



LIGHTSOURCE
RENEWABLE ENERGY LIMITED

STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT



TRENCH FARM, RED HALL LANE,
WREXHAM, LL13 0NA

DOC REFERENCE: Trench Farm

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1 INTRODUCTION

This Statement of Community Involvement summarises the pre-application engagement and consultation Lightsource has undertaken with the local community and stakeholders for the proposed solar farm at Trench Farm, Red Hall Lane, Wrexham, LL13 0NA.

Details of our engagement with Wrexham County Borough Council (including pre-application engagement and EIA screening) are provided in Section 2 of the Design and Access Statement.

2 ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY AND METHODS

The aim and objectives of the engagement programme have been to inform and engage with the local community and stakeholders, in order to ensure local people are aware of the proposal and have the chance to find out more and express their views.

A range of methods have been employed to engage with stakeholders and the local community.

2.1 INFORMATION LEAFLET

A four page leaflet providing information on the proposal was mailed to 115 local residents and businesses in the area on 5th June, 2014. Copies and personal invitations to our drop-in event were also sent to the Ward Member (Cllr Kenyon) and the Overton Community Council.

This leaflet provided an introduction to the proposal, publicised the upcoming community engagement event, and included details for accessing the project website. The leaflet also provided details on how to contact the Lightsource team for further information.

A copy of the information leaflet is included in **Appendix A**.

The leaflet included a freepost feedback form, these were also available at the community engagement event, and provided on the project website. A second information leaflet will be sent to all those who provided either an address or email contact with their feedback form, this will provide an update on amendments made to the project, as well as advising that the proposal has now been submitted to Wrexham County Borough Council.

2.2 PROJECT WEBSITE

A Project Website was created through Lightsource's online Community Portal. The website was launched prior to the leaflet being sent out, and details on how to access it were provided in the leaflet. The website includes:

- Downloadable information packs;
- Site specific information;
- General solar PV information;
- Videos of existing operational solar farms; and
- An electronic feedback form.

The website will continue to be updated with relevant information as the project progresses.

2.3 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT EVENT

In order to engage with the local community, to inform them of our intended plans and gain feedback on our proposal, Lightsource organised a community information drop-in event. This was held at the Overton Village Hall on Thursday 19th June, 2014, between 5.30pm and 8pm.

In addition to the leaflet mail out detailed above, an advertisement was placed in the Wrexham Leader advising of the event (see **Appendix B**) on the 6th June 2014, and a press release sent to all newspapers covering the local area (see **Appendix C**).

At the information event the following information was available:

- Display boards provided information about the proposal and solar technology, these included an indicative layout;
- Information packs and leaflets covering solar PV, the biodiversity enhancements seen at existing solar farms, and agricultural co-use options;
- Multimedia in the form of videos on various aspects of solar PV and solar farms; and
- Feedback forms.

Representatives from Lightsource were available throughout the drop-in event to provide information and answer questions, as well as take note of any concerns raised.

Approximately 15 people attended the drop-in event.





2.4 BRIEFINGS FOR COMMUNITY COUNCIL AND WARD MEMBER

Prior to the community engagement event, Lightsource made contact with Overton Community Council and the Ward Member (Cllr Kenyon) providing information regarding the proposal and offering to meet and discuss the proposals prior to the community engagement event.

Neither party have committed to pre-application discussions to date, however members of the Community Council did attend the information evening. An offer to discuss the proposal in more detail was made, and Lightsource will continue to provide updates to both the Community Council and the local Ward Member.

2.5 MEDIA

As noted above, Lightsource sent out a press release in advance of the community engagement event in order to maximise awareness of the proposal and details for the drop-in event.

A copy of the Press Release is provided in **Appendix C**. Articles were published in the following publications:

- Daily Post (Wales)
- Wrexham.com
- BBC Wales
- Leader Series (local newspaper series)
- BBC Radio Cymru
- Wales on Sunday

- Heart North West and Wales (radio)
- BBC Radio Shropshire (as it's close to the border)
- Shropshire Star

2.6 SERVICE PROVIDER REGISTER

As part of the community engagement, Lightsource has specifically sought contact with local suppliers and contractors who could provide services during the construction and post-construction maintenance of the solar farm. For example, local accommodation providers, landscapers, and tradesmen.

These details have been compiled in a local Service Provider Register, and Lightsource will seek to utilise these services where appropriate.

3 SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK

Following the leaflet mail out, website launch and community engagement event, no completed feedback forms were received. Lightsource representatives at the community engagement event did however take note of matters and concerns raised during conversations with attendees.

These matters were limited, but focussed on the following:

- Visual impact, particularly when viewed from the adjacent footpaths and from Lightwood Green to the north;
- Impact of the cable route on individual properties and services.
- Physical impact on footpaths in the area
- Site selection, and potential to expand in the future.

Once these queries were raised and the proposal was explained, there was no outstanding matters of concern. It is fair to say that any concerns were based on misinformation (in terms of exact site location), and were easily dispelled once this was clarified. There was also a lot of general interest in the proposal, and in solar in general.

Overall the feedback received was largely positive, with no significant concerns raised.

4 RESPONSE TO FEEDBACK

The community engagement process has allowed Lightsource to inform the local community of our proposal, and to gain feedback, thus enabling due consideration to be given to matters of importance to the local community.

Lightsource has responded to the feedback received in a number of ways including: provision of additional information; addressing issues raised through the Design and Access Statement and accompanying technical assessments.

4.1 ISSUES ADDRESSED THROUGH PLANNING APPLICATION

As discussed above, all issues raised were based on a lack of information, and these were all addressed during the consultation process. For example, in relation to visual impact, we were able to explain that our planting plans will ensure that the site is screened as much as possible, which in this instance is almost completely. Other aspects were addressed in a similar manner, in addition the Planning Application and all supporting documents have been carefully developed to ensure as much information is provided as possible to avoid ambiguity for people unable to attend the event.

4.2 AMENDMENTS TO PROPOSAL

Given the lack of concern expressed during the pre-application consultation phase, no amendments have been made to the layout resulting from this step in the process.

5 CONCLUSION

Lightsource has undertaken a comprehensive pre-application engagement programme in order to proactively inform and engage with the local community and key stakeholders. 115 households were directly informed of the proposal, and many more were made aware through media articles as a result of our press release.

Overall, it is felt that there is very little opposition to the proposal, largely due to the relative invisibility of the site.

APPENDIX A – LEAFLET

GET INVOLVED!

You can email us your feedback, comments or support via our online Planning Portal:

www.lightsource-rs.co.uk

You can also contact us by phone or email if you would prefer to write to us the traditional way please get in touch and we will happily send you a pre-paid envelope.

Why Solar?

Stabilising energy bills long term
Once the equipment is in place, the sun's energy is free – this means solar power's vital long term power in protecting us from the volatile costs of raw materials, such as oil and gas. Generating energy in this way also means the UK can take more control over its electricity supply too, without relying on foreign supplies.

Overcoming the local economy
Having a local source of energy is a key priority for the generation of renewable energy can provide more businesses with a predictable, steady income stream which can support the rest of the farming business. We also try to incorporate as many local construction and service providers into our plans to provide if you'd like to work with us, please get in touch.

Reducing the energy gap
Compared with traditional power plants, solar farms are quick to deploy. A solar farm capable of generating power the thousands of homes can be operational in a matter of weeks.

Meeting our targets
The UK is legally committed to meeting 25% of its energy demands from renewable sources by 2025. Solar power is one of the most practical technologies to implement in order to help meet these targets and fight climate change.

Boosting biodiversity
The UK's wildlife is declining in species and numbers largely due to intensive crop farming. Solar farms provide patches of diversified land which allow wildlife habitats to flourish undisturbed and biodiversity starts to increase.

Solar farms do not harm the ground they sit on
Steel, pile or post foundations can simply be pulled out of the ground with no lasting damage. At the end of the working life of a solar farm all infrastructure is removed fully and the land fully returned to the way it was. Not every other 'green' solution can say that.

PROPOSED SOLAR FARM AT TRENCH FARM



Benefits

- 1,000 households powered by clean, locally produced electricity
- Entire solar farm seeded with species-rich grass to be grazed by sheep
- Ecological studies underway to establish how our planting can be best tailored to benefit wildlife
- Opportunities for local wildlife groups to have input into our plans.
- Solar farms provide great opportunities for biodiversity enhancement

Lightsource Renewable Energy is working on a proposal for a solar farm on 'Land at Trench Farm', on a cluster of small, well contained fields to the south-west of Overton-on-Dee. We already own and operate a variety of solar farms and rooftop installations across the UK, working with local communities, businesses and landowners to generate green energy locally and sustainably.

A solar farm does not only produce clean energy – the rows of solar panels will be widely spaced and raised so that grass can establish throughout the site, including the areas overlaid by panels. The project will be sensitive to the rural landscape, with the majority of the solar farm remaining open grassland grazed by a flock of sheep and surrounded by hedgerow and woodland. Once the structures are in place, the solar farm would take on a dual agricultural use and supply our food chain whilst still generating clean, renewable energy.

Get involved!

COMMUNITY INFORMATION EVENING

Thursday 19th June 2014

Overton Village Hall
Pen-y-Llan Street
Overton-on-Dee
Wrexham
LL13 8EE

Drop in any time between 5.30 – 8.00 pm

Frequently Asked Questions

How can I get involved?
Generating energy locally means the UK can reduce its reliance on foreign fuel that supplies, but it also opens opportunities for overcoming the local economy and skills around such sites. If you would like to see how you can get involved in the project, please visit our website and get in touch with our team via our online Planning Portal for Trench Farm.

www.lightsource-rs.co.uk
(Full document available)

Are solar farms irreversible development?
No – solar farms are a temporary use of land and do not necessarily lead to further development. The panels are mounted on an aluminium framework with steel legs which are pulled down into the soil. At the end of our lease period (usually about 25-30 years) the framework will be removed without harming the land.

Why harvest energy instead of food?
It isn't a choice – solar farms can do both. Our sites are designed to accommodate grazing of small livestock whenever appropriate, enabling us to generate energy whilst continuing the land's agricultural use.

Is there an increased risk of flooding around solar farm sites?
No – no more concrete surface is required and the majority of the solar farm remains open grassland, so the infrastructure on a solar farm does not affect runoff returns. The panels are raised on a framework which runs on pile-drivers legs, so less than 1% of the ground surface is actually disturbed.

Are solar farms noisy?
No – you would not expect to hear any noise at all beyond the site boundary.

How will the equipment be protected?
The solar farm would be enclosed by a timber and wire agricultural fence of about 2 metres in height, appropriate for its rural setting. No flood lighting is required.

Will construction cause disruption?
A traffic management plan would be put in place to avoid disruption, including ongoing all-peak daytime deliveries. An on-site manager would also be on hand to deal with any queries and avoid inconvenience. It would take about 1 month to install the solar farm, averaging about 5 deliveries per day.

OUR INITIAL THOUGHTS...

'Land at Trench Farm', Wrexham, LL13 0NA



The project would start in collaboration with a local farming business, with sheep continuing to graze on the grassland within the solar farm area, joining the land dual usage.

The fitting panel, canopy and support structure would be installed in the surrounding fields and not be affected by the solar farm.

The site has been chosen because it is very well contained. The fields are surrounded by thick vegetation and woodland – there would be no views into the solar farm from roads or residences.

The panels will reach a maximum height of 2.5 metres so are easily screened behind established hedgerows, but at the moment there are areas along the western boundary (beside the house) which are open or clearing – we plan to install any hedgerows and plant new trees along the field boundaries where needed to screen the farm from the house. This will also strengthen the network of wildlife corridors across the site and create new nesting and foraging habitats for birds.

Our planners and designers work with ecologists who make recommendations on the most appropriate biodiversity enhancements for the site. These enhancements are still underway. Please get in touch if you have any suggestions which we can feed in to our plans website.

All new planting will be funded underground so there will be no new overhead lines.

'Farming gates' in the fence will allow small mammals to move freely across the site undisturbed.

While field margins and gaps between the rows of panels mean that the majority of the solar farm's grasslands remain completely open and unenclosed.

How much energy?

- Generation capacity: **7.5 MWp**
- Capable of powering **2,000 households**
- 3,400 tonnes** of carbon emissions saved every year
- Equivalent to the annual emissions of **766 family cars**

To find out how we make our calculations, please visit our planning portal at www.lightsource-rs.co.uk

The operation of a solar farm is very passive and would be of no disturbance to farm animals, wildlife, equestrian or other activities nearby. Solar farms are not noisy – you would not expect to hear any noise from the site boundary. No flood lighting is planned, there are no moving parts, and as the solar panels are designed specifically to absorb daylight, an anti-reflective surface ensures any reflection of light is dull and minimal.

Location



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APPENDIX B – NEWSPAPER ADVERTISEMENT

COMMUNITY INFORMATION EVENING



Proposed Solar Farm Location:
Trench farm, Wrexham, LL13 0NA

Thursday 19th June 5:30pm - 8:00pm

Come and visit us at:

Overton Village Hall
Pen-y-Llan Street,
Overton-on-Dee,
Wrexham,

LL13 0EE



♥ *Get Involved!*

A solar farm does not only provide green energy... If you're a local biodiversity specialist, fencing expert, accommodation provider, wildlife enthusiast... Get involved with us and let's champion the local economy!

Information packs will be sent out in the area. If you haven't received one and would like to, please contact us:

T: 0333 200 0755

E: info@lightsource-re.co.uk

W: www.lightsource-re.co.uk



LIGHTSOURCE
RENEWABLE ENERGY LIMITED



Overton residents invited to discuss a potential solar farm with the UK's leading solar energy generator

Lightsource Renewable Energy, the UK's leading solar energy generator, is inviting residents to discuss proposals to install a solar farm at Trench Farm, on Red Hall Lane, Overton-on-Dee, Wrexham. Initial plans for the 7.5 Megawatt Peak (MWp) farm will be displayed at a Community Information Evening on Thursday 19th June, from 5.30pm to 8pm, at Overton Village Hall, on Pen-y-Llan Street, Overton-on-Dee, Wrexham.

Residents will have an opportunity to meet with the Lightsource team at the event to help shape the proposals before they are submitted to Wrexham County Borough Council. The initial designs have already been sent to local residents in the hope that they will provide ideas as the plans evolve, ensuring the project best fits with the activities and aspirations of the wider community.

The design and layout of the solar farm will allow all of the fields to maintain their agricultural use for grazing small livestock. The land currently houses a motocross track - this will now make way for a flock of sheep and an array of solar panels which can provide enough power for 2,000 homes. All other activities – caravan site, airstrip and fishing pond – around the site will be unaffected and will continue as normal. The passive nature of the solar development also means there are a number of biodiversity and wildlife enhancements that can be implemented on site. Other solar farms operated by Lightsource have established wild flower meadows, bird and bat boxes and log piles to enhance habitats. Lightsource planners are currently working with ecological consultants to establish the best enhancements for Trench Farm.

Conor McGuigan, Planning and Development Director at Lightsource, said: "Consultation with local residents is extremely important to us as part of our development process. Solar farms have a very small installation footprint and a typical development takes up less than 30 per cent of the allocated area, so there are plenty of opportunities for people to share ideas for putting the rest to good use as well. We understand that people may also have questions or concerns they would like to raise and we would welcome their input. It's a great chance for the surrounding community to communicate any ideas, so we can evolve the plans for Trench Farm with the help of their local knowledge."

Due to the numerous opportunities that this development will present to the local community, Lightsource is looking for the following regional expertise to get involved:-

- Local residents to provide input into the initial design and planning
- Wildlife enthusiasts – solar farms provide excellent opportunities to enhance biodiversity and support local initiatives
- Residents with local knowledge which will help inform the route of daytime deliveries whilst the solar farms are being installed
- Security personnel
- Civil roadways experts
- Storage and logistics businesses
- Fencing experts
- Accommodation & food and beverage providers
- Landscapers specialising in local/native species

The Trench Farm site is heavily screened by natural vegetation and woodland, so would not be visible from nearby roads or residences. Any areas of hedgerow along the perimeter that are thinning or missing will be enhanced with new planting, which will also serve to bolster wildlife habitats. Installation of the site would take up to two months, in which time traffic around the site will be kept to a minimum – averaging around six deliveries per day.

The operation of a solar farm is of no disturbance to farm animals, wildlife or other activities nearby. No flood lighting is needed and there are no moving parts. The solar panels, which reach a maximum height of 2.5m, are designed specifically to absorb daylight and have an anti-reflective surface ensures any reflection of light is minimal. At the end of a solar farm's working life, the installation can be pulled out of the soil and the entire area restored easily to 'green field' land.

Conor adds: "Part of the Trench Farm site has previously been used for a motocross track but this will be restored to flat grazing land. Our plans will make as little impact on the surroundings as possible and all other activities on and around the land can continue as before. The site will remain in operation for at least 25 years, so we want to work with the local community to ensure that we are the best neighbours that we can be. It is still early days for the proposals, which is why we are keen for local businesses, residents and wildlife enthusiasts to help shape these plans."

-ends-

Notes to editor/frequently asked questions:

How much energy will the solar farm produce?

The designs will evolve with the results of our assessments and community feedback. The statistics of the current designs are:

Land at Trench Farm, Wrexham, LL13 0NA

Generation Capacity: 7.5MWp

Capable of powering: 2,000 homes

Carbon emissions saved annually: 3,400 tonnes

Where does the electricity go?

Chris Buckland, Technical Director at Lightsource: "The energy generated by a solar farm enters the electricity grid at a local point of connection – usually the closest substation. It is then distributed by the local District Network Operator (DNO) and the National Grid. Local energy consumption take-off will consume some, if not the majority, of the energy generated. The influx of energy from the solar farm can be equated to a stream entering a lake which has multiple distributaries. The majority of the water from the stream will flow out of the lake again via the closest distributary. If this narrows, more of the water continues into the lake and onto the next closest exit point.

"Depending on the voltage level at which the generated energy is connected to the Grid, and where this is in the local distribution network, there may well be a voltage reinforcement or stabilisation of the line to which the power is connected. So local consumers might see any 'voltage drop' problems, such as dim lights, much improved whilst the solar farm is generating."

Why harvest energy instead of food?

It isn't a choice – solar farms can do both. The site at Trench Farm is being designed to accommodate sheep grazing, enabling the solar farm to produce energy whilst continuing the land's agricultural use.

Are solar farms irreversible development?

No - the panels are mounted on an aluminium framework with steel legs which are pile driven into the soil. At the end of our lease period (usually about 25-30 years) the installation will be dismantled and removed without harming the land.

Is solar power suited to the UK climate?

Yes - solar panels do not require direct sunlight to produce electricity, only daylight. So they still work well on cloudy days, and actually perform more efficiently in cooler temperatures.

How will the equipment be protected?

The solar farm would be enclosed by a timber and wire agricultural fence of about 2 metres in height, appropriate to its rural setting. This is positioned within the current field pattern and on the inside of any hedgerow planting. No flood lighting is required.

Are solar farms noisy?

No - you would not expect to hear any noise beyond the site boundary.

Is there a danger to motorists or aircraft as a result of reflection from the panels?

No - solar panels are designed to absorb light rather than reflect it. Lightsource has commissioned several 'glint and glare' assessments as part of our planning process, and it is generally accepted that solar farms are not dangerous to aircraft. In fact many airports, including London Gatwick, have solar installations on their premises.

What will the impact be on wildlife?

Solar farms have the potential to bring about significant increases in wildlife populations on agricultural land. They are essentially secure sites with little disturbance from humans or machinery once installation is complete. Additionally, we often plant new trees and hedgerows, and seed wild flowers and grasses, all of which enhance prospects for local wildlife. Take a look at our 'Walk on the Wild Side' case study to find out more.

Is there an impact on flood risk?

No - the posts on which the panels are mounted typically take up less than 1% of the land area, with the majority of the site being grassland.

Will the solar farm cause traffic disruption?

No - once the solar farm is in place it would require very little maintenance, with access only needed occasionally using regular cars, vans or 4x4s. This should cause no disruption at all. During installation, a Traffic Management Plan is followed to avoid peak times and unsafe routes as the equipment is being delivered.

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