

Dedham Vale Society legal challenge to the Drift lighting

July 6th 2020 an email was received from Buxton solicitors on behalf of the Dedham Vale Society, DVS, challenging the process that the Borough Council and the Parish Council have followed in obtaining the required permissions for the Drift lighting scheme and the consideration given to the AONB guidance for lighting. DPC acknowledged receipt of the email.

We understand that CBC has dismissed complaints from DVS and DPC referred the communique to the Essex Association of Local Councils, EALC, seeking legal guidance. On October 21st the referred solicitor made contact with us to discuss the complaints and response. There are several inaccuracies and assertions within the Buxton email that need correcting.

Discussions have also taken place with Charles Clover, Chair DVS, and a site visit has taken place with Charles Clover and Paul Gallifant, DPC were represented by Kevin Taylor and Jonathan Smith. Discussions were professional and DPC made clear that it's intent is to comply with all planning considerations and requirements will be followed, additionally DPC will ensure that Dark Sky's guidance is a priority in the lighting bollard design. Whilst appreciating this approach, DVS are still opposed to the use of lighting bollards, 8 to 10 in the current plan, illuminating the Drift path.

The main beneficiaries of the lighting scheme will be Dedham residents coming to and from the village from the Crown Street area and any employees walking home on these dark evenings. It is after approaches from residents, comments during council meetings and business owners, expressing concerns over their safety, that is the key to the project of installing this low level directed lighting scheme.

DPC are in the process of building a dossier in order to aid our solicitor in responding to Buxton and DVS. Once this is complete, the solicitor will be able to provide an estimate for the work to be carried out, it is unfortunate that in responding to the Dedham Vale Society the Parish will incur as yet undefined cost from solicitors and the extra time needed for the Clerk in building the dossier.

The project itself is progressing well, the absolute focus has been to ensure that we get the right solution and deliver it within the period remaining before the next election. The intangible issue now is whether the latest COVID lockdown will impact significantly on the current plan.

Kevin Taylor
November 2nd 2020