

Walpole Substation Connection Projects Meeting

Meeting Minutes

Date: 21st October 2024

Time: 6.30pm – 8pm

Location: Walpole Community Centre

Minutes

Item	Topic/Discussion	Action/Due by
Introduction and agenda	NB provided a brief overview of the projects and efforts from developers to work together to provide unified communications and that this meeting is what the developers hope will be the start of coordinated engagement opportunities for the local community. Councillors immediately raised that the traffic management is a huge concern for local people, and that it seems that plans are not being followed by the developers and subcontractors. i.e. arriving before working periods etc. KB acknowledged these issues, and Conrad are actively chasing their contractors to ensure they are being followed, as well as having recently issued new signage along the route to help with this. Councillors raised that it would be useful to have one point of contact, so if there was an issue, they could ring that. KB assured that if you contact any of the developers it will be heard by all.	
Conrad Energy Update	KB provided Conrad Energy updates. Provided a brief overview of the need for synchronous condensers on the grid today and works to date. Looking forward they are continuing with civils works, moving inside of the synchronous condenser halls and other bits of equipment. Mechanical and electrical works to commence in November. There are two major equipment deliveries upcoming, provisionally the 3rd and 17th of November, however these are not confirmed. There will be a rolling police blockade throughout delivery from Wisbech on these dates. KB provided details of the planned route for the deliveries.	

	Councillors queried about the condition of this route, as well as the roads used in the TMP, as to whether they would be restored to their original condition once works are completed. KB responded that they have survey information from prior to works starting and will do what they can to minimise their impact. Conrad has a Community Fund set up that is now open for application to Walpole and will be circulating the application form shortly. Some councillors raised thoughts that the community fund available was a small amount of money in comparison to the amount of money spent locally and on large infrastructure projects. Additionally, in comparison to the destruction caused by construction and traffic they felt this was a small fund. The council previously received £90k as part of a solar farm benefit fund, which was paid directly to the council about 10 years ago, and they still have some of the money left. It was left to the council to go to the community to decide what to do with it.	Circulate fund application form
Verdant Energy Update	Update provided by KB in Vedant's absence. Following setup of their site late last year they are now preparing to remobilise for site preparation and groundworks in November and December 2024. Between December and March 2025, they will be starting their piling and foundation works. April and May 2025 will be transformer delivery and then electrical and mechanical works. August 2025 completion. Verdant has proposed a £100,000 community engagement fund, including a £10k initial payment, £15k upon completion of development, £25k at year 15 of the project, £25k at year 30 of the project and £25k at decommissioning.	
National Grid Update	Brief overview of the need for the project and consultation and work to date. National Grid have permitted development rights on their site and some other areas, including an obligation to connect companies that wish to connect. Details given of these areas. Each project has been appointed its own subcontractor to enable connection. Minimal demolition works are being completed at the moment. The main works this year are piling and foundation works. Minimal traffic from National Grid at the moment.	
Ongoing Communication and Engagement	Councillors raised concerns that Walpole has become an area with a significant number of projects due to the National Grid substation. Lots of their residents have issues that they have raised with the council, and productive conversation is now required.	

	AR noted that Conrad's contractor uses a yellow card/red card system for drivers, so if they are not following the correct TMP they can be cautioned. Providing registration plates etc. can help inform this. The projects have an aligned traffic management process and will work together to resolve issues. Councillors asked if there have been door-to-door communications on the traffic route. NB informed that the developers are looking to do more joined up communications in the form of newsletters going forward, alongside communications from individual developers as required. We also wish to continue meeting in this format bringing in other stakeholders that we believe relevant to provide a platform for two-way conversation and to address issues on behalf of local residents. In addition, we wish to do a public information event to provide an update for local residents. Councillors raised that engagement from residents may be difficult and the only likely way to engage with them is to walk door to door. They raised that previous efforts to communicate via post or information events have produced little results.	
AOB	Councillors asked if they could have a further meeting with National Grid to get a better idea of the projects coming up in the future. NG noted that while they have an obligation to provide a connection, they do not have a responsibility over the projects that are connecting. NG also noted that lots of developments are determined by the NESO, government policy and other similar bodies in order to hit net zero targets. Request for meeting presentation.	Share meeting presentation with clerk.