

Kitland Solar Farm – April 2024 Update

Consultation Summary:

- Statkraft hosted a public consultation for communities surrounding Kitland Solar Farm between 24 January and 9 February 2024.
- This included a virtual exhibition at kitland-solar.co.uk, for the whole of the consultation period, and an in-person exhibition at Mendip Spring Golf & Country Club on 24 January 2024.
- Awareness of the consultation was raised through
 - a local mailing to 1523 addresses on 8 January, including details of the project, a feedback form which could be returned in a freepost envelope that was provided
 - an advertisement in the paper copy of North Somerset Times on 17 January 2024. The advert was available on the North Somerset Times website between 17 – 23 January 2024.
 - we shared a poster to be included on the social media pages of local Parish Councils
- Useful feedback was received through
 - 25 Public Exhibition Feedback Forms
 - 48 Reply Cards from the local mailing
 - 8 Online Feedback Forms
 - 2 Email and 2 via phone enquiries
- Comments were received on a range of issues and we will shortly be responding directly to everyone who submitted a comment and who said they would like to be kept up to date. All feedback will be carefully considered by the project team as we finalise our planning application, expected to be submitted in late spring 2024.

Public Exhibition

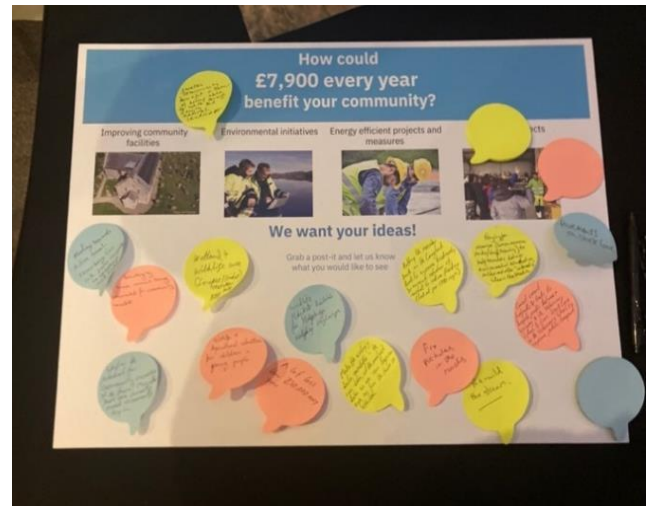
The Public Exhibition event for Kitland Solar Farm took place on 24th January 2024 and was attended by 107 people.

Pictures from Kitland In-Person Exhibition



As part of the exhibitions Statkraft were keen to gather both general and specific feedback on the project. The two areas where specific feedback was sought was the potential use of the Community Benefit Fund and several biodiversity options within the proposed site.

Attendees used marbles to vote for how some of the fields within the site boundary could be used and a suggestions board to share thoughts on how the Community Benefit Fund could support local initiatives or new ideas.



Feedback Summary

In this section we set out an overview of the feedback form responses and the results and suggestions recorded for the two specific areas where feedback was requested.

Feedback Forms

79% of respondents said they believed the country needs to generate more electricity from renewable sources. (Base 80)

25% of respondents answered no to the statement 'solar farms are a good way to generate electricity from renewable sources'. (Base 80)

Respondents' initial thoughts on whether to support or oppose the project are quite evenly balanced (Please note 101% due to rounding. Base 72 from response cards)

43% of respondents either strongly oppose or oppose the project

41% of respondents are either strongly supportive or supportive of the project

17% of respondents are neither supportive or opposed.

The Online question completed by 8 respondents was slightly different and the question and the results are provided below.

Do you think that this site is an acceptable location for a solar farm? No: 4 Unsure: 3 Yes: 1

The feedback form and online form also included a free text area which captured further details about why respondents supported or opposed the project, suggestions about how the site could be used and/or questions they had about the proposal. Some verbatim examples are provided below:

Support for scheme:

- *"A clean way of producing electricity which does not harm the environment"*
- *"I would prefer solar farms to new housing estates which displace wildlife and cause floods by replacing grass with concrete"*
- *"I think there are efforts being made to involve the community, boost biodiversity, support community through practical and monetary means"*

Alternative energy generation:

- *"This country needs to focus on nuclear power - not on unreliable sources of power like wind and sun"*
- *"I like wind farms they are very relaxing and good for the country"*

Site selection:

- *“All in favour of solar energy - but in the right place - such as on rooves of commercial buildings, houses, supermarket car parks, and the like. NOT on farmland”*
- *“Solar panels should be put on rock or all new buildings and put on all warehouses roofs not on green fields”*

Battery Energy:

- *“...to meet UK energy needs, we also need local energy storage, so I look forward to seeing how much storage is proposed to accompany the photovoltaic panels. This storage could also be used to store surplus energy from wind turbines elsewhere on the grid when generation outstrips demand and the local panels are not generating.”*
- *“Where are the solar panels manufactured - China? What is the carbon and environmental impact of mineral extraction to manufacture the large BESS?”*

Use of footpaths within the site:

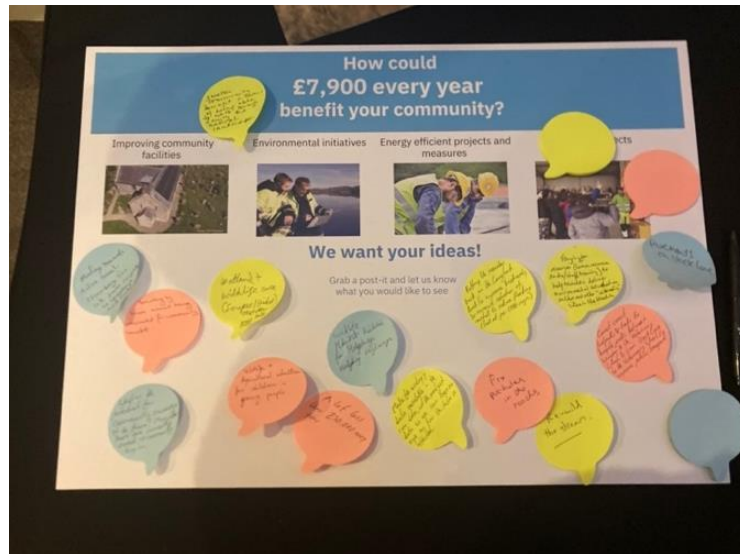
- *“Your location plan does not show the public footpaths which cross the area. Is this a deliberate omission?”*
- *“We walk round some of these fields - will we still be able to?”*

Biodiversity and Community Benefit Fund

As mentioned above, attendees were invited to vote, by placing marbles in jars, for their preference about how fields within the site could be used for biodiversity and community use.

Table 1: Voting outcome for biodiversity and community use within Kitland Solar Farm site


Community Benefit Fund Feedback



We invited ideas about how the up to £7,900 per year Community Benefit Fund for the project could be used by writing ideas on a suggestions board.

Examples include:

- *“Greater Community Benefit in terms of being able to walk through and enjoy the natural landscape.”*
- *“Convert current footpaths and tracks to bicycle paths between Wrington and the Veterinary School and from Stock Lane to the veterinary school to improve public transport.”*
- *“Paying for resources/learn resource packs/staff training to help teachers deliver environmental education on this and other ‘interesting’ sites in the locality.”*
- *“Re-wild the stream”*
- *“Putting the meanders back on the Langford Book to improve Biodiversity and increase retention of rainfall to reduce flooding (look at pre-1980 maps)”*
- *“Fix potholes in the roads”*
- *“Wildlife habitat suitable for Hedgehogs. Hedgehog Highways.”*
- *“Wildlife + Agricultural education for children + young people.”*
- *“Whatever the potential for community ownership of the farm? Many other farms are community owned = community buy in.”*
- *“Insulating by small amount being allocated for community benefit.”*
- *“Funding towards active travel, strawberry line link from Congresbury to Wrington is much needed.”*
- *“Pavements on Stock Lane”*

Conclusion

We welcome the level of community engagement with the project and the number of comments received to date. Where possible the comments will be used to inform our final proposal to be submitted into planning in spring 2024. A full summary of the consultation, including all verbatim feedback, will be published alongside the planning application.