

Tillbridge Solar

Post-collaboration workshop report

September 2022

Table of Contents

1.	Introduction	3
2.	Tillbridge Solar	4
3.	Approach to consultation	5
4.	Collaboration workshops – July 2022	6
	Introduction	6
	Workshop attendees	6
	Format	7
	Information presented	8
	Feedback and comments	10
	Key themes	11
	Our response to comments received	13
	Engagement with near neighbours	21
5.	Frequently Asked Questions	23
6.	Next steps	26
7.	Consultation and engagement	27

1. Introduction

Tillbridge Solar Limited is developing proposals for a new solar and energy storage project which would involve the installation of solar photovoltaic (PV) generating panels and on-site energy storage facilities within Lincolnshire and associated infrastructure for connection to the national grid at Cottam substation in Nottinghamshire.

The project, known as Tillbridge Solar, would allow for the generation, storage, export and import of electricity with an anticipated capacity greater than 50 megawatts (MW).

Proposals for the project are still at an early stage. In July 2022 we held a series of collaboration workshops with representatives of groups with an interest in the area to help shape the project at this early stage.

This report provides a summary of the collaboration workshops, including the information presented and discussed, key issues and themes from comments received during the workshops. This report also sets out the next steps in the development of the project, including in respect of consultation and engagement.



2. Tillbridge Solar

Tillbridge Solar (“the project”) is being developed by a joint venture partnership between Tribus Clean Energy and Canadian Solar (together forming Tillbridge Solar Limited), who are both experienced developers of renewable energy projects. They are being supported by an experienced team of technical specialists.

Tillbridge Solar would be located on land to the south, east and south-east of Gainsborough, and to the north west of Lincoln. The project would involve the installation of ground mounted solar photovoltaic (PV) panels, with electricity generated from the project connecting to National Grid’s Cottam substation in Nottinghamshire. The project would also have an energy storage solution located on site.

The project would make a significant contribution towards achieving the UK’s ambitious climate change targets and the target of 70 gigawatts (GW) of solar electricity generation capacity by 2035, whilst also helping to provide a reliable source of affordable energy.

3. Approach to consultation

Given that the project would generate more than 50MW of renewable energy, Tillbridge Solar is classified as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) in accordance with the thresholds set out in the Planning Act 2008 (the Act). This means that we will need to submit a Development Consent Order (DCO) application to the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS).

The DCO process for NSIPs is set out in the Act and associated regulations. In accordance with section 42 of the Act, we are required to carry out a period of statutory consultation which we are planning to hold at the start of 2023.

Before this, we have been carrying out an initial period of consultation and engagement, where we have been working collaboratively with stakeholders to help understand key issues and potential constraints in the local area. This early engagement included holding a series of collaboration workshops, initial engagement with landowners and near neighbours (to the Tillbridge Solar project site), along with engagement with statutory bodies, such as local planning authorities and environmental groups.

The ongoing development of our proposals is an iterative process, with this initial engagement contributing towards the ongoing refinement of our plans for Tillbridge Solar.

Our objectives are to:



Build a solar farm that will contribute UK’s zero-carbon future and enhance Lincolnshire’s reputation as the home of ground-breaking clean energy projects.



Provide equivalent energy needs for around 200,000 households with low-cost energy, generated in the UK at a time of great uncertainty within the energy market.



Increase biodiversity and enhance existing ecology, to achieve Biodiversity Net Gain and maximise opportunities to create new habitats for wildlife.



Develop a project in a responsible and considerate way.



Provide opportunities for community involvement from an early stage.



Ensure local landscape is central to the project’s design.



Provide opportunities for local communities and the local economy.



Seek opportunities to collaborate with other developers to help minimise impacts of local communities and the environment.

4. Collaboration workshops – July 2022

Introduction

As part of the early-stage engagement for Tillbridge Solar, we held a series of collaboration workshops in the local area. These were held as follows:

- **Wednesday 20 July 2022**, from 1pm to 5pm, at Glentworth Village Hall, Stoney Lane, Glentworth, Lincolnshire, DN21 5DF
- **Thursday 21 July 2022**, from 2pm to 6pm, at Willingham Village Hall, High St, Willingham by Stow, Gainsborough, DN21 5JZ
- **Friday 22 July 2022**, from 10am to 2pm, at Sturton by Stow Village Hall, High St, Sturton by Stow, Lincoln, LN1 2AE

These workshops provided the opportunity for the Tillbridge Solar team to introduce the early-stage plans and explain more about our proposals – a summary of the information presented at the workshops is set out below. Engagement during the workshops also helped to shape the project at this early stage and allow attendees to discuss in detail a number of key topics and aspects of our plans.

Workshop attendees

Tillbridge Solar invited key stakeholders to attend the collaboration workshops. These stakeholders were selected by Tillbridge Solar as being representative of persons with an interest in the project, from a political, community and technical/environmental perspective and was discussed with the relevant local planning authorities before the workshops were held.

A total of 110 individual stakeholders and/or organisations were invited to attend one of the collaboration workshops on the date most suitable to them.

These stakeholders included:

- Relevant country, district, and ward councillors across the districts of West Lindsey and Bassetlaw and Counties of Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire
- Wider council Members, Portfolio Holders, and technical/planning officers
- Representatives of the local community, including parish councils and local interest/community groups
- Statutory consultees and wider environmental/technical stakeholders

Format

By holding a series of collaboration workshops at this early stage, this created a platform for active participation in the design process.

Each workshop was chaired and facilitated by representatives of the project, each session involved a series of presentations, question and answer sessions and opportunities for attendees to have their say during the session. Information was presented using a PowerPoint presentation along with printed maps and plans and attendees were able to provide their comments throughout the session by engaging with the materials, including using printed comment sheet.

Information presented

The workshops provided an opportunity for attendees to learn more about the project and shape the proposals at this early stage. The information presented during the workshop (as part of the PowerPoint presentation) is shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Information presented during the collaboration workshops

Information presented	Summary
Introduction to the collaboration workshops	
The Tillbridge Solar team	An overview of the Tillbridge Solar team, including the joint venture partnership between Tribus Clean Energy and Canadian Solar, along with the specialist team supporting the project.
Our approach to consultation	An overview of the approach to consultation and classification of Tillbridge Solar as a NSIP.
Key aims	An overview of the key aims and objectives of the project and the opportunities presented by this early-stage engagement, including what the workshops were designed to achieve.

Introduction to Tillbridge Solar	
About Tillbridge Solar	An overview of the elements of Tillbridge Solar, including the construction, operation and decommissioning of ground mounted solar photovoltaic (PV) arrays and supporting infrastructure.
Location and key facts	An overview of the location of Tillbridge Solar and initial identification of preferred areas for development (approximately 1,000 hectares), and preferred areas to be considered for mitigation and enhancement (approximately 700 hectares).
The needs case	An overview of the needs case for the project, including the role that solar plays in the transition to net zero, and opportunity to develop Tillbridge Solar in a responsible way.
The story so far	
Site Search Assessment	An overview of the initial high-level site search assessment completed to identify a location for a proposed solar energy farm in the east of England.
Environmental constraints and opportunities	An overview of initial environmental constraints and opportunities, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consideration of environmental features and designations • Consideration of planning designations • Landscape and visual analysis, including low, medium and high risk areas for development
Preferred cable corridor	An overview of the location of the preferred cable corridor, including key constraints considered. This included reference to a series of alternative options that were explored and assessed prior to the inclusion of the preferred option.
Extent of DCO following site selection process	An overview of the project being presented at this early stage, including indicative areas for development and enhancement ("developable" and "non-developable") and preferred route of the cable corridor.

Key topic areas	
Discussing the key issues and constraints	<p>A discussion around a number of key topic areas in relation to how the project is defined going forwards, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cumulative impact, including where the project is located in relation to other solar developments, and how the project has, and will be continuing to, engage constructively with other developers • Site selection and consideration of alternatives, including the approach taken to date • Socioeconomics and land use, including consideration of community benefits <p>A number of other environmental topics were discussed, with an explanation provided around work carried out to date and identification of initial constraints and features. These included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ecology and biodiversity • Cultural heritage • Landscape and visual • Transport and access • Water environment <p>Other environmental topics (outside of the others listed) were also discussed.</p>
Next steps	An overview of next steps and project refinement following the collaboration workshops, along with the project timeline and how attendees can continue to engage with the project.

A number of maps and plans were made available at each workshop and have now been made available on the project website, including plans showing:

- Environmental constraints and opportunities, including desk-based research on Agricultural Land Classification
- Environmental and Planning Constraints, including indicative areas for higher, medium and low risk landscape and visual constraints
- Central Lincolnshire Local Plan Designations
- The preferred cable route corridor, including identification of an alternative route
- The indicative project boundary, including developable and non-developable areas
- The wider site search area, in the context of other large-scale solar projects in the region

Feedback and comments

The project team welcomed the input of workshop attendees in relation to all issues raised, including in respect of local constraints and features. Feedback and comments could be provided throughout the session by:

- Providing comments on post-it notes, which could be pinned on printed maps (showing the indicative developable and non-developable areas of the project and cable corridor)
- Placing pins/stickers on maps to identify notable locations and constraints in the area
- Writing directly onto maps
- Using comment sheets – there was an opportunity to write down any final thoughts at the end of each workshop
- Noting down key issues during discussions with the project team, recorded by both attendees and the project team

Key themes

Attendees were asked to identify key issues, constraints and features that are most important to them and the people who live in local communities. These key issues are shown below:





Our response to comments received

Comments received from workshop attendees are important to us as we continue to refine our plans for Tillbridge Solar. Table 2 notes how the project is listening to feedback and how plans are being refined ahead of the statutory consultation, planned for the start of next year.

Table 2: Summary of key issues raised during collaboration workshops

Important issues	Response and relevant changes to the project
<p>Site Selection Comments highlighted concern about the potential size of the project, suggesting that the scale should be reduced to minimise impact on the local area.</p> <p>In particular, comments suggested that the project should be moved further away from Springthorpe, which would currently be impacted by indicative developable and non-developable areas.</p>	<p>We recognise that there are concerns about the size of the project that has been communicated at this stage, and how this would impact on the local area</p> <p>The figures stated at this stage for our indicative developable areas (1,000 hectares) and indicative non-developable areas (700 hectares), relate to the maximum extent of the project design. These areas are subject to change and will be refined through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ongoing engagement with landowners, local communities and key stakeholders ongoing design work environmental assessments <p>This work will help us to identify the most suitable areas for development and enhancement/mitigation.</p> <p>Tillbridge Solar has secured a Bilateral Connection Agreement (BCA) with National Grid to allow 500MW of renewable energy to be transferred in to and out of their substation. We are now working to refine our proposals to ensure the project can generate as much energy as possible in line with this agreement, whilst balancing that objective against having acceptable environmental and local community constraints.</p> <p>In response to your comments, we have also removed approximately 200 hectares of land to the west of Springthorpe, which would no longer be required for landscape enhancement and mitigation measures.</p>

Important issues	Response and relevant changes to the project
	<p>This amendment has been informed by the initial results of habitat survey work, especially in relation to breeding birds. These early results suggest a less of a potential impact to breeding birds than originally envisaged, therefore, there is less of a need for mitigation measures in this area.</p> <p>We have also set back the project further to the east from the village. This means that our indicative non-developable areas are now approximately 400 hectares.</p> <p>In regard to site selection, we are continuing to refine our plans. The next stages of the project will be to produce an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Scoping Report, which sets out the proposed cope of work and methods to be applied in carrying out the EIA.</p> <p>We will then be producing a Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR), which will be published at the same time as the commencement of a statutory consultation. The PEIR will present preliminary findings of survey work and environmental assessments in relation to the likely significant environmental effects of the development and will help inform consultee responses to the project.</p> <p>This preliminary stage will support the continued iterative design process with respect to site selection before taking on board consultee comments and finalising the DCO application and the Environmental Statement (ES).</p> <p>The PEIR will include a series of drawings that support the initial findings of the environmental assessment. This will include a parameter plan that illustrates the locations of the solar panels and associated infrastructure, including battery storage and substations and it will show areas for mitigation informed by environmental surveys. A landscape masterplan will also be prepared at this stage.</p>

Important issues	Response and relevant changes to the project
<p>Land use and agriculture Feedback during the workshops highlighted the importance of agricultural land and that this land should not be taken out of valuable food production.</p> <p>People also expressed concern about how agricultural land was noted as 'lower quality' and how the land was classified.</p> <p>Comments also suggested that solar panels should be sited on brownfield land, and rolled out on a larger scale on the roofs of houses and buildings.</p>	<p>An initial site selection assessment began in 2020 which identified suitable areas for solar development in the East of England. This assessment resulted in the exclusion of all agricultural land classified as Grade 1 and 2 from further consideration. Our desk-based surveys to date have identified all of the preferred land for the project site (where solar PV panels and associated infrastructure would be located) as being grade 3 classified agricultural land.</p> <p>At this stage, we do not know the extent of which this area is Grade 3a or 3b. This will be confirmed once survey work has been completed. As a project, we are committed to avoiding best and most versatile (BMV) land, where possible.</p> <p>Solar farms can provide a means for farmers to diversify supporting continued agricultural production whilst also delivering much needed renewable energy with the two uses being compatible. Land associated with the solar farm could be used for grazing and support could be provided to UK farmers as they continue food production on other parts of their land. The solar industry will continue to work closely with Britain's farmers to reduce their energy costs and improve the sustainability of their operations.</p> <p>The initial site assessment completed to identify an area of search for the development of a solar farm considered the availability of brownfield sites. None of these were suitable due to their small size or where renewable energy would be contrary in land use terms to existing or emerging allocations within the Council's development plan. There is an overriding need to achieve Net Zero with large-scale solar having an important role to play in this transition. The preferred site, following the initial site selection process, is suitable, available and deliverable for a solar farm. Building solar panels solely on brownfield sites, such as on buildings roofs, would not make a significant enough contribution to meet the Government's objective of delivering 70GW of installed solar generation capacity by 2035. This would also then require additional land to be found to deliver competing uses to renewable energy, such as housing and employment on greenfield sites.</p>

Important issues	Response and relevant changes to the project
<p>Flood risk and drainage</p> <p>Comments during our workshops showed us that flood risk and drainage is an important issue with a history of flooding in villages such as Willingham, Springthorpe, Sturgate, Glentworth and Fillingham.</p> <p>People questioned whether the project would worsen the quality of land in the area and increase the risk of flooding.</p>	<p>As a project, we will carry out a site specific flood risk assessment. This will identify the existing baseline of the site and will assess whether the proposed development would result in an increase in flooding and if so, include mitigation measures. The flood risk assessment would set out any residual impacts following completion of the development and ensure that any new drainage proposed as part of the development is managed and maintained in perpetuity. The project would need to include sustainable urban drainage which will be detailed as part of a Drainage Statement. The initial site selection process has sought to identify land with the lowest probability of flooding.</p> <p>Initial information on flood risk and specific measures for mitigation and enhancements will be available in our PEIR and as a final proposal in our ES, submitted as part of our DCO application.</p>

Important issues	Response and relevant changes to the project
<p>Landscape and visual impact</p> <p>Comments highlighted the importance of the landscape and its overall character and helped us identify a number of locations where the project could be visible from. This included Middle Street and Springthorpe Village.</p> <p>Workshop attendees also welcomed plans for all of the cable corridor to be underground, rather than pylons/other above-ground infrastructure.</p>	<p>A walk-over survey was undertaken following the completion of the initial site selection process. This survey informed the production of a landscape constraints, risk and opportunities plan. This plan identified areas at higher, medium and lower risk from landscape and visual impacts. This also included consideration of impacts associated with heritage assets and public rights of way. This initial work informed a refinement of the preferred site presented at the non-statutory consultation event in landscape and visual terms, as well as consideration of other environmental issues. Planning designations and key planning policies were also factored into this assessment, including recognition of important views highlighted in Neighbourhood Plans.</p> <p>A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) will form an important part of our EIA. The PEIR will include the preliminary findings of survey work and environmental assessments in respect of this LVIA, which will be available for comment during statutory consultation. The PEIR will also include a draft outline landscape and ecology management plan to set out measures to mitigate the effects of the project on landscape and biodiversity. The LVIA will be refined following the PEIR stage to take onboard consultee comments. Landscape and visual impacts will be fully assessed within the EIA, with the final LVIA provided within the ES.</p> <p>As part of our early stage engagement, including with nearest neighbours to the project and key stakeholders, we have made a series of changes to the project to help reduce visual impact from sensitive receptors. This includes setting back to the project further from Middle Street, moving the project to the east from Springthorpe and pulling the project further back westwards from Glentworth. A summary of engagement with near neighbours is also provided on page 21 of this document, including how a series of changes to the project have been made.</p>

Important issues	Response and relevant changes to the project
<p>Cumulative impacts Feedback highlighted concerns about the cumulative impact of multiple projects in the region. Attendees questioned whether all developers will be working collaboratively, sharing the same infrastructure, and assessed together once the planning applications have been submitted.</p>	<p>We recognise the impacts associated with multiple projects being developed in the region, including the connection of two projects at National Grid’s Cottam substation.</p> <p>Given the proximity of Tillbridge Solar to other solar projects, we are currently exploring opportunities for collaborative working, particularly where we have common interests to reduce the potential impacts of the project on local communities and the environment. We will continue to work collaboratively to ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People are easily able to engage with each of our consultation processes and have opportunities to get involved. • All environmental effects are fully assessed, including any cumulative impacts. • A common-sense approach to construction is taken in order to minimise disruption, including sharing infrastructure and construction timelines, where feasible. <p>A preliminary shortlist of cumulative developments will be prepared for the PEIR report for comment as part of the statutory consultation phase of the project. The methodology for undertaking the cumulative assessment will be in accordance with best practice and guidance. The final shortlist of cumulative developments will be presented within the ES.</p>

Important issues	Response and relevant changes to the project
<p>Archaeology Feedback helped us better understand the importance of local archaeology to the community, including historical Roman settlements and Torksey Road (and its link to Viking times).</p> <p>Workshop attendees also discussed potential opportunities for the project, including sharing archaeological data (with other developers), and creating educational initiatives for local people to understand more about Lincolnshire’s heritage.</p>	<p>Our early-stage plans for Tillbridge Solar have been designed to avoid heritage assets, where possible. The preferred site is located away from statutory listed buildings, Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Historic Parks and Gardens and Conservation Areas. Initial work is being undertaken to assess the significance of all heritage assets within and adjoining the preferred site through consideration of the Council’s Historic Environment Record. This desk-based work will enable consideration of the potential impacts of the project upon cultural heritage as part of the PEIR.</p> <p>Our desk-based and field walkover studies are ongoing in relation to archaeology. Recent approval has been given by Lincolnshire County Council for the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for the geophysical survey of the Principal Site. The geophysical survey will enable a greater understanding of archaeological potential and will inform the methodology for trial trenching. The results of this work will be fed into the ES, including measures for mitigation and residual impacts.</p> <p>We will also be working with statutory and technical stakeholders to agree an appropriate assessment methodology, and investigate opportunities to share information with other developers, ensuring the most efficient outcome for all parties.</p> <p>Educational initiatives for local people will be considered as we continue to develop our community benefits strategy.</p>

Important issues	Response and relevant changes to the project
<p>Traffic and access We received valuable feedback about the condition of local roads and examples of routes that would not be suitable for heavy goods vehicles during the construction phase. Particular roads included Grange Lane, School Lane and Dog Kennel Road. The A15 and A161 were suggested as more suitable routes.</p>	<p>A full Transport Assessment (TA) and a Construction Traffic Management Plan will be produced for the project. The TA will assess the current usage of the local highway network and determine the highway impact of the proposed development upon existing roads. Traffic surveys have been undertaken to assess traffic flows in the local area and to inform a preliminary access strategy for the proposed development. The Construction Traffic Management Plan will set out how construction traffic is to be managed to reduce impacts within the local area.</p> <p>The TA and Construction Traffic Management Plan will be made available as part of the suite of documents supporting the statutory consultation. Traffic and access impacts will be considered at the PEIR stage with baseline data informing an assessment of the effect of the project upon traffic and access and any mitigation measures required. This will enable full engagement by consultees prior to the completion of the ES and submission of the DCO application to take onboard feedback. Feedback received in respect of specific roads and local routes at the non-statutory consultation stage will be taken on board as we continue to refine our plans.</p> <p>We recognise the importance of reducing traffic impacts locally, including those associated with having multiple projects in the area.</p>

Engagement with near neighbours

In addition to the collaboration workshops, early stage engagement also included meeting with near neighbours to the development site. Properties were selected based on their proximity to the development site (where the solar PV panels and associated infrastructure would be located), with the project team pre-arranging meetings (by contacting known individuals, such as landowners), or by 'door-knocking'. In total, 19 properties/sets of interested parties were met with across three separate site visits. This included meeting with local residents and farmers, which has also resulted in return visits in subsequent weeks.

These meetings took place prior to the workshops and involved representatives of the project (including land agent and technical specialists) providing introductory information about the project and welcoming comments on how plans could be refined.

A summary of comments received during these visits is provided in Table 3, along with how changes to the project have been made.

Table 3: Summary of near neighbour comments

Summary of comments	Response and relevant changes to the project
<p>Residents were concerned that the project is being brought forward alongside other solar developments in the area. There was concern about the potential cumulative effect on the landscape and its visual impact, especially from residential properties.</p>	<p>Where the project is nearest to other solar developments, plans have been refined to ensure relevant areas are to be used for mitigation planting such as woodland, rather than solar PV panels and infrastructure. We are committed to tree planting and mitigation along routes (including Kexby Road), which will help limit or prevent views of multiple schemes in combination.</p>
<p>Concerns were raised by some residents about proximity and visibility of the scheme to properties, with the open, rural views being highly valued.</p>	<p>Following discussions and observations from residential properties, the indicative developable areas have been setback further in a number of locations. Key views from such locations, along with consideration of the subtle local topography, has informed proposed mitigation buffers (ensuring a larger space between the developable areas and sensitive receptors), including woodland and hedgerows.</p>
<p>Residents questioned whether planting that offers ecological value, including fruit trees, could be included in the plans for the project.</p>	<p>Planting, as proposed for mitigation and enhancement, will be selected to be best adapted to the specific site conditions. The project hopes to deliver maximum diversity and offer features that provide benefits to local people, such as the provision of orchard trees.</p>

Summary of comments	Response and relevant changes to the project
Some residents raised concerns about the potential impacts on existing rural traffic routes (for construction traffic), along with where site access would be taken. Questions were asked about which farm access tracks may be used, which could have a negative impact on the quiet rural amenity along with the safety of families who use the routes adjacent to houses and gardens.	Plans are currently being refined in regard to how site is accessed both during construction and operation of the project. Sensitive routes that are unsuitable for heavy or frequent vehicle movements will be avoided, where possible.
Some residents raised concerns about the impacts on the welfare of livestock, such as from noise and disruption arising during construction of the project.	The project is working to refine the location of the solar PV panels (within the developable area) to ensure minimal impact on livestock. Mitigation proposals are also being developed.
Some residents questioned the proximity of the project to local villages, along with potential impacts on amenity of local people who use recreational routes such as permissive paths.	Further buffers have been included between villages such as Springthorpe, to avoid visual impacts and allow opportunities for more extensive and focused mitigation in these areas.
Queries were raised as to how much ecological mitigation would be incorporated, how it would be managed through the lifetime of the project, and what would happen at decommissioning.	Management of features such as woodland, hedges and species-rich grassland will be clearly explained as the plans are developed in more detail. This will include clarity on the frequency on cutting, thinning and hedge height to ensure careful management during the construction, operation and decommissioning of the project.
Discussions with landowners provided opportunities to identify suitable areas for mitigation and enhancement, including areas of lower agricultural value.	The plans are now being developed in more detail to include specific fields and areas that would be suitable for tree planting or ecological enhancement.

5. Frequently Asked Questions

In addition to the FAQs on our website, we recognise a number of questions you may have at this stage. Some of these questions were asked at our collaboration workshops, however, please get in touch if you have any further questions about the project.

Would the project result in substantial loss in land, which is currently used for food production?

As reported in a 2022 report¹ from Solar Energy UK, new solar farms in the UK occupy roughly four acres of land per megawatt of installed capacity. This accounts for 0.08% of total land use in the UK, which would increase to 0.4-0.6% should the UK meet its Net Zero targets of between 75GW of solar by 2035.

However, we do recognise the importance of agriculture in Lincolnshire and the number of large-scale solar projects that are being proposed in this region. Tillbridge Solar alone would provide equivalent energy needs for around 200,000 households with low-cost energy.

We have also been engaging with the Planning Inspectorate in respect of how projects in the region are assessed together. This will include joint impacts on land and how these impacts could be reduced.

To help reduce the impact on agricultural land in the region, we are committed to selecting areas of land that avoids best and most versatile land (BMV) where possible (Grades 1, 2 and 3a). In this regard, we are undertaking survey work to assess whether any of the Grade 3 land is 3a (BMV). The outcome of this survey will then need to be considered and balanced against all other issues associated with the development.

The proposals would allow land (that has previously been intensively farmed), to recover and become more productive following the operational lifespan of the project, ultimately safeguarding the agricultural usage of this land for future generations. Equipment will be reviewed the end of the design life of the project to determine whether it remains in a viable condition to continue operation after that time.

Why are multiple projects being brought forward in this area? Why can the project not be sited nearer to Cottam Power Station?

The decommissioning of Cottam Power Station (in 2019) has provided additional spare grid connection capacity and the opportunity for the region to play an important role in renewable energy generation in years to come.

We are aware that we are not the only developers to recognise the need for increased solar generation and the opportunity in this area, with approximately 2,000 MW of grid capacity now available at National Grid's Cottam substation. We have secured a Bilateral Connection Agreement (BCA) to allow 500MW of renewable energy to be transferred in to and out of their substation. We are now working to refine our proposals to ensure the project can generate as much energy as possible in line with this agreement.

We will also be working with other developers to share information and explore opportunities for coordination and cooperation, where possible.

In regard to the area surrounding Cottam, our desk-based Site Search Assessment, which dates back to 2020, has identified this area as a high-risk flood zone. It is therefore not suitable to hosting large-scale solar projects and ground-mounted panels and was discounted from our options appraisal process at an early stage.

What is actually meant by Biodiversity Net Gain?

Ground-mounted solar projects, such as Tillbridge Solar, can deliver major benefits to the environment. In addition to providing clean, affordable energy – addressing the nation's energy security and net zero ambitions – the project would improve local biodiversity by supporting new and existing plant and animal life.

The importance of environmental benefits is recognised in the Environment Act 2021 (the Environment Act). The Environment Act introduces a mandatory requirement to deliver a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) compared against the pre-development biodiversity value of at least a 10% for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects through revisions made to the Planning Act 2008. Although these requirements have not yet come into force and are subject to regulations, Tillbridge Solar Limited is already instilling the concept of BNG into its design for the Project.

It is likely that the Project will deliver significantly more BNG than 10% with many solar farms achieving net increases of upwards of 80%. Our plans at this early stage show indicative non-developable areas, where we will be considering specific environmental mitigation and enhancement measures. These specific measures could include preserving, restoring or delivering new hedgerow growth, creating new habitats for pollinators, butterflies and ground nesting birds, and promoting wetland habitats. The project could also provide drainage solutions for the site, which would reduce local flood risk, whilst simultaneously supporting wetland habitats.

Will Tillbridge Solar be built with the landscape in mind?

Landscape and visual impact forms an important element of our EIA work and it is essential for these impacts to be minimised. By engaging with key community representatives and wider stakeholders from an early stage, this is helping us to mitigate any concerns you may have and this will continue as we receive feedback during our statutory consultation at the start of next year.

We are considering a number of landscape management options, including:

- Sensitively designing the project, including using the existing landscape and considering the best locations for developable areas in the context of local features and lines of sight.
- Screening sites by encouraging existing and supporting new hedgerow and tree growth.

Consideration of new rights of way, including permissive paths through the project.

Why can panels not be manufactured in the UK and will any other local suppliers benefit?

As we are still in the early stages of our plans, we are yet to make all final decisions about suppliers for the project. Our specialist team will be working to create a robust supply chain plan, which will outline potential local benefits throughout the construction and operation of the project. On a local level, Tillbridge Solar could create many temporary and permanent jobs and provide wider benefits for the local community and regional economy.

We recognise that the development of large-scale solar is still a relatively new technology in the UK and is therefore not commonly manufactured in this country. Our assessments will consider how the project could be built in a way that maximises the use of local suppliers, where possible.

6. Next steps

We would like to thank everyone that took part in our collaboration workshops. Your comments and engagement has helped us to understand the key issues and constraints and what's important to you as we continue to refine our plans.

Your comments have also helped us to refine certain aspects of the project and provide suggestions for how we carry out our detailed environmental assessment and design work. We will be sharing more detail on our design in due course, including as part of our EIA Scoping Report and during our statutory consultation, planned for the start of 2023.

Our EIA Scoping Report will provide an overview of the proposed development and the baseline environmental surveys. It will also describe how we will be assessing the likely significant environmental effects of the project. This report will be part of a formal request for a scoping opinion from PINS, who acts on behalf of the Secretary of State, on the information to be included in our final ES. As part of this work, PINS will then engage with the relevant consultation bodies, which will establish the scope and level of detail to be provided in our environmental assessments for the project.

A Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR) will build on the environmental assessments outlined in the Scoping Report and will be published as part of the statutory consultation process, in accordance with the Planning Act 2008. The PEIR will outline the initial findings of the EIA and identify proposed mitigation measures which would reduce any environmental impacts. We will be actively seeking comments from all stakeholders at this stage and will be an opportunity to shape the design of the project and our ongoing EIA work.

We will then prepare a final ES, which will build on the content in our PEIR and describe the outcomes of our assessments, along with how comments and feedback received during statutory consultation have been taken on board. The ES will also outline any changes to the project and any mitigation and enhancement measures that we are proposing. This will form part of our final DCO application, which we are planning to submit to the Planning Inspectorate in Q3 2023.

Alongside this environmental work, consultation and engagement will continue to be important as we refine our plans. All comments and feedback received during our pre-application consultation, and how our plans have changed in response to this, will be reported in a final Consultation Report, submitted alongside our DCO application.

7. Consultation and engagement

We are planning to hold our statutory consultation at the start of next year, where we will also publish our Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC). This document will describe how we will be engaging with and seeking feedback from the local community and how people can get involved. We will be engaging with LPAs at this stage and asking for them to comment on our approach to consultation before publishing a final document.

Before we hold this consultation, we will be continuing to engage with key stakeholders, including local residents, parish councils, landowners, and interest groups, along with statutory and technical consultees, including local planning authorities and wider environmental groups. We will also be engaging with other developers to see how we can work constructively together.

Please don't hesitate to get in touch if you have any further questions about Tillbridge Solar or would like to speak with a member of the project team.

You can contact us using the details below:



www.tillbridgesolar.com



info@tillbridgesolar.com



0800 046 9643



FREEPOST TILLBRIDGE SOLAR.

Contact us

If you have any questions about Tillbridge Solar, please don't hesitate to contact the project team using the details below.



www.tillbridgesolar.com



info@tillbridgesolar.com



0800 046 9643



FREEPOST TILLBRIDGE SOLAR
(please note that no stamp is required)

You can also sign-up for updates and contact us using our comment form on our website.

If you would like this document in large print, audio or braille formats, please contact us using the details above.

All graphics and maps in this document are for illustrative purposes.