

SOLAR FARM APPLICATION, FOSTON AND SCROPTON PARISH COUNCIL

HELD REMOTELY VIA ZOOM ON TUESDAY 2ND FEBRUARY 2021

Present: Councillors: Cllr G Thornhill MBE (Chairman), A Barnes (Clerk), Cllr Patten SDDC & DCC

GS Capital L Kelly, Wardell Armstrong L Williamson

Members of the Public: Members of the Public 12

Welcome and Clerk

- Chairman and Clerk welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked everyone for attending via zoom. Cllr Thornhill will divide the meeting into 3 sections, Liam will speak first from GS Capital confirmed no decisions would be made but notes will be taken.
- Clerk confirmed that she had put an invite on the website for the general public to email her if they wished to attend this meeting and asked parishioner to raise their hands if they wished to ask a question.

GS Capital update

- Liam introduced himself and shared a presentation regarding the solar farm.
- Planning consent given in 2015
- Project not started due to regulatory regime
- New technology in place without government support, currently working with Wardell Armstrong
- Application due to be submitted in early February.
- Liam confirmed the power point presentation will be available on the website

Cllrs questions

Cllr Patten confirmed she was observing the meeting and taking notes but will not be making any comments.

Parishioner questions

Are public footpaths which cross the land going to be the subject of diversion?

Liam confirmed there would be no diversion of footpaths however, they may have to acquire temporary closure during the construction phase.

How does the solar farm application fit in with the other application of building 10 houses

Liam confirmed they are not involved in the housing application

Alan Critchlow confirmed they are still awaiting a decision on the housing application, they are t2 separate applications and will not be parallel, applications will be at least 400 metres apart

Lauren confirmed the construction phase will unlikely to overlap with each other, but would coordinate with GS Capital if they did to ensure minimal disruption

The area has been outlined by the government as a flood defence area and issues with Watery Lane flooding may potentially push the water down to that way causing constant problems. What are your views about supporting the local area with flood defences?

Liam understands concerns but can't speak about the flood defences in place. No impermeable surface apart from the panel structure which will be minimal. Introduce swales and capture it from flooding into the village. Flood plan will support the village in preventing further flooding.

Alan confirmed from a farmer's point of view will be underlaid with grass and established grass land consumes more water and would help with water and the solar farm will help with climate change.

Lauren reported a full flood risk assessment has been done and will be submitted to SDDC.

Is there going to be an internet connection there?

Liam confirmed an internet connection be completely dedicated to the Solar Farm, will not be coming of the public box in the village. Local Grid will need control to switch the grid for safety precautions.

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Who will be benefiting from the power?

Liam confirmed the local electricity company WPD will benefit and perhaps local businesses at a discounted rate. No physical individual can connect to the grid

Does the solar farm make any noise?

Liam confirmed the solar farm does not make any noise.

Is there a life cycle?

Liam confirmed the planning application is for 30 years, after that the panels can be removed the land put back, however there will probably still be a need for electricity but another planning application would be required.

Can the site be extended when it is established?

Liam confirmed they are limited to the planning application and cannot extend the footprint, constraint of the grid itself and a connection agreement is in place.

What maintenance will be in place and what contingency plan if the energy company goes bust?

Liam confirmed the business model of renewable energy is wrapped up with pension funds who will be the owner of the assets. Little maintenance is required, and the site will be monitored remotely, no requirement for further engineering or construction works.

Vandalism what is the situation with solar panels?

Liam reported he has never encountered any vandalism, CCTV is put up on site.

Residents emailed comments:

I think this is a fantastic project;

1. There will be no change to existing footpaths or impact on the designated site.
2. It will create new jobs in this time of need with so many people, unfortunately, have been made redundant due to the pandemic.
3. The duration of the project was frowned upon in the public meeting with one resident stating that "it was initially planned for 3 months but now it's going to take 12-16 weeks"? This is roughly the same time frame, so I don't understand the concern as it's not a long duration for such a project.
4. There is a potential for residents to benefit from this project and save money dependant on future discussions and agreements.
5. I'm sure residents would prefer a silent solar farm in operation around their properties rather than a new industrial or commercial unit / business.
6. It's great for the environment and shows Scropton as being a greener village.
7. The parish council could actually use this project on their website to promote the fact things like this are happening in our parish and show others that cleaner, greener energy is the future. Not many parish councils in South Derbyshire can promote such a great development.