

Minutes from the Jack's Lane Wind Farm Community Liaison Group (CLG)

In attendance: Cllr Terry Austin (TA) – Chairman, Jack's Lane CLG
Cllr Pamela Austin (PA) – Stanhoe Parish Council
Cllr Malcolm MacArthur (MM) – Syderstone Parish Council
Cllr Gerry Taylor (GT) – Syderstone Parish Council
Sam Mayes (SM) – Community Relations Coordinator, RES
Gary Scrowther (GS) – Jack's Lane Construction Site Manager, RES
James Dominiak (JD) – Jack's Lane Assistant Site Manager, RES
Bradley Boyd (BB) – Health & Safety Advisor, RES
Rosie Day (RD) – Bellenden
Approximately 15 members of the public

Venue: Syderstone Village Hall

Apologies: Cllr Adam Bunkle (AB) – North Creake Parish Council
Cllr Ann Harvey (AH) – South Creake Parish Council
Mr Jonathan Powell (JP) - CAPE

Date: Wednesday 21st May 2014, 7:00pm

Welcome and Introduction

TA opened the meeting, welcoming the CLG and members of the public. Apologies for absence were received from AB and AH; an apology for lateness was received from MM.

Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting

TA asked for any requested changes to the unconfirmed minutes of the last meeting from 12th March 2014 which had been circulated to CLG members by email. GT questioned the £100 figure stated under section b) on page 3 with regard to RES' Local Electricity Discount Scheme (LEDS) at Jack's Lane Wind Farm. He said he understood that RES had previously committed to a £117 figure for Jack's Lane, which SM confirmed. SM clarified that the reference to £100 in the last meeting's minutes was written in the context of how LEDS is applied to any RES project, i.e. that LEDS 'works on the basis of providing a minimum annual discount of £100 per property'. SM couldn't recall offhand whether the actual LEDS discount figure of £117 was confirmed at the last meeting as eligible properties were not contacted until the week afterward.

POST MEETING NOTE: *While the Jack's Lane Wind Farm LEDS discount of £117 was not recorded in the minutes from 12th March 2014, this amount was displayed on the presentation shown at the meeting (now available on the Jack's Lane Wind Farm project website).*

Questions were raised by the audience about why the draft minutes were not made available to the public. TA said that this issue would be addressed at the end of the meeting, under the item 'Any Other Business'.

RD went on to raise two date errors in the minutes which needed to be corrected. With those changes, the minutes of the 12th March 2014 meeting were agreed by the CLG for publication on the Jack's Lane Wind Farm project website.

Jack's Lane Project Update

a) Construction update presentation

GS presented to the CLG and members of the public an update on the construction of the Jack's Lane Wind Farm since the last meeting in March 2014. He explained that due to the declared insolvency of Askam Construction Ltd, RES had terminated their civils contract for the project in mid-April 2014 and appointed McNicholas Construction Services Ltd in early May 2014 following a re-tendering process.

GS advised that McNicholas started on site on Wednesday 14th May 2014 and the team was already making good progress. As such, RES was confident that the construction programme would remain on schedule in order for Jack's Lane Wind Farm to begin generating electricity in spring 2015.

GT asked when the wind farm would be connected to the National Grid to which GS confirmed October 2014. GS continued the presentation, talking through an indicative timeline of the construction works planned until spring 2015. He confirmed (as per the 'post meeting note' in the last minutes) that the planned grid connection route had changed from Hempton to Egmore – to Hempton to Hunstanton – due to another wind farm developer using the previous route. He provided a detailed map with road names to help the CLG understand the cable route to make this 33kV connection.

GS went on to say that in March 2014 UKPN had submitted an application to Norfolk County Council for the permissions and permits required in order for the road works to take place to facilitate the grid connection.

He finished the presentation by stating that he believed the construction team would make a lot of progress on the construction programme by the next CLG meeting and that he looked forward to updating the group then. He also commented that RES had worked with McNicholas before and they had proved themselves to be an excellent contractor.

b) Community benefits presentation

SM gave a presentation to the CLG as an update on the community benefits package associated with Jack's Lane Wind Farm, namely RES' Local Electricity Discount Scheme (LEDS) and the Community Benefit Fund.

Local Electricity Discount Scheme (LEDS)

SM explained that the last CLG meeting had taken place the week before RES had sent letters to all eligible addresses explaining how their property could apply for the annual £117 discount off their electricity bill.

SM referenced the map displayed in the presentation which showed the Qualifying Area to explain that RES uses a consistent, objective and repeatable methodology for LEDS on their projects across Great Britain. The Qualifying Area for each RES LEDS scheme is calculated by taking a straight line distance - the Set Distance - from each wind turbine and identifying all the postcode geographic boundaries (as defined by Ordnance Survey) with properties on or within this Set Distance to form the Qualifying Area. The Set Distance may be increased or decreased to ensure that the properties within the final Qualifying Area will receive a discount of at least £100 per year. At Jack's Lane Wind Farm, the Set Distance is 2,400m. Properties located outside the Set Distance are only included in the Qualifying Area if they are located within the same postcode geographic boundary as a property located within the Set Distance.

SM explained that there has been a very positive response to LEDS at Jack's Lane Wind Farm, with over 50% of eligible households registering interest within the first eight weeks of the launch.

TA asked if – as there had only been a 50% take up – the remaining budget could be distributed amongst those who had already signed up to the scheme, therefore doubling their discount. SM advised that wouldn't be possible as some eligible properties may not sign up to the scheme until a later date and RES has made an annual commitment to offer £117 to each eligible property (and so needs to make sure this is available).

POST MEETING NOTE: *The LEDS discount amount per property is also fixed is so that people will have certainty over what they will receive. The number of properties registering for LEDS is likely to fluctuate over time and it would not be practical or appropriate to keep varying the level of discount slightly each year.*

Any unspent LEDS allocation each year will be paid back into the Community Benefit Fund to ensure the community always receives the equivalent of £5k/MW installed.

GT queried whether the discount applied to the resident or the property e.g. if a new family moved to an eligible house, would the electricity discount continue? SM confirmed that the discount applied to the property and not the individual owner, therefore any new electricity bill payer for the eligible property whilst the wind farm was still operational would be eligible to apply.

GT asked what would happen if a large housing development came forward within the Qualifying Area after the wind farm became operational, and whether it would reduce the LEDS discount available to existing residents. SM explained that any new developments would not be eligible to apply for LEDS as RES has made an annual commitment to offer £117 to each existing eligible and registered property.

POST MEETING NOTE: *To be eligible for LEDS, a property must be in existence and have an electricity meter at the time of the scheme's launch (i.e. the date leaflets are sent to eligible properties). Any property built within the Qualifying Area following the launch date will not be eligible for LEDS, therefore the discount available to existing residents will not be affected.*

MM asked whether the discount was linked to inflation. SM confirmed it was linked to the Consumer Price Index (as per the 'post meeting note' in the last minutes).

A question from the audience was raised about whether Syderstone Village Hall was eligible for the discount. MM explained that he had contacted RES to clarify this and RES had confirmed that the hall was eligible.

MM raised concern that some properties within what he understood to be the eligible postcode areas had not yet received a letter from RES to register for LEDS. SM explained that if the property was in the Qualifying Area shown on a map displayed in the presentation, they should have received direct contact from RES – but if anyone believed this not to be the case, they should make themselves known so that RES could investigate.

A member of the audience asked why a simple 2,400m radius had not just been drawn on an Ordnance Survey map so only households within that area would be eligible for LEDS. SM said she would provide a post-meeting response to this question.

POST MEETING NOTE: *The Qualifying Area is determined by postcode geographic boundaries in addition to the Set Distance – and not by Set Distance alone – in order to apply objectivity (using Ordnance Survey data) to the methodology. Using Set Distance alone is more arbitrary and more likely to lead to properties in the same street or rows of houses being split in terms of eligibility.*

TA summarised the questions asked by the audience and CLG members, requesting that RES produce a more detailed map including the individual postcode geographic boundaries (referred to as 'polygons') to illustrate why RES' methodology extended the Qualifying Area beyond a 2,400m radius north but not south.

A member of the audience asked whether a particular postcode was in the Qualifying Area. SM advised she did not have this information to hand but would be happy to would pass this enquiry on to RES' dedicated LEDS team who would revert separately with clarification. SM said she would welcome approaches after the meeting from residents with any LEDS eligibility queries, which she would then forward to the LEDS team to follow up on.

Community Benefit Fund

SM explained that the Norfolk Community Foundation had attended the previous meeting of the CLG in March 2014 as the potential Fund Administrator of the Jack's Lane Community Benefit Fund; and that they had since been appointed.

Within the first year of full generation of the wind farm (targeted for spring 2015), RES will make annual £30,000 payments to the Norfolk Community Foundation to administer for local charitable and community projects. The Foundation will work with a Fund Panel of local representatives to set the grant criteria, receive applications, determine the grants and deliver annual reports to RES. SM confirmed that the Fund Panel would be the decision making body made up of elected representatives and residents from the immediately neighbouring parishes to the wind farm site. The NCF will work with the CLG to gain nominations for suitable representatives to sit on the Fund Panel. RES retains the right to a seat on the Fund Panel, but in a non-voting capacity only.

SM stated that the criteria for Community Benefit Fund applications would be drawn up in agreement with the Fund Panel, and that RES will set the Area of Benefit. RES' initial suggestion is to prioritise applications from parishes where over 50% of their area is within a 7km distance of the wind farm site to ensure that the Fund was supporting the local community. SM explained that applications from organisations or projects based further than 7km away would not automatically be excluded, but that funding would only be granted if the applicant/project outside this radius was considered to directly benefit people who lived within the Community Benefit Fund's Area of Benefit.

The presentation listed the parishes which would be included in this 7km radius Area of Benefit. Members of the CLG and the audience raised concern that this 7km area would make villages which they considered to be too far away - with higher populations and more organised community projects - eligible for the funding, when it should be helping near residents closer to the wind farm. PA suggested that community projects in the immediate villages around the wind farm site (i.e. those represented on the CLG) should be prioritised when determining the allocation of funds, with other causes only taken into consideration afterwards.

SM noted these comments and said that these would be issues to discuss with Graham Tuttle from the independent Norfolk Community Foundation, so that acceptable eligibility criteria for the Community Benefit Fund could be agreed. Mr Tuttle would be contacting parish councils directly to start discussions of how the programme would work.

TA summarised the CLG's views on the suggested Area of Benefit but clarified that the Community Benefit Fund was in very early stages and such issues could be addressed by the Norfolk Community Foundation speaking directly to the local parishes.

Public Questions

A member of the audience commented that there are a lot of elderly residents who may struggle to understand the process. She thought that the parish councils were best placed to help identify those vulnerable residents, who were most in need of the discount, and help them apply to RES. GT welcomed this comment, saying many parishes ran their own quarterly newsletters which could help inform elderly residents of LEDS and their potential eligibility.

TA also noted that there are a number of second homes in the area which are not regularly occupied.

A member of the audience asked whether LEDS was taxable by the Inland Revenue. SM said she would provide a post-meeting response to this question.

POST MEETING NOTE: *The payment of the LEDS discount is not intended to be subject to income tax or capital gains tax in respect of the amounts received. However, HM Revenue & Customs has not issued specific guidance on the tax treatment of these payments and it is therefore possible that they may take a different view. RES has not considered the tax implications for the beneficiaries of these payments in any jurisdiction other than the UK. Due to each individual and/or household having a unique tax situation, RES is not able to offer specific tax advice in*

relation to the LEDS payments. RES would strongly encourage individuals to seek the appropriate tax guidance from HM Revenue & Customs to address any questions they may have.

Another member of the audience asked whether LEDS would apply to residents who lived within the Qualifying Area but rented their home. SM confirmed that LEDS applies to the bill payer who will receive the eligibility letter.

MM asked why the Community Benefit Fund was not just distributed to the local parishes for them to spend as they see fit, as they had a better understanding of local needs. SM highlighted that the use of Community Foundations – such as the Norfolk Community Foundation – has proved to be extremely effective at other RES wind farms as with their local knowledge, they can often direct unsuccessful applicants to other streams of funding.

A member of the public criticised the need for bureaucracy when administering the Fund. SM stated the Community Benefit Fund system would be administered by the Norfolk Community Foundation in a way to minimise bureaucracy, delays and confusion - ensuring that groups from the local community with good projects could easily access the money. GT confirmed that Syderstone Village Hall had received funding from Norfolk Community Foundation before and he had found them to be honourable, useful and good at distributing grants; SM welcomed this feedback.

There were no further questions raised at this point of the meeting. TA thanked everyone for their earlier contributions.

Future Meeting Dates

It was proposed the next meeting takes place at 7:00pm on Wednesday 23rd July 2014 at Syderstone Village Hall, if it is available. If the hall is not available on that evening, RD would book Stanhoe Hall for the meeting venue.

Any Other Business

TA introduced Any Other Business advising questions had been raised by members of the audience in regards to why meeting minutes were not released to the public until after the following meeting, which could be months later. SM explained that in line with the Jack's Lane CLG constitution, unconfirmed minutes are only sent to CLG members so that those who attended the meeting can verify the record and advise if there are any errors and mistakes. Once the minutes have been agreed as an accurate summary by a vote at the following meeting, the minutes are then published on the Jack's Lane project website for public access.

SM explained that an exception had been made at the request of the Jack's CLG in December 2013, as this was the first meeting back after a hiatus during the Development period whilst the project was still in planning. However she was keen to get the process agreed for the publication of future minutes. TA asked the CLG members for their views.

GT stated that he thought the unconfirmed minutes should be published online as long as they were clearly labelled as such. However, PM and MM said that the CLG members were in a good position to summarise the main meeting points for updates to their parish council colleagues, residents and readers of parish newsletters. Such an update should provide local residents with enough information until the formal minutes could be agreed as an accurate record. The CLG voted in favour of online publication of the minutes only after approval by the CLG at the subsequent meeting.

The meeting formally closed at 8:30pm.

Actions

Action	Responsibility	Deadline
Book venue for next CLG meeting on 23 rd July 2014 (Syderstone or Stanhoe if unavailable)	Bellenden	Completed
Respond to outstanding questions as post-meeting notes	RES	Completed
Provide more detailed, illustrative map of the LEDS Qualifying Area with an example postcode geographic boundaries	RES	23 July 2014