



Marlow Energy Group Ltd



Notes from Solar Farm Meeting held at Liston Hall and on Zoom on Tuesday the 5th of April 2022

John Laker, a Director of Marlow Energy Group (MEG) introduced himself to the meeting and explained the format of the meeting, which would be an introduction to MEG and then presentations from Michael Beech of RINA and Kayla Ente of Brighton and Hove Energy Services Coop (BHESCO), followed by Q & As.

John said that MEG had been founded two years ago and had held ten 'Ask the Experts' talks, including, heat pumps, hydrogen fuelled cars, under floor insulation by robots, river turbines, electric vehicles, etc. (all on MEG's website www.marlowenergygroup.com). In addition, last year MEG conducted the Marlow Solar Streets project that had resulted in thirteen more houses in Marlow having PV panels installed and this year MEG had surveyed twenty three houses with its Thermal Imaging Camera.

John asked the meeting if they wanted a Nuclear Power station in Marlow, or half a dozen Wind Turbines above Little Marlow, or a Turbine in the river? No-one expressed support for these options. John asked what we should do to produce renewable power to replace fossil fuels, especially from Russia, and where should we locate power generating plant?

John said that before the lights go out, tonight Michael Beech of RINA could illuminate us.

Michael explained that MEG had applied to the Rural Communities Energy fund (RCEF) for a grant to conduct a Feasibility Study and that RINA had been contracted by MEG to conduct this Study into the possibility of installing a Solar Farm in a field in Little Marlow. Michael referred to posters that had been erected around the hall, which showed the preliminary design of the proposed Solar Farm. He said that the site is a landfilled gravel pit, which has an area of approximately 8.5 hectares and that around 4.3MW of electricity could be generated there, which would on average power around 1350 houses in Marlow and Little Marlow. Michael also mentioned that there is a 33kV overhead line on the site already and that there is currently a short roadway parallel to the A404. If connection of the solar farm to the local 33kV line is not appropriate, there is an SSEN sub-station close to the A4155/A404 roundabout. The third possibility may be a direct link to Globe Business Park.

The following questions were then raised.

Would generation on the site suffer from shading from the A404? Michael said that the loss of generation in the late afternoons and evenings would be likely to be between 1.5 and 2% (note:- more accurate figures of between 0.3 and 1.5% were subsequently obtained from RINA engineers).

Could the electricity generated be owned by a local community organisation? John referred to the Local Energy Bill, being currently presented to Parliament as a private Members Bill. If this passes, then this avenue can be explored.

What number of houses could be powered by one wind turbine? (note:- not answered on the night, but in the region of 1500 homes, dependent on the size of the turbine).

Would the landowners take over the project as a commercial operation? Jack Slade from Harleyford Properties assured the meeting that this is a community project and his company fully supported this project.

The question of whether a Solar Farm installed within the Green Belt would then allow building after the Solar Farm was removed, was raised. The answer was not known at this time.

It was pointed out that this site was in the Green Belt and within the designated Little Marlow Country Park and that a planning application would be difficult.

It was mentioned that sometimes there are horses in this field and that historically cows had been present. Jack Slade said that the field was not classed as agricultural land.

Isn't this site a high risk flood area? Michael said that as the highest flood this century was recorded at about 1.5 metres, some of the panels would have to be raised appropriately and any other equipment on the site would also need to be raised to avoid flooding. RINA are seeking advice from the Environment Agency on flooding risks.

There was a query on whether this was the most appropriate site in the Marlow area. John explained that MEG had investigated areas all around Little Marlow, plus Wycombe Air Park Lower Harleyford Lane and Hooks Farm, but none of these sites were suitable for a variety of reasons. John added that if this site proved to be negative, there were no other possibilities left.

A question on how the panels were secured was asked and whether the cables would be underground or not? Michael said that the panels would be put in position after piles had been driven into the ground and that most of the cables would be underground.

What happens after the Feasibility Study? John explained that a grant of up to £40,000 was offered by RCEF for a Feasibility Study (Stage 1) and this had been received; a grant for up to £100,000 is offered for Stage 2 (up to planning) and, depending on the results of both investigations, if still positive, moves would be made to secure funding from the community.

At this point Kayla Ente introduced herself as the Founder of BHESCO and how it works with RINA to ensure, not only the community is greatly involved with a project, but the advantages to local people are promoted and realised. Kayla was proud that the UK led in its attempts to reduce its reliance on fossil fuels through organisations, such as MEG, and that these organisations will generate power for their local communities and generate profits for use on local community projects. Kayla emphasised the future demand for electricity for electric vehicles and how battery storage would provide for this extra demand.

Kayla explained that BHESCO work with both Octopus Energy, Coop Energy and Unity Energy to gain a relatively high price for exporting electricity to them.

Kayla emphasised the importance of renewable energy generation stating that in June last year, for a couple of days, all our electricity came from solar power.

Kayla concluded by saying how important it was for the community to get together to support such a positive project.

The following questions were then raised.

There was a question about the site ownership. Jack Slade said that Harleyford Properties would retain ownership, but would charge a land rent to MEG at a market rate and the community would benefit by having renewable energy and profits from investments, plus extra profits going into a community fund to be distributed to local environmental groups.

Concerning biodiversity, will the Feasibility Study do any research or conduct an environmental impact assessment? Michael said that although this aspect is very important, a subsequent Stage 2 would delve into to this much more deeply.

The subject of other plans for developments in the Little Marlow Country Park were discussed, which are not popular.

John added that as he is a member of Wild Marlow and BBOWT and has connection with the Chiltern Conservation Board, he will ensure biodiversity is top of the agenda during Stage 1, and Stage 2, should Stage 2 take place.

There was a question about battery storage and what the capacity might be. Michael answered that it was difficult to give a straight answer, as the generation figures may change and it would also depend on the recipients of the power and how much they took. Battery storage can vary from one to four hours depending on the type of batteries used. Should a Stage 2 take place, this question will be more accurately answered.

Does the geology need investigation, as this is a landfill site with possible methane leakages? This will be investigated, but Jack Slade said that the landfill was mostly builders' rubble and waste.

There was a question on copyright. Who owns the copyright of the Feasibility Study report? Kayla said that the grant provider (the Government) would own the report, but in her experience, RCEF both seek and benefit from the publicity for the projects they fund.

A query was muted about the possibility of the site being upgraded to an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) by Natural England. This query was unresolved.

A question was put about how we can have a local energy supplier? John said that there were serious attempts to get a Local Energy Bill through Parliament that would allow local energy companies to exist. It is hoped that this Bill will get assent in the not too distant future. It is sorely needed.

John concluded by saying that the Feasibility Study report is due to be published by the 31st of May and that those wishing to keep in touch should either fill in the 'newsletter form' at the back of the hall, or visit the MEG website www.marlowenergygroup.com and register accordingly.

John then thanked Kayla and Michael, who had travelled some distance to attend the meeting, and thanked everyone else for their presence and interest.

End