

**Withington Parish Council Extraordinary Meeting  
Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> September 2022  
at 7.00pm in the Parish Room**

**Minutes**

**40/2022 Present:** Councillors: Phil Heath (Chair), Neil Maxwell, Alan Williams, Denise Roscoe (Clerk), Jack Vaughan (Elgin Energy) and 19 members of the public

**41/2022 Welcome:** The Chairman welcomed everyone

**42/2022 Apologies:** Cllr Lesley Stone, Cllr Martin Timmis, Cllr Lezley Picton, Helen Thomas and Wayne Thomas

**43/2022 Declaration of Interest:** None

**44/2022 Presentation of solar farm proposal by Jack Vaughan of Elgin Energy and the opportunity for residents to ask questions**

Elgin Energy is a full-service, utility scale, solar+storage developer bringing projects from origination through development. The company has a portfolio of projects in late-stage development totalling 5Gigawatt (GW) of solar + 3GW of storage across our three key markets of the UK, Australia, and Ireland.

As of 2022, Elgin Energy agreed to sell the UK's largest solar PV transaction to date consisting of a portfolio of 12 projects with a combined capacity of 519MW of projects to Scottish Power Renewables (UK) Limited.

**Site Details**

The site will consist of lowest point (0.8m) to highest point (2.8m – 3.2m) inclined solar panels. Consisting of single post and two post frames which will be piled by tractor to a depth of 1.5 to 2 metres. The solar panels will be in a landscape/portrait formation and will be one of two models: Bifacial Modules (most likely)

- Captures Irradiance on both the front and back side of the panels
- Becoming more prevalent due to cost parity with Monofacial.
- Can provide significant uplift to a site which can add value

or

Monofacial

- Captures irradiance on one side of the panel
- Most commonly used worldwide due to cost to date.

On site the hard landscape (access tracks) will be constructed from permeable hardcore aggregate.

**Agricultural Land Classification**

- Initial desktop review of the land holding had both Land Grade 2 and Land Grade 3 (This was used for Public Consultation)
- Independent samples taken on site showed that the land grade was
  - 19.55 Ha (43%) Grade 3a
  - 25.90 Ha (57%) Grade 3b

**Transport Key Points**

- Traffic Marshall who will be in charge of overseeing the management of directing deliveries and monitoring site access and materials handling areas
- A Logistics Coordinator will be appointed to overseeing the delivery scheduling and will liaise with the Traffic Marshall

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Chairman

- A temporary construction compound will be designated for delivery and temporary storage of materials. The principal Contractor will make all reasonable endeavours to prevent the area from becoming dirty as to prevent the transfer of mud/dirt to the highways.
- Deliveries will be between the hours of 09:30 and 15:00 as much as possible.
- A Just in time delivery method will be in place so as to prevent the amount of equipment on site at any given time and allow for smooth traffic movements during construction period
- A wheel washing station will be set up to allow vehicles to clean prior to egress

### **Ecology**

- Removal of 6.5m of hedgerow, addition of approx. 700m of natural hedgerow/trees to the north of the site.
- 12 ponds within 500m of the site, 2 of which have the potential (Below average, average) but no signs of Great Crested Newts
- No evidence of other protected species identified
- Proposal will provide significant enhancements to the site through bird and bat boxes, hedgerow and tree planting.

### **Questions**

**Q.** There doesn't appear to be a noise assessment and some residents are concerned about potential noise problems from the inverters. Will a noise study be undertaken.

**A.** The inverters noise is 60 decibels from 10 metres away and will only be on in the daytime. A noise assessment won't be undertaken

**Q.** What agreement have you made with the landowner regarding the additional use of the land once the solar farm has been installed

**A.** Agreement not made. As stated in planning the land will be grassland and may be used for grazing sheep

**Q.** Will the grassland be managed.

**A.** The management of the land will be contracted out and maintained regularly.

**Q.** Ensuring that deliveries categorically only take place between 09.30 and 15.00 as outside these times the roads are busy with commuter and school run traffic

**A.** Guarantee can't be given. Logistics coordinator can be contacted with any problems.

**Q.** There appears to be no provision for contractually committing to the regular cleaning and sweeping of the roads used by the construction traffic. This should be a condition of approval of the project.

**A.** wheel washing station will allow vehicles to clean prior to egress and roads swept if necessary.

**Q.** What penalties will be imposed upon delivery companies who do not adhere to the traffic route

**A.** Information not available

**Q.** Is it possible to implement a circular traffic route, that does not go through the village of Withington, so that construction vehicles will not meet in narrow lanes with limited passing places.

**A.** Vehicles will be managed to prevent this a two-way traffic light system may be used.

**Q.** Following completion of the construction phase what is the level of traffic expected for maintenance etc.

**A.** There will be occasional visits by a van or 4x4 vehicle along with approximately 12 maintenance visits per year.

**Q.** Residents are concerned about the potential impact of a solar farm on the value of their property. Do Elgin have any evidence to the contrary. Some residents will be impacted more than other so will Elgin be open to negotiation with individual residents regarding compensation for house price reduction.

**A.** There is no firm evidence that house prices will be affected. Elgin Energy haven't negotiated with homeowners direct.

**Q.** At the end of the 40-year lifecycle of the project what guarantees are in place to ensure the land is restored to grade 3a & 3b and who will be responsible for doing this. Will the land revert to being classed as farmland or as an ex industrial site (brownfield) which could lead it being open for further industrial use or even housing.

**A.** It will be a planning condition that the land is returned to grade 3a/3b agricultural land.

**Q.** Concerns have been raised that this application is first phase and that additional applications to expand the solar farm expansion will be made in the future. Can Elgin guarantee this is the only application they will make within the parish of Withington.

**A.** This is the only application in the Withington area. There is 0% capacity left on the grid in the local area now. There is no guarantee that another company may apply in the future.

**Q.** There have been recent reports of dangerous chemicals washing off solar panels into the eco system.

**A.** This is happening with cadmium telluride solar panels. There is no seepage from the solar panels used by Elgin Energy

**Q.** What are the fire hazard risks.

**A.** This is unlikely faults in the panels are restricted and the inverters have safety features which shut off. The site is monitored remotely.

**Q.** Will the road be restored if damage is caused by the construction vehicles.

**A.** This will be dictated by the planning department. A survey of the road will be carried out before construction commences.

#### **45/2022 Review of the final results of the recent survey regarding the solar farm proposal**

Total number of electors	=	176
Number of surveys returned	=	72
No response	=	104

41% of Electors replied

No = 12%

Neutral = 10%

Yes = 19%

No firm views = 59%

Therefore only 12% of households objected leaving 88% either in favour, neutral or not having any firm views.

#### **46/2022 Decision by the Parish Council on our response to Shropshire Council to either support, object or be neutral to the proposal**

It was resolved that the Parish Council's stance would be neutral.

#### **47/2022 Date of Next Parish Council Meeting – Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2022**

**Meeting Closed to Public:** as per the motion resolved at the meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> September 2022  
minute ref: 38/2022

Minutes confirmed as correct 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2022

Chairman

## 48/2022 Commercial discussions between Parish Council and Elgin Energy

Elgin did make an offer to increase the CBF to £4K per MW, which would be the floor for any further negotiations, E.G. in the event that their costs are reduced.

It was agreed that Elgin Energy would give more information on the following:

- An explanation of what factors Elgin Energy consider when establishing how you calculate a CBF for a solar farm.
- We understand some of the costs factored into the CBF calculation have risen considerably. Some of these may have peaked. Would Elgin Energy consider recalculating the CBF before the start of construction but only if costs have reduced.
- Elgin Energy's policy is to only offer a one-off payment for a CBF at commissioning of a solar farm. Would Elgin Energy consider the following
  - An annual payment over the lifecycle of the project or even a shorter period of say 20 years.
  - A smaller upfront payment at commission followed by an annual payment.
- Commissioning probably won't take place until 2024. Would Elgin Energy consider making the CBF index linked from the date of signing the CBF contract until date of commissioning as inflation would significantly erode the value of the CBF.

Negotiations are ongoing.