and be closely known to the same Officers who recommended that the Bettws Newydd application be passed. No announcement or statement of this seeming conflict of interest was made at the meeting nor as far as we are aware, at any other time. We are seeking advice about whether this behaviour was ethical and/or lawful.

We will keep the web site updated if any new information comes in, so keep visiting <http://parrog.org.uk>

Thanks again for all your support.

From the Bettws Newydd Campaign. (Web site at <http://parrog.org.uk>)

Notes: You are receiving this note as a result of providing your email when signing the petition regarding Bettws Newydd, or contacting us as a supporter. If you don't want to receive these periodic updates, just send an email to info@parrog.org.uk . Anyone wanting to join the distribution list can also write to this address. We apologise for not replying individually to every email we have received – there have been many of them