

**Minutes of Meeting.**

<b>Meeting title</b>	Substation Community Liaison Group
<b>Location</b>	Tonic 44 Community Hub, Surfleet
<b>Date/ time</b>	Wednesday 3 July 2024 7pm – 9pm
<b>Originator</b>	ODOW
<b>Attendees</b>	<p>Andrew Acum – ODOW – AA  Roisin Alldis – ODOW – RA  Sophie Brown – ODOW - SB  Chris Jenner – ODOW – CJ  Gemma Kitson – ODOW - GK  Jon Ongley – ODOW - JO</p> <p>Cllr Chris Astill – Kirton Parish Council – CA  Cllr David Brown – Boston Borough Council – DB  Cllr James Cantwell - Boston Borough Council / Sutterton PC – JC  Sam Dewar (via Teams) - Boston Borough Council – SD  Kevin Gillespie (via Teams) - Lincolnshire County Council – KGi  Cllr Kerry Gratton – Fosdyke Parish Council – KG  Cllr Alan Mowton – Fosdyke PC / Landowner - AM  Cllr Ian Pennington – Weston PC / Landowner - IP  Jenny Pennington JP  Andy Robbins (via Teams) – DRP – AR  Cllr Elizabeth Sneath – Lincolnshire County Council / South Holland District Council - ES</p>
<b>Apologies</b>	None
<b>Purpose of meeting</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To involve key local stakeholders in the design and development of the Outer Dowsing Offshore Wind project (landfall, onshore cable route and substation) through presentations, discussions and planned workshop activities.</li> <li>2. To act as a two-way communication channel between local communities and the project team.</li> <li>3. To help foster local involvement and ownership of the project.</li> </ol>

**1. Chair's welcome, terms of reference and introductions**

CJ opened the meeting and attendees introduced themselves.

IP and JP identified themselves as having commercial interests as landowners.

The group was reminded of the terms of reference.

The minutes of the last meeting were already approved and posted on the website.

## 2. Project Update

### Project Timeline:

The 25,000-page application has been accepted and the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) will pull issue a timetable for the hearings in August. The project anticipates a consent decision by summer 2025. Subject to a consent decision from the Secretary of State, there will be a period to discharge any conditions prior to construction starting from 2027. Construction will last approximately 3 years and it is anticipated that the project will start to generate power in 2030.

### DCO Examination Process:

The Relevant Representation period has now closed and representations are available to view on the PINS website. A total of 95 representations were received including one from Fosdyke Parish council and one from Well Parish Meeting. A number of representations were submitted by landowners.

The next stage will include a Preliminary Meeting where the examination panel will commence the 6-month Examination process. The hearings are expected to take place between October 2024 and March 2025.

The full examination process will take around six months with issue-specific hearings taking place over this period. The five inspectors will inspect the application and focus on areas of interest and to reflect the representations that have been received. There will then be hearings on specialist subjects.

The inspectors will then have three months to write a report recommending approval or refusal and this will be sent to the Secretary of State who then has three further months to make a decision.

Landowners in the area will receive a 'Rule 8' letter from the Planning Inspectorate detailing the examination process and this may generate some queries to local councillors.

	<p>Residents can sign up for project updates on the PINS website which will provide notification of key milestones such as when the Rule 8 letters are being sent out.</p> <p>CA asked if it was possible to visit the substation site. CJ said that during the examination there would be a site visit for the Inspectors and it may be possible to do something similar for other representatives.</p> <p><b>Action: CJ to explore options for site visit for CLG members.</b></p>
<b>3.</b>	<p><b>Survey Activity</b></p> <p>Further survey work is being undertaken across the project area. This included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Offshore geophysical surveys from July until later this year.</li><li>• Onshore geophysical site investigations – in fields – these were completed in June.</li></ul>

- Onshore geotechnical boreholes and trial pits were completed in May. These will allow the engineers to have a better understanding of the subsurface geology for HDD and the substation work.
- Nearshore geotechnical seabed survey off the coast from Anderby Creek is due for completion by the end of July and a jack-up barge will be visible from the beach. At the closest point, it will be 500m from the shore. It is being undertaken during the summer for weather, speed and safety reasons. It will give the engineers an idea of what they will be drilling through and help them design an optimal route. Workers will be ferried in and out from Skegness Yacht Club.
- Onshore Archaeology trial trench excavation in fields along the route would take place between July-October (est.). This will involve trenches 30-50m in length at locations identified by the geophysical surveys.

AM asked how large the ORCP structure would be. CJ said it would be slightly smaller than the offshore substation platform on the Lincs wind farm. DB asked if it would be possible to land a helicopter on it. JO said there was no intention to put a helideck on it, but it would be big enough to accommodate one.

AM asked how deep the geophysical survey could penetrate and if it had found anything. CJ said that it generally detects anomalies (non-intrusive technique) 2-3m depending on the soil conditions, but it can pick up incredibly fine anomalies. Most surveys find something such as old field boundaries, ditches, buildings, etc, but it is up to the archaeologists to assess relevance. There will be around 200 trenches dug along the cable route starting at the end of July through to October this year. The county archaeologist is consulted to agree the location of the trenches. These are typically 30m long and the width of a JCB bucket. There will be comprehensive soil management procedures in place and the work will be monitored by the County archaeologist.

IP asked what depth the trial trenches would be. CJ said that it would depend on the soil structure in the area, but generally around 1m.

IP asked if there would be trenches on his land. CJ said that Dalcour MacLaren would be in touch with landowners there were any trenches planned on their land. RA said that affected landowners had already been contacted so if he hadn't heard anything, then they would not be digging on his land.

JC asked if it would be possible to involve schools with the archaeology work. RA said that Jan Allen (County archaeologist) is keen on this and the team is currently discussing what could be facilitated.

#### 4. **Outer Dowsing in the community**

##### Young Engineers

The ODOW team will attend the Future Fest careers event in Boston to encourage students to consider a career in offshore wind. This is in addition to a previous event at John Spendluffe College that the team attended.

The team aims to continue to engage young people in the area to promote STEM skills and is exploring the possibility of purchasing learning equipment to do work with primary schools.

##### Lincolnshire Show

Outer Dowsing was proud to sponsor the show this year for the first time. As one of Lincolnshire's flagship events it was important that we were able to show support for the Lincolnshire Agricultural Society and all that they do to celebrate and support rural Lincolnshire. It also provided a good opportunity to answer questions about the project to interested parties such as landowners and primary schools.

##### Community benefit fund

The formal CBF will launch in 2027 when the project reaches financial close.

Ahead of the Community Benefit Fund (CBF), the project is exploring options to support a small number of projects in line with our themes. Most projects proposed so far were more aligned with the CBF. Therefore, ahead of the CBF launch the project will likely focus on developing STEM and Nature Positive related activities such as outdoor learning with local schools, planting/bio-diversity projects and wind workshops.

## 5. Design Review Process

### Design Review Process

AR said that his organisation works nationally looking at a variety of schemes. The National Planning Policy Framework encourages assessment by a Design Review Panel (DRP) which acts as a critical friend, providing advice and work alongside the development team. The panel is made up of a range of built environment professionals including architects, landscape architects, ecologists, energy professionals and town planners based all over the country. The ODOW DRP comprises AR as a town planner, plus two architects and two landscape architects.

CJ said the LPAs, County Council, IDBs and the EA were also invited to take part, alongside the ODOW team.

### Onshore Substation

IP asked if maps were available on the website. CJ said that the best place to find the maps was the PINS website and he would supply the address

**Action: CJ to provide IP with PINS address - <https://national-infrastructure-consenting.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/EN010130>**

IP asked what distance would be needed for a cable to go round a bend. JO said it would need a radius of around 60-100m to make a 90° turn.

JC asked how the project could guarantee that the cable was buried deep enough. CJ said that all land agreements state the minimum buried depth subject to other constraints, but typically the target depth is 1.2m.

IP asked if it was possible to have a meeting with DW to discuss concerns about cable depth.

**Action: DW to contact IP**

CJ said that it was in the Project's interest to protect its assets and the design would include ducts, protection tiles and sufficient depth to mitigate any risk.

CA asked how the minimum depth would be affected by undulating land. CJ said that the minimum depth was 1.2m



below surface level. JO said that they would maintain minimum depth even allowing for localised changes.

IP said that he was double cropping and ploughing his land which was different to installing underneath grassland. CJ said that the standard depth was 0.9m but the project had committed to 1.2m minimum depth recognising the unique agricultural nature of the area.

RA explained that a GIS substation is gas insulated and an AIS substation is air insulated. The visualisation shown previously were based on both options. CJ explained that the Project would seek consent for both types to give more options/greater flexibility for procurement. The landscaping designs should the worst-case scenario including both the GIS height with the AIS footprint.

IP asked how many hectares the substation would require. RA said that it would be 14.5 ha for AIS and 7.3ha for GIS. Since the last meeting the team had looked at variations in colour and roof types, considering summer and winter colours in the area and cumulative visualisations. Pitched roofs more closely resemble farm buildings in the area.

RA then ran through the visualisations showing different colour options and viewpoints.

IP asked if they had looked at graduated colour. RA said that this would be looked at as a result of feedback.

#### Planting for the substation

RA said that the DCO application included the maximum extent of planting that may be required but as a result of the DRP and CLG feedback, they have also looked at reduced levels of planting that may be more in keeping with the nature of the area. The recommendation for the GIS was to maintain the level of planting due to the height, with some refinements in certain areas. From an AIS perspective, there was the possibility of removing some of the bands of planting.

IP said he agreed with some screening but the proposal included 50 acres of screening around a 35-acre site. He said this would just encourage pigeons which would cause damage to crops.

CA said there was a difference between being in a wheat belt and a vegetable belt.

IP said that 17,000 acres would be required for all the projects proposed in Lincolnshire and there needed to be a balance. CJ said that the permanent land take of the Project footprint was limited to between 7-15 ha.

AM asked how much land would be temporarily taken out of production from landfall to the substation. CJ said he didn't know the exact figure including temporary land but would get back to him.

**Action: CJ to supply total land take figure.**

CA said that Viking Link has done a good job of reinstatement and it was not possible to tell where they had been. IP said that visually it was not possible to tell, but if you were growing crops on it, it would take 10 years to recover, and gas pipelines were even worse. CJ said that underground utility installation has come a long way in the last 40-50 years in terms of soil management and reinstatement. The team has been looking very closely at what Viking Link and Triton Knoll had done to learn from them – both what they had done well and to see what the project could do better.

AM said that the heat from the cables could change the microbiology of the soil. CJ said that this was something that the project was looking into.

JC said there were seven projects coming through his ward. He felt that mitigation on seven projects would wipe out a lot of farming and the landscape planting could encourage vermin.

DRP Feedback

AR said that the debate was interesting and the panel appreciated being involved at an early stage where they could make a difference. Due to the early stage, the views of the panel were relatively high level. If the objective was to choose a site and then design mitigation that would hide the site, then the work done was very strong. There was a lot of good analysis of the site and local landscape character. From the site visit they could see that there are actually very few public viewpoints, and the mitigation proposals would mitigate the visual impact. However, whilst

this would work, the panel questioned whether this was the correct approach. There was an assumption that the buildings and elements that make up the substation were inherently unattractive and should be hidden. The panel felt that a functional building does not need to be unattractive and therefore hidden. There was a strong history of things like water towers and power stations that had become powerful pieces of architecture in their own right. The panel's advice was to bring on board some architectural expertise to explore whether there may be a different way of doing it. The other way of doing it may be to create something which doesn't necessarily need to be hidden – it could be creating something striking architecturally but could also be striking in terms of landscape architecture. There was a concern that ideas based around tree belts quite close to visual receptors are not characteristic of the area which is typified by thin, broken up woodland.

Existing large agricultural buildings are not hidden. Mitigation often draws attention to, rather than screen a development. The panel was not promoting an alternative idea, but to explore all options. The project could make use of other locally characteristic features such as berms and dykes. The green energy revolution is creating the need for a whole new set of structures and all involved should think about the impacts on valued traditional landscapes. The panel would like the team to take a step back from the approach of screening the substation and explore different ideas.

IP said he felt this was a sensible approach and would like to meet AR if he was in the area.

ES said she agreed. She said she was born in Lincolnshire and the fens are not traditionally a forested area. She said she now feels more comfortable if the project is looking at building something more attractive with less screening. She also said that she sits on Surfleet Parish Council and wondered why there were no other Surfleet councillors present. IP said that they have never attended. ES said she would follow this up. CJ confirmed invitations had been issued.

KGi said that his company was involved in a lot of the Lincolnshire projects and you can't blanket the landscape with hedgerows and tress as this is not in keeping with the

landscape. There is room for mitigation, but it needs to be placed well and he agreed that buildings don't need to be unsightly. Agricultural buildings that were not to everyone's taste when they were built can later become part of the landscape.

SD said that they had involved a landscape consultant involved and looked at secondary planting so that the planting area doesn't have to be as big.

IP said that trees are easy to plant. His parish council were given three trees to plant 20 years but now they were overhanging the church and it cost £3500 to remove them. CJ said that tree maintenance is covered as part of the Project ongoing commitment to maintenance.

JC said that if there were fewer trees, then they would need to be strong trees due to the high winds. Even 30-year-old trees have come down in recent months.

IP asked if the details about the substation. JO mentioned that generally components are earthed.

AR commended ODOW on their consultation and engagement, and that it was clear to him that ODOW were trying to do the right thing. He said it felt almost apologetic to hide the substation when it is a scheme that is so exciting and will do fantastic things.

CJ said that DRP feedback would feed into the examination process. The LPAs have identified visual impact as a key feature and the Inspectors will draw upon those comments to structure the hearings around these themes, so this conversation will be continued with the Inspectors.

#### Cumulative Impacts

RA ran through the cumulative impacts visualisations. CJ explained that the National Grid element is still fairly high level as the project doesn't have details of what their scheme will look like.

GK said people on the footpath would see both the ODOW and NG projects and this was the rationale for some of the mitigation planting so that people would not be seeing a lot of energy infrastructure.

	<p>IP said it didn't help people trying to make a living off the land when the planting was taking up farmland and encouraging wildlife just to benefit a few people walking their dogs on a Sunday afternoon. CJ said it was about finding a balance that replicated the existing character.</p> <p>CA asked how the project compared with a solar farm in terms of land requirements and power output. CJ said that ODOW was a 1.5GW (1500MW) project and he didn't know any solar farm with that capacity. The largest solar projects tended to be 200-300MW.</p>
	<p><b>6. AOB</b> None.</p>
	<p><b>7. Chair's closing remarks and next steps / next meeting</b></p> <p>The next CLG is expected to be in the late Autumn but the ODOW team will be in touch with details nearer the date.</p>

<b>Meeting Protocol</b>	
Distribute agenda before meeting	Fix responsibilities for each item
Start on time	Finish on time
Set out your ground rules	Publish minutes / actions
Stick to the agenda	Continuous improvement