

MINUTES OF THE PLANNING MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 10th February 2025
at 7.00pm AT THE CLAYTAWC CENTRE.

Present: Cllr Clarke (Chair), Cllr James, Cllr J Griffin.

Attendance: Lynn Clarke Clerk / RFO, Tamsyn Moore, Senior Administrator, Cornwall Cllr Dick Cole (CC Cole), five members of the public and 3 representatives from Statkraft.

P14/24 Apologies

Cllr A Griffin. Apologies accepted. Cllr Hawkins absent.

P15/24 Declarations of Interest.

The Clerk declared an interest in application PA24/09234 as a resident of the area that is covered by the planning application.

The Chair reminded those present that if any other matter arises during the meeting, advice should be sought from the Clerk and the Chair before continuing.

P16/24 Public Participation

Presentation from Statkraft on Planning Application PA24/09234 – Land Adjacent to Trerice Manor Farm – Proposed Solar Farm and Battery Storage (BESS).

Representatives from Statkraft provided a presentation, beginning with an overview of the company and its operations. They emphasised the company's motto: "Renew the way the world is powered."

Attendees were shown a list of considerations taken into account for the proposed site, with Statkraft explaining that an extensive assessment had been conducted to identify and work within the site's constraints.

The proposal involves the establishment of a 32-megawatt ground-mounted solar system, including an associated battery storage unit. Statkraft anticipates the project will be operational between 2027 and 2028, with a lifespan of 40 years, after which the site will be decommissioned and returned to pasture.

Community Engagement and Site Adjustments

Statkraft has held two community engagement events and incorporated feedback into the current design. Notable adjustments include:

- A reduction of the site area by 1.2 hectares.
- Increased buffer zones for affected properties.
- Additional landscaping, with 17% of the area dedicated to trees, scrub, and wildflower areas.
- Installation of a permissive path with two recreational areas, aiming to connect with existing footpaths and provide safer alternatives to road walking.

To mitigate visual impact, Statkraft plans to protect higher points of the scheme with buffer zones and landscaping. The area will be enhanced with additional trees and wildflower meadows to minimise visibility from the nearby church. The scrub areas outlined within the plans will be planted with native species. The battery storage facility will also be enhanced with the planting of

additional trees and wild flowers to integrate the Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) into the landscape.

Environmental Considerations

Statkraft emphasised their commitment to ecology, aiming for a 24% biodiversity net gain. Measures include:

- Protecting existing Public Rights of Way.
- Adding 1.3 km of new permissive paths.
- Utilising only grade 3A and 3B land, avoiding higher-quality agricultural land.
- Allowing sheep grazing under the panels and maintaining grass production for hay.

Alternative site assessments were conducted, and other potential locations were ruled out for various reasons. The selected site comprises 50% grade 3A land, with the remainder being grade 3B and scrub land. The project aims to preserve agricultural use throughout its operational lifespan, ensuring that the land remains productive. Additionally, it was reiterated that the solar panels and associated infrastructure will be removed upon decommissioning.

Drainage solutions for the BESS site will include geo-cellular soakaways to reduce groundwater and flood risks.

Traffic and Construction Management

- Construction traffic will access the site directly from the A30, with an estimated 12 deliveries per day outside peak hours.
- A Construction Traffic Management Plan will be in place.

Addressing Previous Concerns

1. **North-facing panels** – The panel angles have been adjusted to optimize efficiency.
2. **Dust from nearby industries** – Panels will be regularly cleaned with water.
3. **Toxicity of panels** – Proposed panels are 99% recyclable, with only the glue being non-recyclable.
4. **Site security** – The site will have deer fencing, metal gates, CCTV coverage, and mobile security devices if necessary.
5. **Community Benefit Fund** – Linked to the project, providing an estimated base of £400 per megawatt per year, indexed to inflation. Funds will be available for local sustainable and ecological projects.

Question and Answer Session

- **Alternative Site Assessment:** Concerns were raised that alternative sites were ruled out primarily for financial reasons rather than seeking non-agricultural land.
- **Local Benefits:** Residents expressed concerns about the lack of direct local benefits, such as reduced electricity costs, despite the community benefit fund.
- **Impact on Adjacent Properties:** Additional buffer zones and intensive planting are planned for affected properties.

- **Site Access and Safety:** Traffic concerns included access onto a fast road, debris from construction, and visibility. Statkraft indicated that traffic lights could be used to mitigate risks, and hard surfaces would be installed at the entrance.
- **Panel Cleaning Frequency:** A regular cleaning schedule will be implemented, with robotic cleaning available if necessary.
- **Toxic Runoff:** Statkraft assured that modern solar panels do not pose a toxicity risk.
- **Decommissioning Plans:** Infrastructure, including underground cables, will be removed, with no concrete used in the solar panel foundations.
- **Galvanized Metal Concerns:** The potential for metal leaching was raised and noted for further consideration.
- **Permissive Paths and Security:** Concerns included dog fouling, litter, illegal motorbike use, and antisocial behaviour. Statkraft confirmed that site operators would be responsible for maintenance and security.
- **Flood Risk:** Residents reported increased flooding in recent years. Statkraft plans to use deep ditches, swales, and additional tree planting to absorb runoff. Ditches and swales will be inspected every 3-6 months.
- **Company Structure:** Cllr. Cole inquired about Trerice Solar Farm Ltd and its position within Statkraft. The representatives explained that each project is registered separately but remains under Statkraft's ownership and management.
- **Community Benefit Fund Documentation:** Cllr. Cole suggested that documents outlining the fund's management should be made available alongside the planning application.
- **Site Selection Justification:** Concerns were raised about the cumulative impact of renewable energy projects on agricultural land in the parish. Statkraft stated that the proposed project would account for just 0.04% of Cornwall's land area.
- **Alternative Renewable Energy Options:** Cllr. Clarke questioned why Statkraft had not proposed wind turbines. Statkraft explained that current government policies favour solar projects over onshore wind farms.
- **Flooding at Trerice Terrace:** Cllr. Clarke highlighted recent severe flooding, which had made roads impassable. Statkraft reiterated their mitigation measures, including specialised grass to improve water absorption.
- **Agricultural Land Use:** Concerns were raised about the loss of agricultural land. Statkraft emphasized that grazing would continue, additionally informing that only 0.02% of UK farmland is currently used for solar.
- **Drainage Concerns:** Residents questioned where excess water from drainage channels would go. Statkraft stated that natural absorption, tree planting, and regular ditch maintenance would manage runoff effectively.
- **Maintenance of Buffer Zones:** Statkraft confirmed that hedges would be mechanically maintained within buffer zones.
- **Project Naming:** Cllr. Clarke thanked Statkraft for renaming the project to Trerice Solar Farm to better reflect the local area.

Conclusion

The public participation section concluded with representatives being thanked for their attendance and the presentation provided.

P17/24 To adopt the minutes of the Planning Meeting held on the 16th January 2025.
Resolved to adopt the minutes as presented. All present in favour.

P18/24 To ratify decisions made via email:

None

P19/24 Updates on previous applications discussed.

None

P20/24 Matters arising

None

P21/24 Planning applications received –

[PA24/09234](#) Land adjacent to Trerice Manor Farm, Trerice, St Dennis, St Austell, Cornwall. Construction, operation, and decommissioning of a ground mounted solar array and battery energy storage system (BESS), associated equipment such as converters, transformer stations, substations, fencing, CCTV, weather monitoring stations, cabling and landscape and biodiversity enhancements.

It was **Resolved** to object to this application for the following reasons:

Environmental and landscape impact.

- Visual impact and harm to landscape character.
- Loss of green space and open countryside.
- Harm to existing trees and hedgerows.

Agricultural Land and Rural Economy.

- Permanent loss of agricultural land.
- Conflict with Cornwall's Rural economy strategy.

Overdevelopment cumulative impact

- Over industrialisation of a rural area.
- Precedent for further solar farms or extensions to this project.

Highways and transport concerns

- Road Safety risks from increased traffic.
- Unsuitable site access.

Noise & disturbance, amenity impact.

- Construction noise and disturbance.
- Operational noise from battery storage units (BESS).

Drainage, flooding and water management.

- Risk of increased flooding.
- Disruption to natural drainage patterns.

Public Rights of way and amenity impact

- Interference with footpaths.
- Security concerns along permissive paths.

Lack of clear decommissioning plan.

- Long term uncertainty about restoration.
- Concerns about leftover infrastructure.

Lack of meaningful Local Benefit.

- No confirmed plan to provide direct benefit to local residents.
- No Guaranteed local employment opportunities.

Potential Contamination Risks from Bess units.

- Risk of fire and chemical leaks from battery storage.

Impact on wildlife and protected species

- Loss and fragmentation of wildlife habitats.
- Security fencing and barrier to wildlife movement.
- Inadequate wildlife mitigation measures.

Impact on Archaeological and historic assets

- Potential loss of archaeological features.
- Failure to adequately protect historic field boundaries.

- Uncertainty about the full extent of archaeological features.
- Potential setting impact on nearby listed buildings.

Standing Order 3e

That in view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted, it is advisable in the public interest that the press and public be temporarily excluded, and they are requested to withdraw.

There being no other business to be transacted the Chair closed the meeting at 8.40pm.

Signed.....

Chair of Planning

Date