

HEMPNALL PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Tuesday 17 April 2026 at 7:00 in The Village Hall

Present

Chairman Mr David Hook, Mr Phil Bates, Mrs Joan Cann, Mr Hamish Rose, Mr Mike Turner and the Clerk Mr Ian Nelson.

Members of the public present

See scanned list of 209 attendees including: County Councillor Kay Mason-Billig, District Councillor Martyn Hooton, Kim Carsack portfolio holder at SNC for Health & Leisure and also cabinet member.

Apologies

Apologies were received from, County Councillor Alison Thomas, Parish Councillors Mr Peter Workman and Mr Richard Delf, Mrs Jill Turner, Mr Trevor Shurmer, Mrs Olive English.

Declaration of interests

Mr Hook declared a non-financial interest in the East Pye Solar Project as he is a trustee of CPRE Norfolk.

Minutes of the previous meeting

Mr Bates proposed, Mr Turner seconded, and it was unanimously agreed the minutes of the meeting on 17 March 2026 be approved.

Chairman's address

A video was shown of an aerial view of the Bloy's Grove solar site west of the A140 in Swainsthorpe. It was noted that the East Pye development would be 14 times larger covering an area of 2,718 acres, the equivalent of approximately 1,700 football pitches. The land earmarked for the cable route corridors increases the total to over 5,000 acres (more than 3,000 football pitches).

The Solar Cumulative impact map was also on display.

Mr Hook explained that Hempnall parish Council, like South Norfolk District Council and Norfolk County Council where only consultees in the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project ("NSIP") process, the Planning Inspectorate would make a recommendation as to whether the project should go ahead but ultimately the Secretary of State, currently Ed Milliband, would pass or fail the application irrespective of the recommendation of the Planning Inspectorate.

The application had been accepted for consideration by the Planning Inspectorate despite representations challenging it from Hempnall parish Council, South Norfolk District Council and Norfolk County Council, BEPS and others.

Mr Hook explained that the application is currently at the pre-examination stage during which individuals, organisations, councils, charities and others can register as Interested Parties in order to give their views on the application. The dates of this registration period (registration window) are still to be announced but the registration window must be open for at least 30 days. Once registered an Interested Party will have a further opportunity to provide a written representation during the Examination Phase the timetable for which will be explained in a Rule 8 letter issued by the Planning Inspectorate.

County Councillor Update

Leader of Norfolk County Council, Kay Mason-Billig, reported that both she and County Councillor Alison Thomas opposed the East Pye development and were supporters of the

Chairman's initials

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Block East Pye Solar ("BEPS") campaign.

Following legal counsel advice, Norfolk County Council had submitted representations to the Planning Inspectorate stating why they thought the application should not be accepted for examination however the Planning Inspectorate had allowed the application to be considered. Norfolk County Council were now taking further legal advice as to the efficacy of the Planning Inspectorate accepting the application for review to see if it was lawful to do so with a view to mounting a challenge. She reassured attendees that Norfolk County Council opposed this application.

District Councillor Update

District Councillor Mr Martyn Hooton echoed County Councillor Kay Mason-Billig's comments and said that SNC was in full support of NCC's approach.

Public Participation

There followed a period of approximately an hour of questions and answers. The main points arising that are significant for planning purposes were noted by the Clerk for consideration of inclusion in the parish council's response to the application,

Show of hands

Attendees were asked to raise their hands if they objected to the EPS application and wanted the parish council to oppose the development and potentially use parish council funds to support this opposition. All hands were raised.

Mr Hook asked for another show of hands on the same motion (as above) involving only Hempnall residents. It appeared that all in attendance from Hempnall raised their hands to show that they objected to the development.

Mr Hook also asked attendees who supported the scheme to raise their hands - nobody raised their hand.

Vote on Application by Parish Councillors

Mr Bates proposed, Mrs Cann seconded, and it was agreed unanimously that the parish council respond to the application to recommend refusal and use parish council funds as necessary to do so.

Explanation of NSIP process and how parishioners can be involved

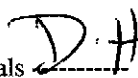
An A4 summary sheet explaining how to register as an Interested Party was made available to all attendees. A more detailed version can be found on the BEPS website <https://www.blockeastpyesolar.co.uk/index.html>

Mr Hook explained that it was very important to register as an Interested Party as the number of genuine objectors did carry some weight with the Planning Inspectorate.

On the registration form it would be necessary to say more than just "I object" but there was a recommended 500 word limit to set out reasons for objecting. It was therefore not necessary to write a lot, but it is important to identify topics of concern and provide reasons for those concerns. He re-emphasised the need to register and respond in the timeframe set by the Planning Inspectorate.

He also pointed out that the registration process for Interested Party status was entirely separate from any other registrations that attendees may have already undertaken, e.g. Category 3 registration.

Mr Keith Stubbings, co-chair of BEPS informed the meeting that BEPS would be holding a series of roadshows to help people be effective in their representations and ensure the points raised would be relevant to planning considerations. The first such roadshow will be in Long Stratton Village Hall on 21/04/26 at 19:30 – everybody is welcome to attend in order to obtain information and help.

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Mr Stubbings also encouraged people to go to the BEPS website and register for direct messages / newsletters from BEPS to keep them informed of progress and ways they could help.

Date of next meeting

The next Parish Council meetings will take place as follows:

21 April 2026 at 7.00pm in The Mill – planning meeting

19 May 2026 at 7:00pm in The Mill - main meeting

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There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 20:35

Signed David Hook Date 21/04/2026