



CLEVE HILL
SOLAR PARK

Cleve Hill Solar Park

Community Newsletter

March 2024

In this newsletter...

An update from the Cleve Hill Solar Park (CHSP) project team following the recent decision from Swale Borough Council regarding the Battery Safety Management Plan for the solar park.

Plus, the latest news on construction progress, ecology works, Public Rights of Way through the site, abnormal load deliveries of transformers and general construction traffic management.

Energy Storage

Energy storage is an integral part of the Cleve Hill project and was consented under the Development Consent Order.

On Wednesday 28th February Swale Borough Council's Planning Committee voted to refuse to discharge Cleve Hill Solar Park's proposed Battery Safety Management Plan (BSMP).

The BSMP was submitted to the Council to discharge Requirement 3, of the Cleve Hill Solar Park DCO (requirements are similar to local planning conditions).

This plan sets out how the solar park team will manage the safety of the energy storage element of the solar park during its lifespan. This includes the construction, operational, and decommissioning stages.

Permission for energy storage at Cleve Hill Solar Park was granted by Development Consent Order (DCO) in May 2020. It is a key element of the project's contribution to decarbonising the UK's electricity grid.

Cleve Hill Solar Park developed the Battery Safety Management Plan through industry expertise and engagement with local stakeholders.

Our work to ensure the plans are robust and thorough was recognised by the planning officers at Swale Borough Council who recommended that the plans should be approved.

We are grateful for the engagement with statutory consultee the Kent Fire and Rescue Service, who agreed the mitigation measures set out within the BSMP.

Following requests from the local community Swale Borough Council appointed an independent battery storage expert, Battery Safety and Testing Consulting (BST&T) to review the plans on their behalf. BST&T concluded that the BSMP would deliver battery storage in accordance with all applicable safety legislation and guidance.

The BSMP is a framework for the management of safety. CHSP intends to appeal the decision, and the appeal is expected to be heard in the coming months.

Our team will continue to work with relevant stakeholders to ensure a comprehensive safety plan is in place to accompany this important part of the solar park.

We intend to hold a number of events this summer to allow the community to understand the facts behind the information within the plan.

Construction Update

The construction of the electrical compound has made significant progress in recent weeks.

The first three of six 33kv/400kv transformers are now in place along with the harmonic filter. This equipment helps to regulate the flow of power to the National Grid.

We are currently fitting out the high voltage switch room with equipment to ensure the protection and safe operation of the electricity supply from the solar park, reducing any interruption.

The final section of the protective bund surrounding the electrical compound is complete and secure, including the flood gate. This area was previously left open for contractors to access construction areas within the compound.

We are using test solar tables as training examples for the ongoing construction of the solar panels. The panel construction is underway along with foundations for 33kv substations and continuing screw piling works for the solar panel support structures.



Harmonic filter in electrical compound.

Security Lighting

Following comments and enquiries received from local residents, green lights have been removed at the site of the solar park, reducing the amount of light emitted. The only lights remaining are for security purposes – they are cowed and face northwards away from residential areas where possible. The team is exploring how any remaining light impact can be mitigated even further.

Traffic Management

A variety of traffic-related topics are raised at the ongoing fortnightly meetings of the Traffic Management Group (TMG). We really appreciate the feedback that we receive regarding traffic management, and we are now able to track every HGV moving from the marshalling compound to the site, allowing for greater accuracy in our tracking.

We look into any issues raised and ensure that any potential infringements of the agreed Construction Traffic Management Plan are dealt with appropriately. This includes a yellow and red card system, whereby drivers receive a warning and then a ban from the project if they make a second infringement.

The team engages regularly with Kent Highways framework contractor Amey, to review any potholes, verge damage and signage issues for repair. This monitoring is ongoing and reported back to the TMG meetings.



Electrical compound photographed from above.



Protective bund surrounding electrical compound and flood gate.



Switch room (green building) and transformers.

Abnormal Load Deliveries

There are six 76-tonne transformers headed for the site that constitute the only abnormal load deliveries part of the project. The first abnormal load deliveries to site arrived via Monkshill Road and Seasalter Road on Wednesday 7 and Sunday 11 February, followed by three further deliveries on Wednesday 6 March, Thursday 14 March and Wednesday 27 March. The route has been used in order to avoid the railway bridge on Seasalter Road, following discussions with Network Rail. The first abnormal load deliveries completed the journey quickly taking less than 25 minutes to travel along Monkshill Road, helping to minimise the impact for local residents and businesses.

The project team have employed Collett, a leading haulage company specialising in abnormal loads. Careful planning includes the use of several marshals along the route who are available to assist the public and advise which route to take to safely exit the area.

A rolling roadblock system minimises the localised disruption that could be caused by a full road closure.

Arrangements for these deliveries have been in progress over a period of months and have been discussed at the Traffic Management Group meetings.

The final transformer delivery is scheduled for Friday 5th April.

The aim is for the transport to travel through Monkshill Road and Seasalter Road between 9.30am and midday. External factors, including the fact that the abnormal load requires a police escort for part of its journey from Staffordshire, can impact the precise timing.

Ecology Update

Over the 2023/24 winter period, the full-time Ecological Clerks of Works have continued to attend site daily, overseeing activities such as further licenced water vole mitigation and advising on general measures to reduce construction impacts as set out in the Construction Environmental Management Plan.

We are regularly monitoring the establishment of key habitats in the east of the site. These areas host a number of the key overwintering bird species they were designed to attract, such as lapwing, brent goose and golden plover. Marsh harrier has also continued to be recorded across the site.

Phase 2 Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) works will shortly be underway to connect the scrapes and swales already completed in Phase 1 to the internal drainage ditches. This will allow seasonal flooding and create a new wetland area as part of the Land and Biodiversity Management Plan.

The project team met with the Habitat Management Steering Group (Natural England, Kent Wildlife Trust, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Environment Agency) in mid-February 2024 to provide an update on construction activities and discuss the effectiveness of the habitats established to date. These meetings are set to continue throughout the year.



Contact Us:

If you would like to be kept updated via email, please get in touch with the project team via the communication channels below:



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