

Walpole Substation Connection Projects Meeting

Meeting Minutes

Date: 3rd June 2025

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. Stated that this meeting was the second of our continued engagement efforts with the parish councils, now with the addition of West Walton. Asked what we do when HGV drivers do not follow the designated routes? KB confirmed that all developers have their own construction companies to manage. When the issue arises, we will discuss between us to see if we can identify the driver / company and therefore who's contractor it is. We will all issue a statement to contractors to ask them to speak to their teams. It does require repeated follow up as it isn't always the same drivers. This particular instance was a driver in Pigeon Street on a Sunday. KB confirmed that we will follow up with contractors. CO said that we also take registration plates so we can identify and escalate especially with repeat offenders. All contractors and sub-contractors are briefed on the route. If you do see anyone not following the route, if possible, log the time date and registration place so we can escalate appropriately. Asked what coordination we have with other agencies, as there have been some major road closures on this route. For example, two weekends ago off the A17 on to King John Bank and there was a 4-mile alternative route, which was also blocked. KB confirmed that we don't get any notice from the local authorities as to whether there are road closures. How do we get around road closures? Lots more development coming here between 2026-30 – there is at least 10 more coming through. There should be more joined up coordination between projects / developers and local authorities. Confirmed that local authorities should be aware as they are the ones that designated the routes, but sometimes it's very difficult to get information from them.	

	Norfolk County Council had mentioned looking at cumulative impact along this route from all projects, but nothing more was heard from them. CR stated that we would welcome more communication from the local authorities. Lincolnshire County actually manage King John Bank (although road is split between two local authorities). That road is a pinch point and that's something perhaps the Parish Council can raise to the Council. Does seem that there is no joined up thinking and there is no understanding of when all of future construction programmes are going to happen as it is getting pushed back. There's lots of development and there is a chance it could overwhelm local roads when it all starts. Confirmed that EGL5 is a separate project to the ones being discussed here today. Asked if each project owned by National Grid? Are you all private enterprises? Who is the ultimate client? Confirmed that all are private National Grid merely hosts infrastructure and has responsibility to provide safe and secure connections, they don't own or commission all of these projects/ developers, they choose to develop what and where in their own right. KB confirmed that Conrad is a bit of an exception as they are contracted by National Energy System Operator (NESO) to deliver grid stability. Discussion around who ultimately has responsibility. Confirmed that National Grid own and operate grid and substations under strict regulations. Confirmed that if there were any issues with the development or construction process this needs to be taken up with each developer directly, National Grid have no control over how each operates.	BK to pick this up directly afterwards
Conrad Energy Update	KB provided Conrad Energy updates. Provided a brief overview of the need for synchronous condensers on the grid today, location and landscaping plans and works to date. Explained that there is going to be a change to the programme and their completion date is now looking to be June 2026 rather than the second half of this year. There is no additional construction it just means that they will be demobilising and returning to complete the works later in the year. The majority of outside works are complete and most work is focused within buildings. Likely that around Oct / Nov 2025 the team will be demobilising from site. Major equipment deliveries have started with the first having taking place on the 18th and 22nd May. Asked if there was any feedback on the deliveries so far. Main comment was not to have done it on a school day and although the deliveries were carried out of school hours people couldn't park because laybys etc were shut. KB confirmed that that was the only one to not to happen on a Sunday and we are driven by what the police want to do in line with their resource availability and planning for the escorts. Confirmed that the transshipment point would have compound fencing and security, it is needed as the route is quite long and unlikely that we would get there in	

	one day. Confirmed that a newsletter had gone out to parish councils, our usual distribution area around the development area and all properties along the route down to Wisbech. Conrad has a Community Fund of £10,000 available and have been receiving applications for it. It was raised that the fund available was a small amount of money in comparison to the amount of money previously spent locally and on large infrastructure projects. Highlighted that all projects are coming into the area in a disjointed way and that the local communities need to benefit properly from the huge number of infrastructure projects coming into the area. 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. Asked which area that it covered, KB said that he would look into this. KB highlighted some community outreach that the projects had been carrying out and that information is available in the presentation slides.	KB to look into criteria for fund
Verdant Energy Update	CO gave an overview on the solar and battery site that is currently in construction. Main construction works on the solar site since Sep 2024. All internal access roads are in place and piling is complete for the posts and the panels are now being fixed into place. Work has been ongoing on the battery site since March 2025. Civils works are almost complete and electrical works are due to be complete in July / August with the exception of the cable route from the site to connect into the National Grid substation. Expecting batteries to start to be delivered towards the end of June and 2-3 deliveries a day which will follow the approved traffic route to site. It was highlighted that no notice was provided about the piling, however notices were provided. Asked to provide their address and this would be looked in to. Showed further images of the site at its current stage of construction. Asked if there would be any impact with Conrad's deliveries. CO confirmed that we share and align on delivery plans. Asked if there was a biodiversity plan for the projects. CO confirmed that there was a landscape management plan which formed part of the consented plans which they now have to implement. Confirmed that there would be hedge planting around the site and for every tree removed there would be two planted elsewhere in the country. Asked why BNG compensation isn't followed and why elsewhere in the UK rather than locally. CO confirmed that for the main site compensation it is onsite, they also following National Grid's	CS to check if address would have been on mailing list (if received)

	compensation which is slightly different to BNG which involves tree planting elsewhere, though they did look locally but there isn't sufficient space to do this. What happens in the unlikely event that the operating company goes bust, does it fall to the landowner to return the site to its original state. CR said that he would look into this.	CR to look into.
National Grid Update	JB gave a brief overview on the Walpole substation expansion and that this is required due to increased green energy connection requirements and manage power flows and improve energy security. The uprating of the substation is also part of the National Grid Great Grid Upgrade project. For some of the expansion they have permitted development rights (for the Conrad and Verdant connections). The rest they require Town and Country Planning (Norfolk County Council) consent. Planning application is anticipated to be submitted in late summer. Stated that this is as large as a National Grid substation could be so won't have any future expansion works. Confirmed that as part of the application a BNG strategy will be included, which will be minimum 10%, which is National Grid standard. Confirmed that for the Verdant connection, piling works have been completed and are due to start installation of the mechanical structure and looking to have connection energised by the end this year. They are a few months behind for the Conrad connection so there is limited work taking place currently. JB provided some information on the National Grid community benefit fund. Highlighted that proposals were brought forward by government for communities that are hosting large infrastructure projects (£200k per km of overhead line and £530k per new substation and convertor station). The Walpole substation expansion will likely qualify for the substation fund, but the exact specifics of how this will actually work is still being determined and finalised and once it has come into law it would need to be interpreted by Ofgem before implementation. National Grid will be and are currently in the process of engaging communities as to how best to use that money in local communities. Asked Would the awarded fund be provided in one lump or split? JB confirmed that currently he doesn't have an answer on that but will go away and see if he can find out any more information.	JB to confirm how funds will be awarded if information yet available.

Ongoing Communication and Engagement	Attendees happy to meet again. Agreed that later in the year around September / October 2025 when the projects are at good points to provide appropriate updates. Highlighted that people in this area are generally confused due to the number of different projects at different stages and therefore unengaged.	
AOB	Request for meeting presentation and minutes	Share with clerk.