Minutes

Varley Solar Farm Community Liaison Group

Date:	2 November 2026
Time:	18:30 to 20:20
Location	Cromhall Village Hall

In attendance:

- Councillor John O'Neill (JO)
- Cyrus Contractor, on behalf of Cromhall Parish Council (CC)
- Sharon James (SJ)
- Zena Whitefield (ZW)
- David Moreton (DM)
- Bertrand Devossel, Development Project Manager – RES (BD)
- Carey Green, Community Relations Manager – RES (CG)

Item	Details	Actions
1	**Welcome and introductions** JO opened the meeting and members introduced themselves.	
2	**Apologies** Apologies received from Sarah Rocks of RES.	
3	**Action review and matters arising** See attached action tracker. RES responded to comments from CC on the minutes from 5 October 2026. a) There was an error relating to the solar height in the previous minutes which has now been corrected. The solar panels for Varley Solar Farm will have a maximum height of up to 3.5 metres not 3.6 metres, as previously noted. b) It was clarified that the ongoing SI and trial trenching works are not deemed to be Commencement of Development. The preliminary access works constitute Commencement of Development and therefore represent the formal implementation of the planning permission. It was noted and acknowledged that notwithstanding this, RES still has a responsibility to manage and minimise any impacts on local residents. c) It was clarified that the Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) and Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) relate only to the preliminary access works. A further updated CTMP and CEMP will be submitted to the local authority, at the relevant time, in respect of the main construction works. CC requested that the documents by default be applicable to all works including the SI and trial trenching. RES acknowledged that from a resident's perspective, all activities associated with the project may be seen as part of the same overall development. However, the CTMP and other documents approved as part of the wider solar farm development, do not automatically apply to separate pre-construction investigative works. It is also important to note that the CTMP submitted as part of the discharge of conditions application for the preliminary access	

	works remains under consideration by the Council and has not yet been approved. Approval will only occur once the relevant planning conditions have been formally discharged. d) It was confirmed that the construction vehicle bypass would be constructed prior to the main construction works. Members of the CLG recommended the construction vehicle bypass be constructed from the north of Farleigh Lane. RES advises that commencing works from the north would require the creation of a new site entrance, resulting in additional disruption to local traffic and necessitating further ecological works, including hedgerow removal. The use of the existing access off Talbots End therefore, represents the least disruptive approach from both a transport and environmental perspective. e) RES acknowledged that some wording within the CTMP, for the preliminary access works, was poorly worded. For the avoidance of doubt, no HGV vehicles will use Farleigh Lane for any of the works. It was noted that Cromhall Parish Council intend to write to the local authority emphasising this and that the vehicle bypass must be constructed prior to main construction works.	
4	**CLG Terms of Reference** CC has developed a Terms of Reference document and will share with RES for consideration. ALL CLG members were asked to provide any comments on the second revision of the Terms of Reference, as shared by RES on 2 November. RES to share the stakeholder RACI as a starting point for discussion. The request from Mike Winter to join the CLG was agreed by members.	CC ALL RES
5	**Project update** RES apologised for the blocking of Talbots End during delivery of the excavator on 19 October. Due to low cables and branches, the HGV had not been able to proceed further along the road. To try to ensure such re-occurrence, mitigation measures have been put into place, including written acknowledgement from any delivery subcontractors and their drivers confirming that they have read and agreed to the full RAMS, that they understand the agreed timings and site access restrictions. Furthermore, contractors must confirm HGV delivery schedules well in advance. The unsuitability of the landowner's yard and current site access points was discussed. RES to ensure feedback is provided to the transport consultant. The importance of ensuring residents of Talbots End are notified in a timely manner regarding vehicle movements was discussed. RES to write to each resident of Talbots End to obtain three contact methods (post, email and telephone) for each property. SJ confirmed she was happy to collate and share any updates/information whilst this information is collected. Total traffic movements for all works were discussed, and it was confirmed that the updated CTMP, to be submitted in advance of the main construction works, will contain the relevant information. The information will not be able to be provided in advance of detailed design. It was noted by CC that the updated CTMP should maintain parity with the CTMP submitted as part of the planning application. Good progress has been made on the trial trenching archaeology evaluation, with fairly limited archaeological results. As of Monday 2 November, most trenches have been excavated. Over	RES RES

	70% of trenches have been blank and 3 shards of pottery have been retrieved from colluvial deposits. The majority of trenches have now been backfilled and, subject to agreement of the County Archaeologist it is anticipated that backfilling will be complete by 11 November. Geotechnical work is due to recommence on site on Tuesday 3 November. Works will include performing infiltration tests and pile testing. The electrical resistivity testing will happen in the following days. The excavator, used for the trial trenching work, will be collected from site on 10 or 11 November. To avoid blocking the road, it is expected that the excavator will be tracked down Farleigh Lane and loaded on Bristol Road. Fencing and bog mats will be removed on small lorries. RES to notify SJ of exact date once known. Appropriate signage to manage HGV movements was discussed. It was agreed this would be a two-stage process with stage 1 being the production of signage stating *"No solar farm HGVs past this point. Contact [telephone number]*". RES to produce a proof of the proposed signage and consult with CLG members with regard to the positioning of the produced signs.	RES RES
6	Q&A The following questions were received and discussed: Q: Why is only part of the vehicle bypass being constructed now? *A: The Gate 2 grid offer providing for the solar farm to be connected to the grid network will inform the programme of the main construction works. Until the offer is received, and the full construction programme is confirmed, the preliminary access works only will be undertaken. The preliminary works will also secure the planning consent.* Q: Until the rest of the vehicle bypass is constructed, will all vehicles access site via Talbots End? *A: At this stage, it is expected that HGV vehicles would access via Talbots End, with lighter vehicles using Farleigh Lane, until the vehicle bypass is constructed in full.* Q: Can all construction vehicles use the vehicle bypass, not just HGVs? *A: The intention is that all vehicles will use the bypass, once constructed* Q: Will internal access tracks be built to take HGVs or just vans? *A: Site tracks will carry both HGVs and vans as required, throughout the construction period for delivering components to the necessary areas on site.* Q: What objective evidence supported the reclassification of previously identified Grade 3a land as Grade 3b? Was that assessment undertaken in accordance with the applicable ALC methodology, and how did the Council satisfy itself that the classification was robust when determining P22/07114/F? Finally who paid for and commissioned that assessment and should the Parish Council commission their own assessment? *A: The pre-1988 MAFF (Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food) ALC grading identified the land broadly as grade 3 but did not distinguish between 3a and 3b and was not supported by a detailed survey. Surveys at the time of classification would have been carried out at every 5km. RES commissioned Soil Environment Services Ltd to undertake a detailed ALC survey based on soil sampling on a 100-metre grid basis. South Gloucestershire Council's planning officer's report to the planning committee stated "The LPA is content that the survey is accurate". RES cannot comment on whether the parish council should commission their own assessment. CLG members noted that as planning permission has now been granted, they did not consider it appropriate to revisit matters that were examined by the Council before reaching its decision on the Varley Solar Farm planning application.*	

7	**Community benefit** RES confirmed that the Varley website had been updated inviting local residents to contact RES with ideas on how any future community benefit funding could best support the local area. The website has also been updated inviting local residents to contact RES if they may be interested in becoming involved in a local Community Benefit Steering Group. CC advised that community benefits had been discussed at the parish council meeting. The parish council's preference would be to combine the Varley community benefit with their existing community benefit fund, which has established procedures for distribution of grant funding. RES advised the below had been received from Cromhall Parish Hall and Recreational Trust, which was noted by CLG members: *Further to recent correspondence with the residents and community of Cromhall can you please ensure that I am kept up to date on any funding or grant availability from RES to the local community. I represent the committee of the Cromhall Parish Hall and Recreational Trust and can be contacted on this email. As for all charities run by volunteers we are struggling for funding and are currently trying to update the acoustics of the village hall.*	
7	**Any other business** It was confirmed that all members present, plus Mike Winters, were standing members of the CLG.	
8	**Date and time of next meeting** The next meeting will be held at 18:30 on 14 December 2026 at Cromhall Village Hall.	

Attachments:

- Action tracker

Varley CLG Action Tracker

Action ID	Meeting date	Agenda item	Action	Responsibility	Target date	Status	Progress update	Date completed	Outcome/response
CLG001	05/10/2026	2	Provide RES with a suggested list of objectives for the CLG	Cyrus Contractor	02/11/2026	Outstanding	Will be dependent on agreeing the CLG Terms of Reference		
CLG002	05/10/2026	2	Add CLG membership to next Parish Council meeting agenda	Cyrus Contractor	02/11/2026	Complete		20/10/2026	
CLG003	05/10/2026	3	Circulate amended CLG Terms of Reference	RES	26/10/2026	Work in progress	Terms of Reference still under discussion		
CLG004	05/10/2026	3	Publish CLG Terms of Reference on Varley website, once agreed	RES	18/12/2026	Outstanding			
CLG005	05/10/2026	3	Publish form on Varley website to enable members of the community to raise questions and comments for discussion at CLG meetings	RES	12/10/2026	Complete		12/10/2026	Link to form
CLG006	05/10/2026	4	Comments from members and residents regarding Farleigh Lane and proposed bypass, to be fed back to relevant consultants/contractors	RES	Q3 27	Work in progress	Fed back to contractors and consultants undertaking SI and trial trenching works.		
CLG007	05/10/2026	4	Share Construction Traffic Management Plan and Construction Environmental Management Plan in respect of the preliminary access works	RES	12/10/2026	Complete		12/10/2026	Documents appended to the CLG minutes of 5 October 2026
CLG008	05/10/2026	5	Update Varley website with more detail on community benefits and a potential steering group	RES	12/10/2026	Complete		12/10/2026	Link to webpage
CLG009	05/10/2026	5	Varley community benefit to be raised at next Parish Council meeting	Cyrus Contractor	02/11/2026	Complete		20/10/2026	
CLG010	05/10/2026	6	Liaise with Blackfinch on sharing of panel manufacturer	RES	Q3 27	Outstanding			
CLG011	05/10/2026	6	Produce flyer, posters and digital assets with further information on how CLG documentation can be accessed	RES	16/10/2026	Complete		26/10/2026	Newsletter sent to c. 300 properties Digital asset provided to admin for Cromhall Facebook page Varley website updated
CLG012	02/11/2026	4	Share Terms of Reference document with RES for consideration	CC	27/11/2026	Work in progress			
CLG013	02/11/2026	4	Provide any comments on the second revision of the Terms of Reference, as shared by RES on 2 November	ALL	18/12/2026	Outstanding			
CLG014	02/11/2026	4	Share stakeholder RACI as a starting point for discussion	RES	18/12/2026	Outstanding			
CLG015	02/11/2026	5	Feedback information on unsuitability of the landowner's yard and current site access points, to transport consultant	RES	30/11/2026	Work in progress	Information fed back to consultant and await response		
CLG016	02/11/2026	5	Contact residents of Talbots End to obtain additional contact information	RES	13/11/2026	Complete		10/11/2026	Letters sent.
CLG017	02/11/2026	5	Notify SJ of exact date for collection of excavator	RES	09/11/2026	Complete		09/11/2026	Email sent to SJ asking for the information to be shared, as appropriate.
CLG018	02/11/2026	5	Provide HGV signage proof to members and consult on placement of signage	RES	04/12/2026	Outstanding			