

Grange Solar farm

A meeting between the Parish Council Liaison Group (PCLG) and PS Renewables (PSR) was held in January. PSR reported that they are no longer the owner of the site and that they have sold it to a company called Liberty Global (LG) who are now the owner of the assets. LG are large and are investing heavily in the UK. PSR will still be the main point of contact until the end of the construction period. The official Community Benefit Deed will now need finalising with LG; a meeting will be arranged by the Parish Council clerk as soon as possible to complete this.

PSR agreed to share photographs of the Archaeological findings with the PCLG. The findings are now with the County Archaeologists. The area where these have been found by PSR are now protected by a Written Statement of Intent from the County Archaeologists detailing how these areas are to be managed, and panels can no longer be installed in these areas.

The Planting Plan scheme is part of the Land Ecology Management Plan (LEMP). Everything identified on the plan, which has been received by the PCLG, will be planted under the scheme. PSR hope to plant everything on the South site in Spring 2026, except for the mature trees around the substation. PSR will try to source plants locally, any plants that die will be replaced. Once the Solar panels are in place the site will be levelled and then seeded with grass seed. Often the farmers who own the land on Solar Farms will graze sheep to keep the grass down, but it is not known what the farmers plans are on this site. The equipment installed is raised off the ground to allow sheep to graze underneath. Usually, grass is cut once a year between the rows. None of the existing trees and hedges will be removed.

Site boundary fences have now been erected on the South site. Gaps have been left under some of the fencing for wildlife access. Boundaries are geo located and mapped onto platforms and software, whilst excavators have GPS machinery, to maintain accuracy. Originally the site was larger but the Norwich to Tilbury transmission scheme which is planned to run down the side of the site has taken priority and slightly reduced the size of the Grange Solar Farm site. However, PSR have revised the site plan to maintain the same number of panels.

The biodiversity section of land near Millway Lane has not been sold as some had thought but belongs to the site for wildlife. This is part of the Biodiversity Net Gain for which projects gain credits. This is a government scheme to offset carbon footprint and protect habitat.

The construction schedule for the site is being expanded into more detail by PSR for LG. Once completed and agreed with LG it will be distributed to the PCLG. A WhatsApp group is in place including members of the PCLG and PSR managers, to be used for raising concerns or inform of major activities taking place. Once construction begins there is potential for disruption and noise particularly when the piling begins. The build is expected to be completed by October 2026 unless there are any delays. The panels come from China whilst the transformers are European. Once PSR move to the North site there will be another compound put in place, trenching, steel structures then panels installed.

Battery storage is not used as these are a fire risk. The solar panels used need the sun to work, with power generation fluctuating all the time due to weather conditions. They have a 25 year guarantee with degradation after 20 years. Due to changes in technology however and to maximise efficiency the panels may be replaced earlier. Solar panels used are 100% recyclable e.g. aluminium, glass, silver, copper, and silica, with a recycling plant in Lincoln.

The site needs to be completed and commissioned before any output is available. The commissioning phase is substantial and could take until April 2027 to complete.

There is a decommissioning plan in place with an ESCROW fund over the lifecycle of the project to guarantee the decommissioning at the end. There is also insurance in place to cover damage over the life of the scheme, with assets covered during the construction phase.

Once completed and operational an Operations Maintenance Team will take over the ongoing maintenance of the site. They have planned and reactive maintenance schedules. The solar panels are monitored daily online. There is also CCTV monitoring onsite 24 hours 7 days a week.

No further complaints had been received from residents regarding the lorries coming through the village.

There had been further security issues at the site with intruders and thefts, but none have been caught yet.

At the end of the meeting PSR took members of the PCLG a tour of the South site. The perimeter fence could be seen as well as the trenching for the cabling.