

Fosse Green – Community Liaison Group

28 April 2025



Overview

On 28 April, Fosse Green Energy (FGE) held its first project Community Liaison Group (CLG) at Witham St Hughs Village Hall.

The CLG was timed to keep conversations going between FGE and the wider community following the statutory consultation on the project in late 2024 and in advance of its submission of a Development Consent Order (DCO) application to the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) in July 2025.

In advance of the meeting, invitations were issued to a range of stakeholders including local parishes, district and county councillors, and the local MP.

FGE was represented by:

- Mark Sandles (MS) – Windel Energy
- Helen Heward (HH) – Recurrent Energy
- Tim Read (TR) – FGE Community Relations

Stakeholders attending were:

- Pam Whittaker – chair South Hykeham Parish Council
- Phil Drifill - South Hykeham Parish Council
- Theresa Brewer – Coleby Parish Council
- Nick Lyons – Thorpe on the Hill Parish Council
- Roy Martin – Thurlby Parish Meeting
- Mark Gascoigne – Witham St Hughs Parish Council
- Karen Harrison – Witham St Hughs Parish Council
- Mary Green – Bassingham Parish Council
- Marie Elliot – Witham St Hughs
- Mitch Elliott – Witham St Hughs and Swinderby, North Kesteven District Council
- Roy Husemeyer – Norton Disney Parish Council

Agenda

The project team talked through a presentation (attached) which covered the following topics.

- Introductions
- The CLG
- Project update
- Submission and next steps
- Discussion

The purpose of the CLG

The FGE team explained the idea behind the CLG and its role in building and maintaining a dialogue between the project and the communities in advance of, post submission and assuming development consent is granted, into construction and into operation.

The team committed to circulating notes and actions of the meeting to those present, and that they would then be provided to groups who could not attend. **ACTION.**

There was a conversation about recording future meetings to capture emotions etc. Concerns were expressed that this might stifle discussion.

Project update

The FGE team explained where the project has reached – post public consultation and pre submission. It was confirmed that submission to the Planning Inspectorate is being targeted for 18 July 2025.

There was a discussion about ongoing community engagement. TR asked for feedback on the newsletter that was issued in March 2025. A number of stakeholders noted the newsletter discussed potential changes to the project including where panels would be removed or the layout changed, but that the maps online were not altered. This had caused confusion and was frustrating – people had asked the parishes for clarification.

There were a number of comments on the need to make sure invitation lists are up to date and that information is sent through in response to requests.

The FGE team explained that the final plans are still be reviewed and checked off, so an updated final plan had not been created. The FGE team was advised and accepted that wording explaining this in the newsletter could have been clearer and more helpful.

Changes to project design

Following the discussion on presentation of changes in the newsletter, HH ran through the project design and the proposed changes using hard copy plans on the tables. The key design changes were included in the slides and were presented in the community newsletter.

The meeting discussed the presentation of the plans, including where solar panels might be and which areas within the red line boundary would and would not be developed for solar, be open space or continued to be farmed etc. There was a discussion on map orientation.

The FGE team was asked if the project would definitely go ahead. There was then a discussion of the NSIP process and the steps before and after submission. The FGE team was keen to note the guidance from PINS that they welcome joint submissions from groups of parishes or other organisations.

Highlighting/clarifying changes made

One of the key areas of discussion was getting clarification on the changes made post statutory consultation. It was asked that an updated version of the masterplan be provided. HH explained that the project wouldn't want to share anything until the project is confident it has been finalised so there aren't different versions of the plans in circulation.

Thurlby Parish asked for an updated map before a meeting on 8 June to enable the parish to talk to a clear plan. The FGE team said it would look at this and keep the parish updated. **Post meeting note.** While we will carefully monitor this situation it is unlikely we will be able to provide updated plans in advance of submission.

A number of questions were asked about the masterplan and areas to double check for accuracy. The meeting discussed changes/improvements to the footpath network.

Construction and traffic

The meeting discussed potential construction routes. It was noted that there is a push to lobby for speeds on Bassingham Road Thurlby and Thurlby Road Bassingham to be reduced to 40 mph. The meeting noted the problems of speeding vehicles in the area more generally. FGE was asked if it would support a campaign to reduce the speed limit to 40mph from the national speed limit – and more generally to support greater pedestrianisation. Concerns were expressed more broadly about the ability of the roads to deal with construction traffic.

Impacts of the scheme – long-term management

The question was asked about how many properties would be affected? It was suggested the project was close to a lot of properties – it was argued to be more than other schemes. Concerns around impacts on house prices. HH made clear the difference between the dark green areas on the plans with solar with the lighter green that will remain fields and in some cases remain farmland.

This prompted a question of who would be responsible for managing open space. HH said there would be a legal responsibility for the project to monitor and manage this space so parishes would not have to be responsible.

Inheritance tax

There was a discussion about inheritance tax for those whose land was being used for the project. The meeting considered whose responsibility it should be to talk to the landowners about this. It was agreed that there was still uncertainty. MS noted the farmers would all have agents who would advise.

Other infrastructure in the area

It was noted that there are pipelines running through the area including a number from the Humber to London. It was suggested some pipelines in the area may be part of an undocumented network. The FGE team explained the processes that are gone through to engage with stakeholders and fully survey the land.

Technology

The meeting discussed the lifespan of the project and technology. HH noted the scheme has a 60-year lifespan and that the technology might need to be replaced once in that time. A question was asked about where the panels would come from – will it be China? HH said those decisions would be taken nearer the time of procurement, but all options will be considered.

Future changes to the project – role of the examination

It was asked whether there might be changes to the project as a result of the Examination process. MS explained it is more like a courtroom than a place for new ideas. He said it would be surprising if any significant changes arose.

Community benefit and mitigations

The meeting discussed community benefit. It was explained that there is currently no final decision about what the potential fund would be or how it would be calculated. There was some frustration that things are not clearer at this stage as this would be helpful for communities in terms of thinking about impacts of the project, money available and the structures in place for managing it in the right way. The FGE team explained there may be some scope for making limited contributions in advance of generation, but that the main fund is only there post consent and construction. HH noted the solar industry is working to develop a standardised approach. The FGE team said it welcomed any thoughts on what the project might fund if it receives development consent. One suggestion made in the meeting was to use benefit funds to reduce the cost of electricity for village halls for the life of the project. It was argued that this is a good way of dispersing the benefit fund to help local communities as they would see reductions in the precept they pay to the parish/town council.

Post meeting note. In line with industry best practice we can confirm that our community benefit fund will provide £400 per megawatt of installed capacity for communities to spend on local projects. We will continue to provide greater clarity on the fund as we work to finalise our proposals in the lead up to submission and acceptance of our DCO application.

Future ownership

The meeting asked what would happen if the project owners walked away from the project. MS said everything within the red line boundary was the responsibility of the FGE team. If the ownership did change hands then any responsibilities would be passed onto the new ownership.

Maintenance, design and fire safety

There was a discussion about what fire safety precautions and procedures there would be for the site. HH noted this concern is predominantly about Battery Energy Storage Solutions (BESS). She noted we would be working with the fire services in planning our response which will include use of attenuation tanks to ensure there is water on site if required (given absence of water supply for hydrants).

It was asked if the project was going to be illuminated at night. MS said no. In response to discussions about potential vandalism, it was also noted that security cameras would be on site, but they would face inwards.

The meeting discussed whether the panels would be south facing and fixed or tracking. Concerns were expressed about glint and glare. It was explained that careful studies will go into designing out issues of glint and glare. The decision on the type of panels being proposed remains to be finally confirmed.

The meeting asked whether it would be possible to have mature trees in from the start. The FGE team said that can be considered, but they would still need time to grow fully.

Next meeting

The next CLG meeting is proposed for September 2025 – post submission and assuming acceptance of the application.

Action Items

- Circulate notes to attendees before issuing more widely
- Provide link to project page on PINS website
- Provide updated plans with changes identified – when/if possible.
- If possible, provide an updated map in advance of the 8 June, Thurlby Parish Council meeting
- Provide more details on community benefits
- Ensure contact email lists are up to date
- Keep CLG updated as the project progresses.

- **Ends** -