

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 Ann Harvey (AH) – South Creake Parish Council
Sam Mayes (SM) – Community Relations Coordinator, RES
Rachel Anderson (RA) – Regional Head of Communications & LEDS Manager, RES
Gary Scrowther (GS) – Jack's Lane Construction Site Manager, RES
James Dominiak (JD) – Jack's Lane Assistant Site Manager, RES
Billy Taylor (BT) – Bellenden
Approximately eight members of the public

Venue: Syderstone Village Hall

Apologies: Cllr Gerry Taylor (GT) – Syderstone Parish Council
Cllr Robin Maslin (RM) – South Creake Parish Council

Date: Wednesday 10 September 2014, 7:05pm

Welcome and Introduction

TA opened the meeting, welcoming the CLG and members of the public.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from GT and RM.

Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting

There were no proposed changes to the minutes of the previous meeting. The vote to approve the minutes was unanimous.

Jack's Lane Project Update

a) Construction Progress

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 May 2014. This included an overview of completed, current and planned on-site construction works with an indicative timeline of remaining construction milestones.

GS explained that the C479 (the last part of the route to site off the B1454 Fakenham Road which has been closed on weekdays and evenings since February) will be reopened on Friday 19 September 2014. The purpose of the road closure was to undertake a series of road widening works in preparation for turbine deliveries.

GS confirmed that the site tracks were constructed using a stabilised method which is slightly different to conventional methods. The road will be covered with stone and once tested, will be the final running surface layer.

GS stated that there is another planned closure of the C479 at the end of the year or early next year to reinstate the widening and install the truck pave at the junction C479/B1454.

POST MEETING NOTE: *The need for this second closure is to restore the road to its previous state in line with instruction received from Norfolk County Council. This can only be done once the wind turbines have been erected and the vast majority of the construction team has vacated the site.*

TA asked why the hedges along the site track couldn't be replaced like-for-like rather than the 'baby' hedges which have been planted. MM commented on this point stating that he did not want to see small twigs poking through plastic pipes when gaps could be reinstated with established trees. GS said these works have been undertaken in line with agreed advice from RES' consultant ecologist and that he will try to seek an answer to revert with.

POST MEETING NOTE: *RES' consultant ecologist has since advised that if you wish to create a hedge which is really dense and bushy from the ground upwards it is advisable to plant young, small plants. Many people look at the small bare rooted seedlings or transplants and imagine it will be a long time before they will achieve anything which looks like a 'hedge', when in actual fact, the hedges should be well established after just two or three years. If larger plants are chosen, they are more likely to fail than small ones and the result can often be that the hedge is rather gappy at the base.*

GS stated that all on-site accommodation facilities had been fully erected – comprising of toilets, offices and kitchen facilities. In addition, GS announced that the electricity substation superstructure has now been fully constructed and onsite electrical works are ongoing.

GS informed the CLG that to date, five turbine foundations had undergone concrete pours. Works on the base of Turbine 2 (T02) is nearly complete; with concrete pouring scheduled to take place on Thursday 11th September 2014.

b) Grid Connection Works

GS explained that UKPN, who appointed sub-contractor Carillion Plc to install the 11kV cabling route, had completed its works within the site boundary and had vacated the site.

Now that the 11kV cabling had been laid, GS announced that RES had started their own cabling works in preparation for connecting the turbines.

GS provided a breakdown of the key project milestones and dates with full electricity generation scheduled for spring 2015.

Commenting on transporting the turbine components to site, GS advised the trial run of the delivery route in August was a success and is suitable for getting the turbine components to site.

TA asked when the turbines will be delivered. GS said that a specific date is yet to be fixed however deliveries are anticipated to begin in late September/early October 2014. SM added that information on this phase of the construction work has been included in a project newsletter recently distributed to more than 4,500 properties in a 9km radius of the site.

A member of the public enquired about the speed at which the delivery vehicles would be likely to travel at along the A148. GS confirmed that they will travel at 40mph.

TA asked if there is back-up power in case of a power cut. GS confirmed that back-up power can be sourced from the substation.

Community Benefit

a) Local Electricity Discount Scheme (LEDS)

Through a presentation, SM updated the CLG on three points: how RES' Local Electricity Discount Scheme ('LEDS' hereafter) had evolved to date; the methodology applied in order to determine eligibility; and the next steps regarding registration and payment.

SM began by reminding the CLG that RES contacted all eligible residential and business properties in March 2014 to inform them of the scheme and invite them to register their interest in receiving the electricity discount. At the subsequent CLG meeting (in May), a request was made for a more detailed depiction of the LEDS qualifying area than the drawing shown in the presentation (following a previous request for visibility of the extent of eligible properties).

Referring to the new drawing displayed in the presentation, SM explained again that the qualifying area for LEDS 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. At Jack's Lane Wind Farm, the Set Distance is 2,400m, the boundary of which is shown in the drawing. Properties located outside the Set Distance are only included in the qualifying area if they are located within the same postcode geographic boundary (or polygon) as a property located within the Set Distance. This explained why some areas outside this Set Distance are shaded and shown as eligible in the drawing.

SM explained that the CLG's request to produce a more detailed map of the qualifying area prompted RES to undertake some detailed investigation in preparation of making the first payments early next year. Upon review of the qualifying area at a closer scale and also with an update to the data which is supplied to RES by a third party, it was discovered that an eligible property located within the 2,400m Set Distance had been missed when LEDS was initially launched in March. RES had to therefore amend the qualifying area to include this property and also those which fell within the same postcode geographic area (or polygon).

As a consequence, SM explained that an additional 72 eligible properties are now eligible for LEDS and that the annual discount of £117 which had been previously communicated has had to reduce to £100 in order to include them. This is because there is only a certain amount of budget available for LEDS each year (£45,000 based on £3,000 per MW) and RES wanted to make sure they could still deliver the benefit to those they had already made a commitment to earlier in the year. The

alternative would have been to pull in the 2,400m Set Distance and contact certain properties to explain they are no longer eligible.

SM advised letters with information on LEDS had been put in the post that day to the newly eligible properties, and that the rest of the qualifying area would also receive a letter the next day about the amended discount.

In response to a question from a member of the public regarding the additional properties that are now included in the qualifying area, SM confirmed that Monks Close and Bircham Community Centre are now eligible. SM went on to say that whilst it is unfortunate that the additional properties did not receive the initial correspondence, RES is pleased that this omission has been picked up before the first payments are made and that more properties are now able to benefit from the scheme.

There were a number of interjections from the public gallery about the omission of some properties in Mill Lane. SM clarified that some properties in Mill Lane unfortunately are not eligible due to postcode geographic areas (polygons) being split in this case. On Mill Lane, three separate geographic areas share the same address postcode (which does not indicate eligibility alone). However only one of these areas is eligible because it contains a property located within the 2,400m Set Distance. The others do not and so cannot apply for the discount.

MM asked why RES had used this methodology as he believes that it is common sense for all of Mill Lane to be included.

RA stressed that RES has applied a strict set of criteria to determine the qualifying area and level of discount that each wind farm can provide under LEDS. The postcode geographic areas or polygons are an established Ordnance Survey product and RES has chosen to use this independent data to ensure the LEDS methodology is objective. Adapting the scheme's methodology subjectively, or on a case by case basis, would undermine the principles of objectivity and repeatability on which LEDS is based and this is why we have to honour the qualifying area. RA confirmed that although the qualifying area had recently been amended to include the newly eligible properties which had previously been missed, this is now fixed and is not subject to change.

Whilst making the point that the scheme is voluntary and participation does not signal support for the wind farm, SM commented that RES is proud to deliver LEDS at Jack's Lane Wind Farm because not only is this a benefit no other developer offers, the extra £45,000 RES is injecting into the local community is in addition to the traditional Community Benefit Fund which makes £30,000 available each year (based on £2,000 per MW). The benefit of receiving discounted electricity was not proposed during the planning process of the wind farm as LEDS was not in existence at the time, however RES has since been keen to offer this annual discount to those living and working near Jack's Lane Wind Farm with the aim to include as many people as possible.

TA commented that he understands the confusion over 'postcodes we know to be part of our postal address' and the Ordnance Survey 'postcode polygons' but recognises RES has to be consistent and objective in its methodology to ensure it stands up to external scrutiny. He summarised that in

creating the LEDS qualifying area, there will naturally be 'winners and losers' – and reinforced that RES is delivering on their promise to offer a minimum discount of £100 per eligible property.

SM advised the first LEDS payments will be made in 2015 once the wind farm becomes fully operational – and that payments will be made once a year directly to the electricity supplier of an eligible property.

In response to a question from a member of the public, RA confirmed that households need to inform RES if they change energy supplier. RA added that eligible properties will be contacted in October 2014 with joining instructions and information on how to apply for LEDS by submitting details about their electricity supplier.

SM informed the CLG and all members of the public present that LEDS will not be discussed at subsequent meetings in so much detail. Additional information on LEDS can be found online at www.res-leds.com along with contact details should anyone want to talk over any specific queries with the team. SM made it clear that going forward the focus of the CLG should be directed toward the Community Benefit Fund to ensure it is established in time for the first annual payment upon the operation of the wind farm.

b) Community Benefit Fund

SM confirmed that RES is still in the process of contracting the Norfolk Community Foundation ('NCF' hereafter) to administer the Community Benefit Fund ('CBF' hereafter) – and that the main point of contact at the NCF is Graham Tuttle who presented to the CLG at the meeting in March 2014.

In response to a question from a member of the public, SM confirmed that the annual £30,000 fund is index-linked and payments would be made each year for the wind farm's operational lifetime.

SM explained that following the discussion regarding the suggested area of benefit for the CBF at the last CLG meeting, RES had taken members' views on board and reduced the radius from 7km to 5km. It was explained that whilst preference would be given to groups wishing to apply for funding and are located within this area of benefit, those outside of it were not excluded as the Fund Panel may agree that a certain project would be considered beneficial to people residing within the area of benefit i.e. a school minibus.

TA said that 5km area of benefit may still be too wide as he feared that as Burnham Market is a much larger area, there could be more projects a significant distance away that could in theory benefit from the CBF more than those parishes in closer proximity to the wind farm.

SM clarified that it is RES' intention for the CBF to benefit the wind farm's host communities and that ultimately any decision would be made democratically by a panel of local people and therefore by those who know where the money can be best directed.

TA recognised that the rationale for 5km is to broaden options in consideration of the length of time the CBF will be around for but suggested that the area of benefit could be reduced in size and only expanded to the 5km zone should there a) be any surplus funds available for the remaining financial year and b) if there are a lack of applications or projects remaining.

SM said that the final decision on area of benefit will be stated in the contract agreed between RES and the NCF however matters such as application criteria and how the Fund Panel will score them can be discussed when the Fund Panel is formed at the first meeting held with the Norfolk Community Foundation. In response to the query from MM, SM confirmed that a constitution for the Fund Panel will be drawn up and agreed at the inaugural meeting, once everybody is happy with how the Fund will work.

SM explained that the envisaged membership of the Fund Panel comprises nine members at any one time; one elected representative from each of the four nearest parish boundaries with parish council representation, three elected representatives from a total of five outer lying parish councils (selected on a rotational basis) and two members of the public living anywhere in the area of benefit (though offered first to any interested residents within the two parish boundaries without parish council representation: Bagthorpe with Barmer and Barwick).

A member of the public questioned whether the proposed panel composition has too many people and what is meant by an 'elected representative'. AH asked whether the Panel could include local vicars and teachers.

In response to both points, SM said that the composition has been considered carefully by RES in mind of ensuring that the area of benefit is adequately represented. In which case, 9 Fund Panel members seemed appropriate for the 5km radius and an odd number of people is preferable so that decisions on applications do not reach stalemate. RES encourages input from a broad spectrum of the community and so any member of the public including teachers and vicars etc are invited to apply to join the Panel.

SM advised that the NCF would in the near future contact parishes councils to kick-start the discussion regarding membership and to request nominees to attend an initial meeting.

TA asked whether there are any spending limits per grant as he had know some funds to have a maximum allowance per application (i.e. £5,000). SM confirmed that there could be no limit, but ultimately this would be a decision to be made by the Fund Panel and NCF to ensure each application is assessed fairly against set and agreed criteria.

A member of the public questioned whether it would be the Fund Panel or the NCF who would decide how to allocate the Fund. SM confirmed that the Fund Panel would make the decisions on where the money is spent; the NCF would help guide decisions using its local knowledge and experience of managing funds, but its prime remit is to organise and chair the yearly meetings, receive the annual payments from RES and administer grants to successful applicants. The NCF will also ensure the Fund is appropriately advertised along with the associated deadlines and will be responsible for collating and reviewing application forms before presenting recommendations to the Fund Panel for ratification at the annual meetings.

MM asked whether the NCF will attend all Fund Panel meetings. SM said that the NCF will attend each meeting in person but will have no voting rights.

SM informed the CLG that the first CBF payment will be made in 2015 once the wind farm is fully operational and the first meeting of the Fund Panel will then follow.

MM asked whether the Fund Panel could meet more than once a year. SM said that it is possible but would depend on the contract agreed with the NCF. Currently RES considered an annual meeting to be sufficient for the value of the Fund.

Public Questions

TA asked whether the whole construction route would be grasscreted. GS advised that the junction between the B1454 and the C479 is the only part of the route to undergo grasscrete treatment.

TA asked whether the grasscrete treatment is a temporary measure. GS said it would remain in place for the full 25 years of the wind farm lifetime. This is to ensure the necessary infrastructure is already in place in the unlikely instance that replacement parts for turbines etc need to be delivered later down the line.

Future Meeting Dates

SM suggested that for the next meeting, the CLG focuses entirely on the Community Benefit Fund by meeting with the Norfolk Community Foundation in November. SM reiterated that the NCF will be in touch directly with dates once the contract with RES has been finalised.

SM suggested that possibilities for a site visit are investigated for the CLG members in December 2014. This would have to take place in daylight hours and RES would be in touch in due course to arrange dates and agree logistics.

Any Other Business

None.

The meeting formally closed at 8.35pm.

Actions

Action	Responsibility	Deadline
Respond to outstanding questions as post-meeting notes	RES	ASAP
Compile list of dates for next CLG meeting in November (liaise with NCF)	RES	End of October
Circulate dates, collate replies and book venue for the next CLG meeting with NCF (Syderstone Village Hall)	Bellenden	End of October
Prepare and organise programme and logistics for the proposed site visit	RES	Ongoing
Circulate site visit plans to CLG including a list of dates, collate replies and note special requirements	Bellenden	Ongoing

A copy of the presentation is available on the Jack's Lane Wind Farm project website.