



CLEVE HILL SOLAR PARK

Phase Two: Community Project Update

August 2018

www.clevehillsolar.com



CLEVE HILL
SOLAR PARK

1. Introduction

Thank you to those who participated in our Phase Two consultation between Thursday 31 May and Friday 13 July 2018. We welcomed over 400 people to our community consultation events and received over 700 pieces of feedback on our proposals for Cleve Hill Solar Park.

This Phase Two Community Project Update has been written to provide a summary of the feedback we received during our Phase Two consultation, to update you on how we are responding to this feedback and to inform you on what the next steps are for the proposed Cleve Hill Solar Park.

We also would like to inform people that our indicative submission date for the Development Consent Order (DCO) application has moved from August to October 2018.

This is to ensure that in our final application we can fully address the feedback that we have received from all consultees.



Full details of the entire pre-application consultation process will be provided in our Consultation Report, which will be available to view on our project website and via the Planning Inspectorate's website when our application has been submitted at: <http://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/>

2. Our Proposals

Our aim is to make Cleve Hill Solar Park one of the lowest cost generators of energy in the UK. With a capacity exceeding 350 Megawatts (MW), Cleve Hill Solar Park could provide enough clean, affordable energy to power over 110,000 homes.

Government data shows that on the afternoon of 30 June 2018, solar generated nearly 30% of the UK's power. With a quarter of the UK's generating capacity being decommissioned, a new mix of energy generation is needed to keep the lights on.

Cleve Hill Solar Park would deliver subsidy-free energy that is clean, affordable and secure. This is a solar park driven by innovation, not by subsidies.

Of the total 492 hectares (ha) development area, the solar panels will cover approximately 50% of the site. The developers, Hive Energy and Wirsol Energy, are committed to delivering low cost renewable energy generation and a project that will create a biodiversity gain on the site.

3. Our Phase Two Consultation

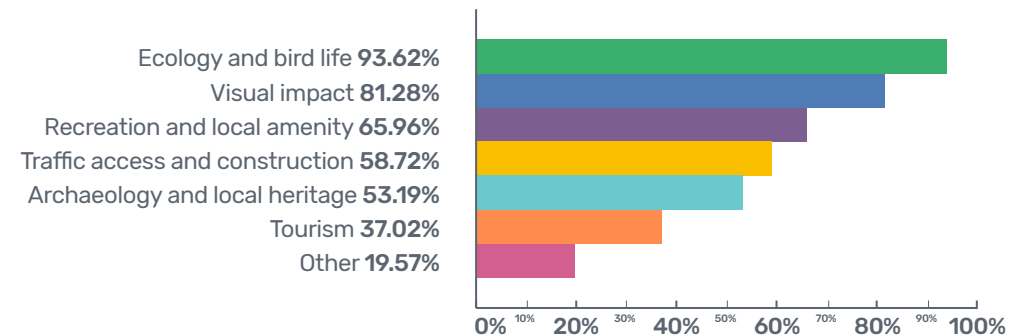
Our Phase Two consultation period ran from Thursday 31 May until Friday 13 July 2018. During that time, we gathered feedback on our detailed proposals for Cleve Hill Solar Park and the series of studies and assessments undertaken as part of our Preliminary Environmental Information (PEI).

As part of this consultation period, we ran four community events in the local area and we would like to thank all of you who attended.

All the materials shown at our events are available to view and download from our website: www.clevehillsolar.com/downloads.

The feedback which was received during the Phase Two consultation period highlighted a number of key areas people are concerned about.

Which aspect of the project is most important to you?



All our communication channels remain open – please continue to contact us at any of the following channels.



Write to us at:
Freepost: Cleve Hill Solar



Call our Freephone information line:
0800 328 2850



Email us at:
info@clevehillsolar.com



Visit our website at:
www.clevehillsolar.com

Throughout the pre-application consultation and in response to the Phase Two consultation, the project team has sought to address and respond to these areas of concerns raised.

A full description of these project responses to all feedback received will be provided in the Consultation Report that will accompany our DCO application. A summary of the key issues are provided below.

Issue	Comments	Project Response
Scale and Location	<p>Respondents expressed their concerns that the size of the site is too large.</p> <p>Respondents also highlighted that they believe the proposed location for the site is unsuitable.</p>	<p>With a capacity exceeding 350 MW, Cleve Hill Solar Park could provide enough clean, affordable energy to power over 110,000 homes. Of the total 492 ha development area, the solar panels themselves cover approximately 50%. The project team are working with leading experts and nature conservation bodies to design habitat mitigation areas and enhancements which would boost habitat quality and biodiversity on site.</p> <p>To date, no other sites have been identified in the south of England in such close proximity to the 400 kV National Grid Electricity Transmission (NGET) network with the ability to accommodate significant generation capacity. This is as well as the site containing other positive characteristics for solar energy development. These include good irradiation levels, lower quality agricultural land (classified as Grade 3b) and relatively flat open land.</p>
Landscape and Visual Impact	<p>Respondents expressed their concerns about the visual impact of the site, particularly regarding the upper-most height of the solar panels which will be approximately 4 metres high.</p> <p>They also expressed concern about the east-west orientation of the panels.</p>	<p>Considerable efforts have been made by the project to include significant areas of screening and the set-back of solar panels from residential properties in response to feedback throughout the consultation process.</p> <p>Following our Phase Two consultation, we have removed more panels at Cleve Hill, specifically the Field Y parcel, resulting in a complete removal of panels at that location.</p> <p>There will be planting on the south and south eastern parts of the site, including a mix of native hedgerow and hedgerow tree planting.</p> <p>Throughout the site there are areas of scrub planting proposed which will break up the land between the solar panels and enrich the areas of grassland – creating a simple habitat which will also add to the landscape character of the area.</p>

Issue	Comments	Project Response
Tourism, Recreation and Local Amenity	<p>Respondents highlighted the importance that they place on the Public Rights of Way (PROW) that run alongside and through the proposed site, particularly the Saxon Shore Way. They also expressed concern for a loss of tourism due to people no longer wishing to walk in the area.</p> <p>Respondents showed support for increased pathways through the site, although they raised concerns about the views which people would experience on these pathways. There was a strong rejection of the proposals for a community orchard on the site.</p>	<p>In response to suggestions from people in the community, we have included an additional permissive pathway in the proposals. This is to improve connectivity of the existing pathways and provide more varied routes in the area.</p> <p>We also proposed a community orchard but the feedback that we received suggested that this was not a favoured option by local residents. The area will be returned to lowland meadow, a priority habitat.</p>
Ecology and Bird Life	<p>Respondents expressed their concerns about the potential impacts the development could have upon wildlife which uses the site and the adjacent protected areas. Particularly regarding overwintering birds and the disruption which could be caused during construction and operation.</p> <p>Respondents also expressed concerns for the impact of the east-west orientation of the solar panels and how this might impact soil conditions.</p>	<p>We understand the concerns raised particularly as this is a new type of panel layout, east-west, as opposed to the more conventional south facing arrangement.</p> <p>Through extensive research and discussions with the relevant nature conservation bodies, we believe the solar park can provide a net biodiversity gain on the site which is currently intensively farmed. We are also proposing to graze sheep on the site which will allow the land to retain an agricultural use.</p> <p>A significant habitat mitigation area is proposed for bird species and is currently being discussed with nature conservation bodies: Natural England, Kent Wildlife Trust and RSPB. The project team meets with these groups as part of the Habitat Management Steering Group. Using data gathered over the past 4 years, the group are working together to agree an area of habitat mitigation that would extend and improve the function of the current Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) neighbouring the site to the east.</p>

Issue	Comments	Project Response
Traffic and Access	<p>Respondents expressed their concerns about construction traffic increasing congestion on roads which they feel are already inadequate and dangerous. They also expressed concerns about noise and pollution from construction traffic.</p> <p>Respondents highlighted that it is important to keep people informed and to manage the construction traffic sensitively.</p>	As the proposals for the project are finalised in response to the recent consultation, a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) will be submitted as part of the application. We will be engaging with local councillors and Kent highways officers prior to application submission to receive additional, focused feedback on the CTMP and our mitigation proposals.
Archaeology and Local Impact	Respondents expressed concerns for the loss of the landscape in the area. They also highlighted that pre-development digs, surveys and assessments should be carried out stringently, preferably with local archaeology groups.	The DCO application will include an outline Written Scheme of Investigation setting out the proposals for archaeological investigations pre-construction. These investigations will be carried out by accredited professionals as per all previous investigations undertaken on site, and we will seek to use local contractors for elements of the work as appropriate.
Flooding and Flood Protection	<p>Respondents expressed concern for the potential for the management of flood defences to be undertaken by Cleve Hill Solar Park.</p> <p>A number of respondents also highlighted that they did not wish for the development to prevent the Environment Agency (EA) from undertaking their plans for the area under Medway Estuary and Swale Strategy (MEASS).</p>	<p>We have undertaken flood-modelling for 1 in 200-year and 1 in 1000-year events based on flood predictions using predicted sea levels in 2070. We have provided this modelling to the EA.</p> <p>We are working with the EA to ensure the site will continue to be protected from flooding throughout its operation. We continue to have regular and detailed discussions with the EA on how the sea defences are managed, and how we can work together to continue this management, whilst also complementing MEASS.</p>

4. What Happens Next?

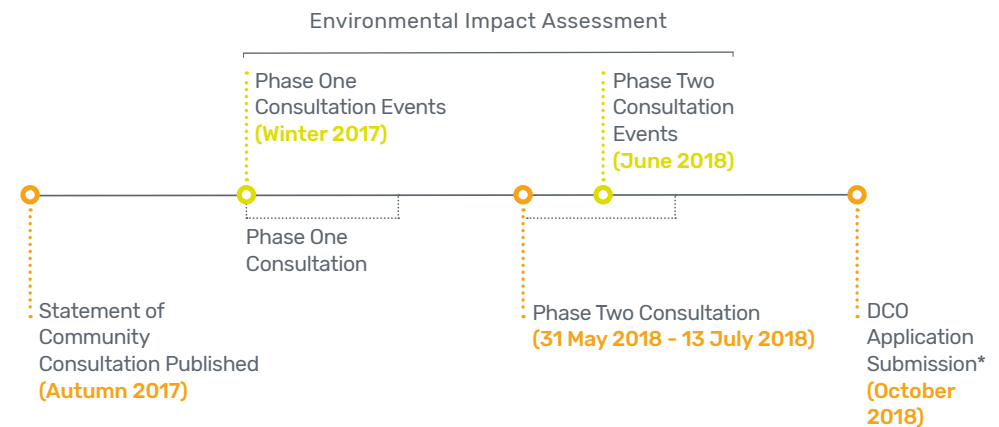
We are continuing to review all the feedback that we have received during the Phase Two consultation period. As we refine the design of our proposals in response to this feedback we will continue to engage with statutory and non-statutory consultees including the local planning authorities and nature conservation bodies.

In order to develop our proposals with consideration to all feedback received, we have moved the application submission date from August to October with the aim of submitting a DCO application to the Planning Inspectorate by 31 October 2018.

We will update you on when the application is submitted and where you can view it. The Planning Inspectorate must decide whether to accept the application within a month from receipt. If it is accepted, at that point information will also be provided on how you can register your interest and comment on the application. We will also include details of the examination process following the application's acceptance.

In the meantime, all our communication channels overleaf remain open. All comments received outside of the Phase Two consultation period will be responded to in our Consultation Report as part of our ongoing engagement.

Consultation timeline



* All dates are indicative and may change.

5. Contact Us

Please don't hesitate to get in touch if you would like to find out more information about Cleve Hill Solar Park and our associated consultation programme.

You can contact our Community Relations Team and find out more by using the details below.

All images, graphics and maps in this document are for illustrative purposes only.
For all sources please visit our website.

If you would like this document in large print, audio or braille please get in touch as below.



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