Holcombe Rogus Parish Council’s comments supporting its Objection to Application 22/00907/FULL

Representatives of the Parish Council attended a demonstration firearms session on 2nd August 2022 at Pondground Quarry, Holcombe Rogus hosted by Devon and Cornwall Constabulary.

Members of the public were present, notably those who lived in nearby properties. Representatives of Mid Devon District Council’s Environmental Health Department and Planning Officers also attended.

All present were asked to wear appropriate ear protection during firing to protect their hearing. Even with these worn the firing was loud. After the initial demonstrations, it was suggested that guests dispersed to locations of their choice in the neighbourhood to assess the noise away from the quarry.

It was disappointing to learn that the Environmental Health Team were very reluctant to accept an invitation to go into the Eden Lodge property to listen from a location that claims to be badly affected by the increased firing in the past couple of years. Eventually, they were persuaded to visit. (It was noted that Councillor Collis was noticeably startled by the sound at Eden Lodge when firing was resumed.) This reluctance suggested that the team did not want to gain first-hand experience of the sort of noise experienced by the residents at Eden Lodge.

Some residents had commissioned a Sound Assessment by Parker Jones Acoustics. This professional firm points out that there is no standard for assessing acceptable and unacceptable noise from the type of firing from the Police training. He draws on standards used in other types of firearms use. After drawing conclusions from this exercise, he felt that the noise he had measured at various locations around the quarry was likely to have exceeded acceptable levels mentioned in BS 8233:2014. While this relates to noise experienced at new builds it seems most unfortunate that the new Application for firearms training may inflict noise levels considered unacceptable for new properties on existing dwellings.

The Environmental Health Officer has dismissed the conclusions out of hand because there is no specific standard for firearms training; failing to acknowledge the professional attempt to rationalise this shortfall in the British Standards.

She has resisted calling for a Noise Impact Assessment for this Application which I understand often accompanies Applications with the potential to cause noise nuisance in a locality.

I hope that members of the Planning Committee will take notice of the follow-up letter submitted by Parker Jones Acoustics, published on 15th July 2002, which carefully argues that the Environmental Health Officer’s Report may be considerably flawed.

Should members agree with Parker Jones Acoustics conclusions they should refuse this Application in its present form.