

Note of the meeting of Staveley Solar Farm CLG held in Wing Village Hall on Thursday 23rd January 2025

In attendance:	Cllr Andrew Johnson	Rutland County Council
	Mitch Ward	Pilton Parish Meeting
	Andy Lawrence	Wing Parish Council
	Robert Purves	North Luffenham Parish Council
	Ruth Blinch	Manton Parish Council
	Jayne Williams	Pilton Parish Meeting
	Doug Reid	Staveley Solar Action Group
	Peter Riley	Anglian Water
	Matt Cotterill	Anglian Water
	Rhonda Miller	TotalEnergies
	Eric Montmean	TotalEnergies
	Thierry Chevrot	TotalEnergies (via Teams)
	Ellen Hornsey Fortt	Pegasus

Note of last meeting

The note was accepted as an accurate record of the last meeting.

Planning update and next steps

Eric explained that Ellen was the principal planner involved in our planning application. Eric and Ellen gave an overview of where we are now, after being granted permission at the Rutland County Council meeting in December.

They explained that the council had stipulated that a S106 agreement be put in place and clarified that this is a biodiversity agreement between the landowner and the Council. An early draft has been shared and is now with the Council. It is hoped to have this agreed in the coming days as planning consent will not be publicly approved until this is agreed.

Following this approval being made public, a 6 week window opens for anyone wishing to challenge the planning process through a Judicial Review.

Only after this period of time has lapsed will the application be formally approved. Then all the various conditions that the Council have imposed must be discharged before construction can begin.

There will be further conditions to be discharged during construction and also when operational. Details of the 23 conditions can be found on the Rutland County Council website. **2024/0300/MAF**

Ellen explained that the cable route will go through Wing Village but stated that if the cable is not on the highway, a plan will be required to be submitted and also details of transport measures, such as banksmen, lights, etc will be shared with the community.

Doug said that he understood that the cable will go through the centre of the road and it was agreed that this is the case. A preliminary survey has been completed and a more detailed one will be done in the coming weeks.

Cllr Johnson pointed out that Rutland County Council are about to introduce Highways Charges.

Alternative route

TotalEnergies are still looking into the possibility of using an alternative route to avoid Morcott. A topographical study will be carried out in the coming days.

The planning application for this will take 13 weeks and time is of the essence as TotalEnergies want to get this in place before construction starts. Looking to submit in March with the hope that determination will be in May.

Eric stated that TE are squeezing and optimising timescales in order to submit early, but we are at the mercy of the Council. Delegated powers would speed things up.

Action: Ellen to provide an overall timeline for Rhonda to send out – acknowledging that this is a snapshot in time.

It was pointed out that where marshalling areas are likely to be considered there will be a need for signage as people speed down there. TotalEnergies confirmed that extra measures will be required.

The likely surface of the road was discussed – likely to be tarmac at the entrances and gravel for the rest of the road – the transport report will confirm. It was suggested that wheel washers be installed. There will be one on site but consider more if needed.

The use of aluminium mats was discussed. Eric said that this was unlikely and it was pointed out that they often get stolen. It was also pointed out that some of the track already exists.

Construction update

Thierry gave an update. Internal committee approvals and survey engineering will start in April in order to fix the design. Details such as the number of panels to be used will only be fixed once a contractor is appointed. Procurement of items will also take place in April.

The first visible work is likely to be the installation of portacabins at the entrance to the site – this is necessary as anyone entering the site will need the appropriate inductions/ passes, etc.

It is likely to be 2 – 3 months after this before work starts in earnest.

There was then a discussion around some of the planning clauses.

It was clarified that the trackers on the arrays do not make any noise.

It was also clarified that the only lighting will be around the transformer – which is in the middle of the plot.

Thierry reiterated that once we agree a schedule, including cabling works, it will be shared with the CLG, particularly around the piling works, where we will try to accommodate everyone.

There was a discussion about using a Chinese manufacturer to build the panels. Thierry confirmed that most of the equipment comes from China, but that as a company TotalEnergies is exposed reputationally, so ensures that stringent rules are followed, including visits to factories to ensure compliance with modern slavery policies.

Ruth urged TotalEnergies to think about road closures as tourists hate these and there is a heightened awareness of road closures at present.

Update on community benefit fund

Rhonda explained that she is pulling together a paper on possible mechanisms for the community benefit fund management, in particular a community interest company.

She suggests that the paper be shared, people allowed time to read and digest it before organising a workshop, with specialist help in place.

Eric pointed out that our biodiversity net gain programme needs to be more tangible and we should agree with the community what should be delivered.

It was pointed out that a large population of lapwings can be seen close to the site – these would need to be protected. There are lots of red kites too. Jayne pointed out that there is a local hedgehog protection society and will share the details of this group.

Date of next meeting 6th March at 7pm.