

XLinks Consultation May /June Alverdiscott and Huntshaw Parish Council (A&HPC)
Comments.

During Construction

ACCESS

We note and commend XLinks stated intentions to require that all construction traffic for the proposed converter stations use agreed access routes.

The lanes of the parish around the proposed construction area are currently under extreme pressure from ever increasing and cumulative levels of traffic from other recent and proposed major developments (solar panel installation, Waste management development etc). They were never designed to take even the current level of traffic and are already under extreme pressure with excessive damage and, at times, severe congestion at certain pinch points where there are no passing places. In the immediate area of the proposed site, there has been a very recent severe accident involving structural damage to a resident's property that could have had fatal consequences. This was as a result of a lorry ignoring the specified access routes to the adjacent solar panel site. Between Roundswell on the A39 and Torrington there exists a spider's web of lanes all leading off the B3232 that a satnav will identify as access to the proposed site.

For this reason, the Alverdiscott & Huntshaw Parish Council (A&HPC) have serious concerns about secondary traffic in the form of XLinks and subcontractor employees, and couriers etc that will attempt to access the construction depot and site via any of the many unsuitable access points along the B3232.

A&HPC would request feedback and inclusion in your proposals—details of:

- 1) What measures you will use to effectively and safely manage access to the proposed site for ALL traffic and not just deliveries of major equipment and materials
- 2) The A&HPC would like appropriate signage, for example: "No Access to XLinks site" on all non-approved access roads
- 3) Instructions to NOT use Satnav to all those who may need access as Satnav's may lead them onto unsuitable access points.
- 4) Appropriate maps provided when contracting / ordering goods etc.
- 5) Suitable penalties for employees and suppliers if these instructions are not followed.
- 6) Serious consideration of a temporary speed limit?

We are also concerned about the possible long-term effects of any road widening in the area that may encourage large vehicles to use the surrounding roads post construction. If the road is widened to the site and not reinstated, then the residents of the parish will be condemned to a future of heavy traffic using these lanes as short cuts to improve delivery schedules regardless of risk. A&HPC would request a more robust consultation with DCC and Devon Highways in conjunction with local consultation on the long term effects of increased traffic, of all types, using the narrow lanes from Gammaton Cross. We would welcome responses from the relevant authorities to our suggestions of a weight limit and speed limit on these roads for the long term safety of the local residents who have no choice but to use these lanes for access to services. We are already at risk from vehicles using these roads and are concerned that unless a long term solution is negotiated there will be a higher risk of RTA's in the surrounding area.

OPERATING HOURS

Whilst this proposed development is in a rural area we have evidence and many reports that have resulted in complaints to TDC of noise pollution from the current solar panel installation adjacent to the proposed site. Due to the location and elevation of the proposed site noise and other disturbances have already been shown to detrimentally affect residents and with your development expected to last for 6 years the A&HPC consider the operating hours are crucial in an attempt to maintain the goodwill of the local residents.

The PC request proposed operating hours be amended to:

- 8am to 6pm Monday to Friday
- 8am to 1pm Saturday
- No operations on Sundays and Bank Holidays

EMPLOYMENT

You state in your brochure that during construction you will have up to 400 people needing to access the site and that some may need local accommodation.

- 1) Can you specify where this local accommodation may be?
- 2) We are concerned that the local area may be looking at temporary workers housed in on site caravans / mobile homes / converted containers etc.
- 3) What assurances can you give the community that this will not be the case?

BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY (figures taken from 2021 census)

The population of Alverdiscott & Huntshaw (the area most affected by the proposed development) is approximately 420 living in 180 dwellings. The majority (56.2%) of these are over 50 years old with 39.9% of the total over 60 and therefore probably considered retirement age. In addition, around 56.2% meet the 1 or more criteria of deprivation. The two parishes both have village halls and churches but no other community facilities. The dwellings are almost all off grid and rely on fossil fuel of one form or another or wood for all their heating, hot water, and cooking. The vast majority of the dwellings are old buildings with solid stone walls that do not lend themselves easily to adopting modern green energy technology.

For this reason, it is difficult to settle on any one thing, or any broad-brush initiatives, that will trigger any benefit for the whole of the community who will be affected by the proposed development and possible subsequent upgrades;. There have been past community financial compensation schemes that cannot be fully taken advantage of as the requirements for allocation of the funding are too restrictive under the above circumstances.

Many of the local residents are keen to adopt greener technologies and move away from fossil fuels but, due to the demographics of the area, there is a fear of the unknown and of being misled by unscrupulous advisors and companies, so the more recent, government led, initiatives have met with real resistance from local residents, a view reinforced by recent horror stories in the press.

The A&HPC has the following suggestions for possible measures of mitigation for the community:

- 1) The establishment of a registered consultancy firm / group with knowledge of the locality and the buildings who would build a positive relationship with the residents to advise them of appropriate green options on a building-by-building basis, in order to reduce their carbon footprint, future proof the areas energy supply and reduce energy expenses

- 2) Grants provided after said consultation to assist in upgrading their properties to greener energy solutions
- 3) Local contractors associated with the consultancy scheme qualified to carry out the works.

By such an approach XLinks would gain by providing renewable energy to the UK, demonstrating how business can work with local communities, further enhancing the renewable ethos and developing expertise that could be rolled out more widely.

In addition, if this were to be coupled with a special energy deal, for the specific area, through one of your partners, for example Octopus, then each resident would have the choice to take advantage of this through the supplier or take another tariff from an alternative supplier. This is in line with the Government committing that communities affected by onshore wind installations should “directly and tangibly benefit”. Alverdiscott and Huntshaw could become a test case for converting disparate buildings in a deprived area to a greener more carbon friendly community. This would be a cooperative venture to both compensate the local residents for the upheaval during construction and for XLinks to prove their true green credentials and expertise in converting traditional buildings in the UK to a renewable future.

We constitute only a small percentage of the UK population but with this scheme alone we will be producing 8% of the UKs energy requirement, in addition to the areas of solar panels and wind turbines currently in the area all of which are of negligible benefit to the local community.

Finally, we are told that the National Grid have said this is the only available site for this proposed scheme and you are including their extension to the site within your applications. Whilst you have held public consultations we have never seen a National Grid representative to explain why this location has been selected. It would be useful if they were to engage with the community to explain more fully why they have come to this decision. They could also address other community concerns over the possibility of more pylons to transfer the power to the grid.