

Katherine Doughty

From: James Hartley-Bond <James.Hartley-Bond@lowcarbon.com>
Sent: 18 November 2019 18:29
To: gordon.beach@eynsham-pc.gov.uk; epc.clerk@eynsham-pc.gov.uk
Subject: Proposed Solar Farm: - Twelve Acre Farm, Eynsham (Application reference: 19/02516/FUL).

Dear Mr Beach

I wanted to drop you line personally, as Low Carbon's representative overseeing the planning element of the proposed solar farm at Twelve Acre Farm, Eynsham (Application reference: 19/02516/FUL).

As you may be aware, in addition to meeting with your Parish Council we have also met with South Leigh Parish Council, members of GreenTEA, and the Low Carbon Hub to discuss various aspects of the project. Questions have been raised with us in those meetings (and/or in correspondence following those meetings) about direct financial contributions from the project into the community.

Low Carbon believes that the community should see a benefit from the project however that must be weighed up with maintaining the financial viability of the project. In an unsubsidised environment, routes to market for the electricity generated are typically obtained through auction processes creating pressure to reduce costs across the board.

With that in mind, we have been having discussions with the Low Carbon Hub about the possibility of them acquiring the project in the future through their existing community energy investment vehicle. We are working with the Low Carbon Hub as we believe that they have the necessary expertise to work through a transaction such as this. It is anticipated that if this was to move ahead, members of the community could invest into the project and become an owner of it if they wished. Any excess profit that is generated over its lifetime would then be invested back into the wider community.

In an unsubsidised environment it is still unknown whether a transaction such as this will be workable while ensuring that the project economics remain robust so that the project ultimately moves from being a development to an operational project.

A part of those discussions have therefore been focussing on a 'fall back' option should our discussions with the Low Carbon Hub not eventuate in community ownership of the scheme. That fall back will be a community funding agreement that contains a direct financial contribution from the project. We anticipate that we will enter a unilateral undertaking into the planning process that underpins this commitment. Note that there is time pressure on this and numerous parties that will have input into that community funding agreement therefore there is a possibility that the unilateral undertaking may not be ready prior to planning determination. From our perspective that does not matter as it is our intention to enter into the community funding agreement as a fall back option irrespective of whether it is obliged by a unilateral undertaking or not – however we are aware that the nature of a unilateral undertaking provides comfort and security to the beneficiaries of that community funding agreement.

We have had broad discussions with GreenTEA and the Low Carbon Hub about the contents of that community funding agreement however the detail of this has not yet been worked through. We anticipate receiving a draft agreement from our solicitors in the coming days and that will act as the prompt for working through the details.

If you wish to have more details please feel free to contact me directly. Alternatively I will provide you with a further update as we work through the details.

Kind regards

James

James Hartley-Bond

Project Management Consultant

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