

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 Gerry Taylor (GT) – Syderstone Parish Council
Sam Mayes (SM) – Community Relations Manager, RES
James Dominiak (JD) – Jack's Lane Assistant Site Manager, RES
Richard Evans (RE) – Project Manager, RES
Rebecca Meek (RM) – Solar Developer, RES
Billy Taylor (BT) – Bellenden
Approximately 10 members of the public

Venue: Syderstone Village Hall

Apologies: Cllr Malcolm MacArthur (MM) – Syderstone Parish Council
Cllr Robin Maslin (RM) – South Creake Parish Council
Cllr Ann Harvey (AH) – South Creake Parish Council

Date: Wednesday 11 March 2015, 7:10pm – 8.40pm

Welcome and Introduction

TA opened the meeting, welcoming the CLG and members of the public. TA announced that members of the CLG had attended a site visit organised by RES that afternoon prior to the CLG meeting, and that members found it to be very informative.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from RM, MM and AH.

Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting

TA proposed one minor change to the minutes: to change the wording on page six, paragraph two to read as follows: "Bagthorpe with Barmer and Barwick". By incorporating that change, the CLG voted unanimously to approve the minutes of 10 September 2014.

Jack's Lane Construction Update

JD presented to the CLG and members of the public an update on the construction of Jack's Lane Wind Farm since the last meeting in September 2014. This included an overview of completed works to date. JD explained that the construction team is finalising the remainder of the works on site before management of the wind farm is transferred to the Project Delivery team in April. JD explained that some of these works comprise ecological monitoring and hydro-seeding. JD provided an indicative timeline of remaining construction milestones.

In addition, JD apologised for any confusion around the communicated temporary road closures, and confirmed that the matter has been resolved by working in co-operation with Norfolk County Council. JD confirmed the timescales for the closure of the C479 Burnham Road (and part of the U22193 Barwick Road in order to fix some potholes) will begin on Monday 16 March 2015 and will

be in effect until Monday 30 March 2015 between 7:00am - 5.30pm, Monday to Friday. The road will open as usual during the evenings and at weekends.

TA asked JD who will manage the hedging and verges once the construction team has left site. JD replied stating that the hedging would be RES' responsibility and confirmed RES has appointed consultant 'Carbon Forestry' to physically undertake the on-going maintenance.

POST MEETING NOTE: *Norfolk County Council will maintain the verge from the road to the Highway boundary.*

GT asked whether copies of the images contained in the presentation could be supplied on a CD to Syderstone Parish Council to be saved in their archives. SM agreed to the request.

TA highlighted some instances of television reception being affected in Stanhoe during the testing of the Jack's Lane turbines. TA explained that RES hired a local television company to rectify this. TA warned that some properties may still be found to be affected – especially with the number of second homes in the area, and urged residents to contact RES directly if they are experiencing any problems.

A member of the public asked why RES did not consider the impact wind turbines would have on TV reception. SM advised that TV interference is a factor which is always considered in the design stage of any wind farm, to inform the turbine layout in order to mitigate the occurrence. TA recalled this being addressed as a condition or an undertaking by RES at the Public Inquiry and advised that RES had acted quickly to resolve the issue. SM took the opportunity to ask the CLG and members of the public to contact RES if they are experiencing problems.

Community Benefit

a) Local Electricity Discount Scheme (LEDS)

Through a presentation, SM updated the CLG on the progress, next steps and timescales for making the first year's £100 payments of the Local Electricity Discount Scheme ('LEDS' hereafter).

SM explained that 467 eligible properties were sent LEDS postcards in December 2014 asking them to apply online by 31 January 2015 to be guaranteed to receive the first LEDS payment. SM added that in line with its sustainability ethos, RES encouraged online applications, but paper copies were supplied upon request. SM advised that RES is aiming to make the first payment within six weeks of the wind farm becoming fully operational and confirmed that payments would be made directly to the supplier, not to the householder. SM explained that RES will endeavour to process all applications received to date (including those received after 31 January) in order to make the first payment but this cannot be guaranteed for properties which did not make the deadline.

A member of the public asked whether properties that apply after the first payment is made will still be able to receive that year's payment. SM replied stating that properties can apply to the scheme at any point; however payment runs will only take place once a year. Therefore, if an eligible property did not make this year's deadline and subsequently does not receive this year's payment – they will have to wait until next April/May to benefit from a £100 discount on their electricity bill.

SM confirmed that properties that apply after an annual payment is made cannot reclaim payments from previous years. A hypothetical example was provided in that if a household decided to register in five years' time, that household will not be entitled to claim the previous five years' worth of LEDS payments. Also that if a family moved into an eligible property in the future, they would need to contact RES with their supplier details in order to apply and will only be able to benefit from subsequent payments. RE added that LEDS would last for the 25 year operational lifetime of the project.

A member of the public asked how many properties had applied, and suggested that surplus monies should be equally divided and shared amongst those properties closest to the wind farm that are not eligible to receive LEDS. SM confirmed that 60% of eligible properties had applied to date and that any surplus monies will be automatically placed into the Community Benefit Fund.

POST MEETING NOTE: *The presentation contained an error in that it stated: "60% of properties have sent in their details and have been successfully accepted onto the scheme". This should have stated that 60% of properties have applied to the scheme. At the time of the meeting RES had only just begun to process the applications so the number of accepted applications was unknown. The presentation has now been amended for the purposes of publication on the project website.*

A member of public asked why some properties in Mill Lane are eligible, whilst others are not, and questioned the methodology of postcode polygons. TA said that whichever methodology was used, there would be winners and losers, and that it is an unfortunate situation, however RES has confirmed its position and there is little value in continuing to discuss what cannot be changed.

A member of public said that the phrase 'postcode' not 'postcode polygon' was used previously to explain the methodology.

SM confirmed that in all CLG meeting minutes, 'polygons' had been consistently referred to as "postcode geographic boundaries (as defined by Ordnance Survey)" as a means to dilute jargon but acknowledged that 'polygon' had been adopted in language during the meetings.

GT explicitly asked for his following comment to be minuted: *"LEDS has divided Syderstone between recipients and non-recipients. RES stated to the CLG from the outset that any eligible household that rests next to one property with the same postcode outside the 2,400m radius, that that property would be automatically included. This has not happened, and 50-60 houses are excluded in Syderstone, ones which can view the wind farm compared to eligible ones who do not, and as a result Syderstone Parish Council has received a sizeable number of complaints. RES has a duty to think about where to draw its line, and in this instance RES has failed to consider Syderstone properly."*

SM contested GT's interpretation of the originally communicated methodology and expressed concern considering the detail which had been shown/discussed in previous CLG meetings and subsequently minuted. SM said she would be happy to be pointed to any reference in past minutes which could be deemed to mislead as RES has made great efforts to make the methodology as transparent as possible in response to the CLG's requests for a better understanding of the qualifying area.

SM acknowledged that the methodology had been confusing at times, not helped by the fact that in some areas around Jack's Lane Wind Farm, there were multiple 'postcode geographic boundaries' or polygons which shared the same six character postcode.

SM emphasized that LEDS was not based on visibility of the wind farm and that at no time had the methodology changed, only the total payment when RES included an eligible postcode polygon that was mistakenly missed at launch. SM assured that if residents felt they had been misled regarding eligibility, this was unintentional.

RE advised the team would take on board GT's comments to inform future LEDS launches at RES sites.

POST MEETING NOTE: *The consistent explanation of eligibility in past minutes is as follows: "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. 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."*

b) Community Benefit Fund (CBF)

SM updated the CLG with the progress of the Community Benefit Fund by advising that the first meeting led by the Norfolk Community Foundation (NCF hereafter) to discuss fund criteria had taken place a few weeks back. SM restated that the NCF would administer the CBF to successful applicants with a Fund Panel of local people making the decisions on where the money is spent. Having not been in attendance SM invited TA to summarise the content of the meeting. TA advised the first meeting was attended by representatives nominated by each of the parish councils RES had written to and was a successful discussion in order to kick off expectations for the eventual Fund Criteria. The next meeting on 25 March 2015 will be attended by the final Fund Panel membership to agree a constitution and guidance notes for future applications.

A member of the public asked if members of the public can attend Fund Panel meetings. SM said no, it was a meeting of the Fund Panel (of which suitable representatives are appointed by parish councils) who then can report back to their parish councils respectively. TA said it would be difficult to conduct the meeting in an open forum as there will undoubtedly be public participation which is not the meeting's purpose. TA added he will convey this sentiment to the NCF however.

A member of public asked for clarification on the CBF radius. SM confirmed the area of benefit comprised a 5km radius of the turbines.

A member of the public asked what types of projects the CBF will pay for. SM stated that applications will be considered on their merits, and ultimately, a project has to be considered of benefit to those living and working within 5km of each of the turbines. GT added that the CBF will not pay for live schemes; they have to be new initiatives.

A member of public asked how the Fund Panel membership is comprised. TA explained that the four parish councils (with elected representation) closest to the site: North Creake, South Creake, Stanhoe and Syderstone will have one permanent seat each totalling four representatives, with the seven other parish councils having a rotational membership to make up the 5 remaining seats and ensure there are 9 members at one time.

A member of the public asked how RES defines a "suitable representative" as a potential candidate for the Fund Panel. SM advised this definition is used to include interested individuals such as a policeman or teacher who understands the community at large – so that membership is not limited to parish councillors.

SM explained that the first CBF payment will be made within one month of the wind farm being declared fully operational. On current timescales, SM advised the NCF is looking to award the first payments from the CBF to successful applicants in June 2015.

A member of the public asked if parish councils would be granted priority if they were the 'applicant' and so could pursue their own agenda regarding projects.

TA said that this is not the case, and that any organisation can apply and the Fund Panel would consider their application objectively, whether it be a parish council application or one, hypothetically speaking, from a scouts association. TA said that the CBF should be spread equally amongst all parts of the fund area to ensure fairness. GT added that applications have to meet set criteria, and the application will be reviewed by the Fund Panel accordingly. SM added that any unsuccessful applicants due to the demand for one round of funding may be able to be resubmit their application for consideration the next year – subject to meeting the relevant criteria.

A member of the public asked in the eventuality of conflict, whereby a member of the Fund Panel is unavailable to vote on a scheme in their respective parish, how would a tied vote be decided? GT said that the Chairman has the casting vote.

Public Questions

GT took this as an opportunity to congratulate RES for its programme of community engagement. GT said that the CLG, councillors and the wider community had been kept informed from the outset, and have had a forum to raise issues, make comments and question RES directly which is commendable.

TA echoed GT's comments, stating that some people may like or dislike the wind farm but that RES has listened, and has taken on as much feedback as possible with the RES team being professional and cordial from day one.

Future Meeting Dates

SM announced that a final meeting of the CLG will be held in late 2015/early 2016. It was agreed the date would be set via email.

Any Other Business

SM announced that the CLG of 11 March 2015 is the penultimate meeting before they cease, with a final meeting of the CLG to take place in late 2015/early 2016 when RES would be in a position to introduce the Asset Manager from the RES Generation team who will assume responsibility for the project throughout its operational life.

SM announced that the CLG of 11 March 2015 is the final meeting with the presence of the construction team.

SM introduced RE, the new Project Manager for the Jack's Lane Wind Farm. RE addressed the meeting explaining that RES has recently undergone an organisational restructure, whereby his role is to lead a RES project delivery team which takes RES projects through the development and construction stages and up until the end of the first year of operation (where separate departments were responsible for these areas in the past).

RE explained that RES is expecting Jack's Lane Wind Farm to reach full operation on Monday 16 March 2015 and in any case in the next few weeks. Having now taken on Jack's Lane Wind Farm, RE confirmed he will work with SM to liaise with any members of the public should they have any questions, comments or concerns.

SM introduced RM who informed the CLG that RES is investigating the feasibility of a solar scheme in close proximity to the site of the Jack's Lane Wind Farm. RM gave a brief overview of the 5MW scheme located on 25 acres of agricultural land classified as grade 3b which is suitable for solar development. RM explained the proposed consultation methodology, asking CLG members for any constructive input in regards to making the consultation as inclusive as possible.

RM used a presentation to guide the discussion, and outlined indicative timescales for the proposal. RM explained that RES is proposing a public consultation event in April 2015, with the view to submit a planning application in summer 2015. If a positive decision is made in autumn 2015, construction will begin in spring 2016, with the solar farm becoming operational in summer 2016.

GT enquired whether the project would deliver a community benefits package. RM advised there could be a one-off community payment of up to £25,000 (£5,000 per MW), depending on the outcome of the planning process. SM stated that RES will consult the community on potential funding recipients at the public exhibition to understand how this contribution could be best used.

The meeting formally closed at 8.40pm.