

Note of the meeting of Staveley Solar Farm Community Liaison Group held on Thursday 7th November 2023 in Wing Village Hall

In attendance:

Cllr Philip Giles	Morcott Parish Council
Cllr Andrew Johnson	Rutland County Council
Suzannah Fish	Wing Parish Meeting
Doug Reid	Staveley Solar Action Group
Ruth Blinch	Manton Parish Council
Bob Purves	North Luffenham Parish Council
Eric Montmean	TotalEnergies
Rhonda Miller	Total Energies
Philip Reilly	Anglian Water

Apologies received from Jayne Williams, Kevin Atkinson, Thierry Chevrot and Edith Weston PC.

Note of last meeting

Susannah asked for a line to be included in the previous note to make it clear that The community have real concerns about construction traffic going through Wing Village. She stated that although they recognise that there are no plans to go through the village, it will still happen. Rhonda agreed to add this in.

Planning Update

Eric confirmed that Bluestone have now left the project. The EPC and ICP contractors have been appointed by TotalEnergies. Ellen from Pegasus will continue to work with the project to provide planning advice.

Unofficially TotalEnergies have been told that the planning committee will be held on the 5th of December, but this is yet to be confirmed. It will be a special executive committee meeting.

Alternative Route

Eric explained that TotalEnergies have been looking into the possibility of using an alternative route for construction vehicles. This would cross an adjoining field and would mean traffic would not come through Mortcott Village. Maps were provided showing this suggested route.

Eric explained that we have not yet approached planners with the alternative route, but will proceed with the current route until surveys have been carried out to ensure the route is viable.

Any new planning application will tie in with the discharging of conditions should the first application be successful – likely to take around 13 weeks.

Questions were asked about the direction of traffic and the proposed surface of the road through the fields. It was explained that traffic management will be necessary to ensure mud does not transfer onto the road and to ensure safety.

Cllr Giles said that on behalf of Morcott he is very grateful that TotalEnergies are considering this alternative route.

It was pointed out that the cable route will go through Wing village and a question was asked as to how this would be managed.

Action: Eric to come back with an answer.

Noise Levels

Eric explained that a preliminary review had been carried out. A further study needs to be carried out near the main houses likely to be affected (North Luffenham Road and Pilton.)

During the initial review the noise levels were 76 decibels – approximately equivalent to street corner traffic. Mitigation measures will be implemented to decrease these levels. Noise levels will be measured 24 hours per day and if noise limits are reached work must stop. Noise barriers will also be in place.

Eric stated that we will talk to local communities before and during work. Noise levels will be shared.

Eric also confirmed that during piling works, measurements taken 50m from the work were 130 decibels.

The group then went on to discuss the ‘250m buffer zone.’ Pilton are worried that the buffer zone is not being adhered to.

Eric shared the case officer explanation, but there was still some uncertainty so Eric agreed to provide a clearer explanation.

Action: Pegasus to provide a clear explanation.

Community Benefit Fund

Rhonda spoke about setting up a community investment company as a way to manage the community benefit fund. Andrew Johnson agreed that this may be a way forward, but it might be easier to set up a simpler Company Limited by Guarantee.

It was agreed that there was a lot to take into account, including whether to invest (probably not), a safe bank account, the need for public and directors liability insurance.

Rhonda agreed to pull together a paper considering some of these items along with who should be involved, how activities will be run and accountability.

Beneficiaries were also discussed, with Pilton, Wing and Morcott being likely to be the most affected communities. It was pointed out that during cable laying other communities are likely to be affected.

It was agreed that whatever form the CB Fund takes, there should be an independent chair.

It was agreed that a Community Interest Company was probably the best way forward, but that it would need to have an arbitration process in place.

Cllr Giles pointed out that there is currently legislation covering compensation levels for wind developments and it is likely that this will follow on for solar too. He asked that any contract should include a clause to state that TotalEnergies would comply with any legislation that comes into force in future.

Action: Rhonda to prepare a document incorporating everything discussed and then arrange a dedicate workshop to take this forward.

Any Other Business

A question was asked as to how much traffic there will be during operations. There will be contracts in place for cleaning the panels and engineering work.

Action: Eric agreed to take this away and find out.

A concern was raised about high level lighting during operations. Would there be a significant number of light columns? Would there be any mitigation?

Eric explained that as this is not a COMAH site there is no reason for there to be any high level lights.

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 8th January 2025 in Wing Village Hall.