



Community Project Liaison Group (PLG) meeting: 2-4pm, Thursday 20 November 2014

MINUTES

1. Introductions

Chair – Paula Seager, Natural PR
Secretary – Katherine Elton, Natural PR

Chris Tomlinson – E.ON

David Hodgkin – Henfield Parish Council
Cllr Alan Sargent – Peacehaven Community Council
Chris Whitton – Shermanbury Parish Council

2. Rampion Project Update re: final project design and construction plans

(questions were taken from the floor during the presentation)

Chris Tomlinson gave attendees an illustrated presentation of the Rampion Offshore Wind Farm final design. The presentation and new design slides can be downloaded from the link on the cover email.

The presentation recapped the project stages and original scope of the Rampion project. Chris gave an overview of the project's progress since the group last met in April 2013 and a timeframe for construction works.

Cllr Sargent asked if the scaled down project would still make money and asked if there was any financial reason why it might not go ahead. Chris Tomlinson replied that the project would go ahead subject to the sign off of the final investment funds, which was due to take place in March. He added that E.ON had invested millions of pounds towards geotechnical investigations into the wind farm, which had informed the final design to reduce engineering risk and the associated costs.

E.ON is planning to hold information events in locations near the cable route prior to construction. The events will most likely be held at Brooklands, Steyning and Henfield.

Technical issues:

Cllr Sargent asked Chris Tomlinson to confirm that the turbines were smaller than previously discussed. Chris confirmed that, due to geotechnical considerations, the turbines would be 140m instead of a potential 210m.

Chris Whitton noted that the wind farm would offset 2 tonnes of CO₂ per household.

Cllr Sargent asked if the team had located many shipwrecks during their investigations. Chris said a number of wrecks had been located and construction would take place away from these areas.

David Hodgkin asked if the plan was 'future proofed' with the reduction of the number of cables from four to two. Chris said the plan represented E.ON's final decision and that any additions would result in a whole new development consent being required with the associated consultation and environmental statement. He said 'future proofing' the cable route would be costly, bearing in mind its 27km length and this would add millions onto the cost of the project.

Construction:

Chris Tomlinson informed members that during the two-year onshore construction timeframe, most of the construction would take place in year one with year two involving rigorous testing, which would not generate significant noise or traffic.

With regard to the possibility of using a trencher along the cable route, David Hodgkin asked if that may destroy any possible archaeological finds within the construction area. Chris Tomlinson said sensitive areas have been identified through desk research and trial pits along the cable route, which are included in the construction plan.

Chris Whitton said utilising the trencher may cause less of an issue than it may do with the construction of a conventional building as it would cut across a narrower area of the site. Chris Tomlinson added that for those with an interest in archaeology, an open day would coincide with the dig at Tottington Mount.

Chris Whitton asked how the lead contractors would be managed. Chris confirmed that there would be around 14 lead contractors. They would be contracted to E.ON for the duration of the project and would subcontract various works to support delivery of their contracts.

Chris asked if the cable would produce heat. Chris replied that it was 1.6 metres underground and encased in robust insulation and armouring and ducts, and that crops could be grown above it.

David asked when the first turbines would start generating electricity. Chris Tomlinson replied that they would start generating electricity during the testing period in 2017. He said the electricity would still go to the National Grid. At this stage it would be monitored and tested to ensure the project was operating successfully.

David also asked if E.ON would be monitoring electro magnetic fields. Chris Tomlinson said that wind farms were not new schemes and the cable would be buried at depth and encased in robust insulation and armouring, in addition to the earth itself being a good insulator. He added that pylons carried electricity above ground without casing. Chris Whitton added that the northern end of the cable route was away from people's properties. Chris Tomlinson said E.ON had deliberately avoided domestic curtilage.

Community benefits:

Chris Tomlinson said E.ON was committed to establishing a fund to benefit the community living around the substation and this would be announced in April. He said the project(s) supported by the fund would be the community's choice and but would have some high level criteria, e.g. for the benefit of the broad community, not individuals, while not compromising the integrity or reputation of E.ON and/or the Rampion project. He said the community would also have to run a consultation process to ensure community support for the project(s).

The community benefit fund and Visitor Centre for the Rampion Offshore Wind Farm, a voluntary capital project, went 'above and beyond' what was required from E.ON. There would be no competitive bid process but authorities were free to suggest locations where the Visitor Centre might be located, based on criteria including high foot fall and a view of the wind farm.

Cllr Sargent asked if the project would require a viewing tower. Chris Tomlinson replied that this was not required, but E.ON was looking at providing screens, telescopes, displays on how electricity was generated plus potentially underwater video footage.

Cllr Sargent said he would be interested in hearing more about jobs which would be generated in Newhaven so he could pass this information onto Peacehaven residents. Chris highlighted that there would be up to 300 jobs involved in the offshore construction with around 40 of these based at the Project Management Facility in Newhaven and 65 full time permanent jobs at the operations base in Newhaven once operational.

3. Next steps for the Community PLG

Paula Seager said a further update on the project was likely to take place in April. PLG members agreed it was a useful forum, which allowed them to convey information back to their organisations.

Chris Tomlinson said the next meeting would provide further updates on community benefits and the Visitor Centre as well as the detailed timetable for construction work.

It was agreed that the group's role was now to convey information rather than consultation and members agreed that the Community PLG could merge with the Business & Tourism PLG to create a wider group with similar interests.

