

**Viking Link Community Liaison Group
Minutes of the second meeting
25th February 2021**

Presenters:	Mike Elmer	Viking Link
	Aaron Ward	Viking Link
	Amrit Viridi	Viking Link
	Sally Barson	Viking Link
	Phil Spain	Viking Link
	Matt Burr	Viking Link
	Robert Nicholas	Viking Link
	George Arvanitakis	Viking Link
	David Arrowsmith	Balfour Beatty
	Rajesh Balakrishnan	Balfour Beatty
	Alison Critchley	Balfour Beatty
	Scott Williams	Siemens Energy
	Colette Flynn	Siemens Energy
	Carole Riley	BECG, Chairperson
	Alex George	BECG, Secretary
 Attendees:	Adrian Benjamin	East Lindsey District Council
	Geoff Boxer	East Keal Parish Council
	Steven Brudenell	Alford Group of Churches
	Louise Edney	West Fen Parish Council
	Graham Fordham	Thornton Le Fen Parish Council
	Sue Fortune	Lincolnshire Community Foundation
	Martin Foster	East Lindsey District Council
	Elizabeth Gadd	Amber Hill Parish Council
	Simon Gadd	Amber Hill Parish Council
	Geoff Hotchkin	Helpringham Parish Council
	Paul Ireland	Little Hale Parish Council
	Steve Jack	Lincolnshire Wolds
	Kathryn Kelly	Bicker Parish Council
	Sarah Kulwicki	West Keal Parish Council
	Richard Moody	West Keal & Keal Coates Parish Council
	Christopher Pavely	Stickney Parish Council
	Peter Richardson	Thornton Le Fen Parish Council
	Charles Roberts	Frithville with Westville Parish Council
	Rachael Sutton	Executive Assistant to Victoria Atkins MP
	Marlene Sylvester	Huttoft Parish Council
	Sally Tarry	North Kesteven District Council
	Eric Wilson	Alford Group of Churches
	Chris Wray	Black Sluice Internal Drainage Board
	Elizabeth Wray	Donington Parish Council

1. Welcome and introductions

- 1.1 Carole Riley welcomed everyone to the 2nd Viking Link Community Liaison Group (CLG) meeting, which due to the COVID-19 restrictions was taking place online via GoToWebinar. Attendees were advised how they could ask a question and said there would be an opportunity to ask questions at the end of each presentation and at the end of the meeting.

2. Apologies for Absence

- 2.1 Apologies for absence had been received from:
- Kathleen Roberts, Langrville Parish Council
 - Clare Sterling, Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust

3. Approval of minutes from the meeting held on 1st October 2020

- 3.1 One comment was received on the accuracy of the minutes - Cllr Moody stated that the Balfour Beatty compound is located in West Keal, not East Keal. There were no further comments on the minutes.

3(a). Actions Update

- 3.2 *Terms of Reference* - All attendees had been provided with a copy of the draft terms of reference ahead of the inaugural CLG meeting and were asked to provide any comments they had by email to vikinglink@communityfeedback.co.uk. Carole Riley confirmed no comments had been received and that the terms of reference were now regarded as 'accepted'.
- 3.3 *Community Matters Newsletter* - Carole Riley stated that requests to be added to the Community Matters distribution list had been accepted and that electronic copies of the newsletters would be issued to CLG members to distribute within their communities, as required.
- 3.4 *Focus on Age UK* - Cllr Wray suggested that there are other loneliness focused charities in the area. Since the inaugural CLG meeting, Viking Link has reached out to the Lincolnshire Rural Support Network and we will consider them along with other organisations.
- 3.5 *Education Programme* - Cllr Wray was asked to provide details of a particular school that she wanted the project to contact about the school's programme. It is noted that Donington Cowley Endowed Primary School is currently one of the schools included in the schools programme.
- 3.6 *TED project* - Cllr March suggested Viking Link becomes involved in the TED project. Since the inaugural CLG meeting, Viking Link has researched the project and will make contact at the appropriate time.

3.7 *Format of Future Meetings* - Attendees of the inaugural CLG meeting were asked to provide comments on the format and frequency of future meetings. A variety of responses were received. For now, given the ongoing pandemic, the CLG meetings will continue to take place virtually, with a single meeting hosted every 4-6 months. If any urgent information needs to be discussed, an additional CLG will be set up.

4. Project updates

4.1 Mike Elmer, Project Director, Viking Link

- 4.1.1 Mike Elmer welcomed everyone to the CLG, both new and returning attendees.
- 4.1.2 Mike highlighted that the purpose of the CLG is to provide community representatives with project progress updates and to also provide an opportunity for attendees to ask any questions they may have related to the project.
- 4.1.3 Mike noted that Brexit has had no major impact on the construction of the Viking Link project. He went on to mention that once the project is in operation, there will be changes to the way the European energy market operates, but this will not fundamentally affect the purpose and function of the interconnector.
- 4.1.4 Viking Link has developed principles for ensuring Covid-safety, and stringent procedures are in place, including regular lateral flow tests for team members at site. Mike highlighted the importance of ensuring that the project team and the community were not exposed to any increased risk and that project works had no impact on the background-levels of Covid in the region.
- 4.1.5 Mike provided an overview of ongoing works, including the project team's commitment to archaeology and informed the attendees that historic finds, such as a 2000-year-old roman pagan burial site had been uncovered.
- 4.1.6 Referencing the Leonardo da Vinci cable laying vessel, Mike provided insight into ongoing fitout works taking place in Norway to ready the vessel for work on the project. The Leonardo da Vinci has been specially commissioned by Prysmian for the Viking Link project and is capable of carrying 120km of cable, holding a crew of 50 people and laying cable lengths of up to 3km.
- 4.1.7 Mike provided an overview of ongoing land agreements, stating that Viking Link always sought to ensure friendly negotiation and thanked landowners that had been involved in these discussions.
- 4.1.8 Mike highlighted Viking Link's efforts to preserve local wildlife, such as trees, wherever feasible. Mike recognised that any major infrastructure project will create local disturbance and noted that Viking Link has an ethos of preserving areas or reinstating them to the same or better condition than at the start.
- 4.1.9 Prysmian, based in Naples, Italy, would be supplying 1500km of cable for the Viking Link project, some of which has already been shipped to the UK and delivered to Boston port.

- 4.1.10 Mike provided an overview of seabed clearing works that took place along the offshore route between the UK and Denmark, which included the identification and safe removal of 42 items of unexploded ordnance (UXOs).
- 4.1.11 In recent times, the harsh weather conditions in Denmark, reaching -20 degrees Celsius, was an added challenge for the project.

4.2 Scott Williams, Senior Project Manager, Siemens Energy

- 4.2.1 Scott Williams informed attendees that Siemens Energy is responsible for the construction of the converter station and the connection to Bicker Fen Substation.
- 4.2.2 Attendees were shown a computer-generated image (CGI) of the converter station. Scott noted that construction work is on course for completion at the end of 2023.
- 4.2.3 Work on the converter station access road was completed ahead of schedule, and Scott thanked CLG members for being patient with the temporary traffic management systems in place on the A52.
- 4.2.4 Scott advised that the completion of the access road now provided the project team with direct access to the converter station site, reducing traffic volume impact on the local highways network during construction.
- 4.2.5 Scott informed attendees that stone is required at the converter station site, to improve the ground stability and raise the site above the flood plain. Scott noted that Siemens Energy had reached an agreement with the Triton Knoll project to reuse stone from their recent offshore wind farm connection to Bicker Fen substation. By recycling this stone, Viking Link will eliminate 470 lorry movements, saving 30 tonnes of CO₂.
- 4.2.6 Scott advised that there may be noise associated with piling rigs works due to commence from 1st March, whilst the foundations were laid for the converter station.
- 4.2.7 Scott also advised that the main civils work on the converter station will commence in June 2021, resulting in an increased workforce on site from circa 50 people at present to around 120-150 people in June.
- 4.2.8 Scott informed attendees that a temporary access road would be constructed using the recycled stone connecting the converter station to Bicker Fen substation. The road is required to install the AC cable. These works will take approximately 3-4 months and began week commencing 15th February 2021.
- 4.2.9 Scott stated that by working flexibly, Viking Link has been able to preserve an old oak tree beside Bicker Fen substation.
- 4.2.10 Scott discussed the 'left-in-left-out' access point onto the A52, outlining that given the increased traffic coming to the site from June, Viking Link intends to review the current traffic management plan with the Highways Authority to identify the safest method for vehicles entering and exiting the site and to reduce traffic impacts.

4.3 Aaron Ward, Lead Project Manager – Cables, Viking Link

- 4.3.1 Aaron Ward provided an overview of the specially commissioned cable laying vessel - Leonardo da Vinci – that is under construction in Norway.
- 4.3.2 Aaron also provided an overview of Horizontal Direct Drilling (HDD) works that will commence on 1st March at the Sandilands landfall location. The team are installing cable ducts through which the cable will be pulled in from the sea.
- 4.3.3 Aaron outlined the measures put in place to mitigate risk in compliance with the Environment Agency's sea defence requirements. The landfall site ground level has been raised by 2-metres to ensure the ground height is above sea level.
- 4.3.4 Aaron thanked local residents for their patience whilst these works were undertaken.

4.4 David Arrowsmith, Project Director, Balfour Beatty

- 4.4.1 David Arrowsmith provided an overview of his role and Balfour Beatty's role on the project to connect the landfall cable to the Bicker Fen substation.
- 4.4.2 David noted that the temporary offices at West Keal were now fully operational and were currently accommodating 80 members of staff, socially distanced with all the required Covid restrictions in place. The site includes electric vehicle charging provision and has been built using a modular design to minimise construction impact in the area.
- 4.4.3 Balfour Beatty will undertake over 100 HDDs along the 67km onshore cable route. David explained that HDDs are required at certain points along the route, such as rivers, roads and railways and to prevent the need for digging open trenches.
- 4.4.4 David emphasised the ethos at Balfour Beatty is to ensure land is left as it was found.
- 4.4.5 David provided an overview of historic and archaeological finds uncovered to date, including roman cart tracks and pottery, from over 220 trial trenches.
- 4.4.6 David explained that it is inevitable that there will be some temporary loss of local vegetation due to our works; but will be replanted when works are complete. David outlined that in some cases, Balfour Beatty are relocating trees whilst works are ongoing, before returning them to their original location where possible.
- 4.4.7 David outlined innovative measures being introduced at their compounds to create a more environmental and sustainable sites. Measures include:
 - Harvesting rainwater (to re-use as grey water) to save 2000 litres per week
 - Solar-hybrid generators powering the site and managing electronics
 - Flexible lighting to support neurodiversity
 - Using recycled furniture
 - Using recycled plastic for fencing
 - Plastic mesh for ground level, to avoid use of concrete

4.4.8 Balfour Beatty's recent recruitment and supply chain appointments, include:

- Hiring 19 new members of staff dedicated to the project (of which 12 are local people)
- 87 people locally employed by Viking Link's subcontractors
- A further 35 new hires in the area

4.4.9 David explained that these figures did not include the employment figures of sub-contractors, so it is likely there have been additional local employment opportunities.

4.4.10 David provided an overview of the upcoming milestones:

- Cable trenching works commence in March 2021
- HDD works ongoing until summer 2022
- Archaeological mitigation works continue
- Cable drum delivery to site and installation from June 2021

4.4.11 The project will require 120 x 60-tonne cable drums to be delivered along the cable route as part of the project. These deliveries (via 40 tonne trucks) will commence in June and will be carried out in a way that minimises disruption.

4.4.12 Councillor Moody referred to the security lighting on the West Keal compound, stating that was illuminated from 5am until 11pm and that it caused a glare to the surrounding area. Councillor Moody asked if other lighting measures could be considered, including motion sensor lighting.

4.4.13 David stated that he had already raised concern over the balance of lighting for security purposes and the environmental impact. He also noted that Balfour Beatty are considering alternative lighting options and that he will ensure Councillor Moody is kept informed.

Action: David Arrowsmith

4.4.14 Councillor Sylvester referred to the regular road sweeping works on the A52 and raised concern that these movements are resulting in damage to the west bank of the road.

4.4.15 David stated that he was not aware of this situation and would investigate. David added that the need for a road sweeper had been greatly reduced now that deliveries from the local quarry works had been completed.

4.4.16 Councillor Sylvester went on to query a possible typo on the CLG slides and asked if 'Welton Quarries' should have been 'Walton Quarries'. David confirmed that Councillor Sylvester was correct and the slides would be updated.

4.5 Amrit Virdi, Compliance and Communications Manager, Viking Link

4.5.1 Amit Virdi provided an update on the most recent Community Matters newsletter, issued in December 2020. The newsletter was issued to 8000 local business and residential addresses along the cable route. The next edition is due to be published in Summer 2021.

- 4.5.3 Amrit thanked CLG members for their feedback on the inaugural CLG meeting and clarified that it is Viking Link's intention to host face to face meetings and Parish Council Forums, when it is safe to do so. In the meantime, Viking Link will continue to hold virtual meetings.
- 4.5.4 Viking Link has been writing out to parish council clerks to advise of road works associated with the project within their area, including notification of temporary traffic lights and speed restrictions. Amrit thanked the local community for their patience and understanding whilst the road works are being undertaken.
- 4.5.6 The Viking Link website is updated on a monthly basis with upcoming project works (www.viking-link.com/projectupdates).

4.6 Sally Barson, Stakeholder Engagement and Communications Manager, Viking Link

- 4.6.1 Sally Barson outlined her role at Viking Link with regard to stakeholder engagement and communications.
- 4.6.2 Sally stated that Viking Link is keen to contribute to the communities in which it works, outlining three main areas that the team is focused on:
- Loneliness
 - The environment
 - Education
- 4.6.3 With the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic, it has restricted the project team's ability to provide physical support to communities on local initiatives.
- 4.6.4 The community contributions criteria is currently being finalised and will outline the local, not for profit, community initiatives that Viking Link could support with time and materials.
- 4.6.5 Sally informed attendees that all requests for support, received to date, will be reviewed against this criteria, and responded to accordingly. The criteria will be uploaded to the project website for reference when submitting community contributions requests.
- 4.6.6 Viking Link will continue to engage with Age UK Lincolnshire and Age UK East Lindsey to identify ways they can support the charities. So far Viking Link support has included providing food donations, PPE and winter warmth packs.
- 4.6.7 Sally updated attendees on Viking Link's school education programme, outlining how in light of the coronavirus the workshops had changed focus and would be delivered virtually in schools.
- 4.6.8 Sally provided details of a Key Stage 2 education book, aligned to the national curriculum, being developed by Viking Link, which will be issued towards the end of March to the Primary Schools that are part of the projects schools programme. The project will also reach out to other primary schools along the cable route to offer this free educational resource.

- 4.6.9 When the schools return after lockdown, Viking Link will be supporting pupils by donating materials such as stationery, outdoor games and sports equipment to the 10 schools on the projects schools programme.
- 4.6.10 Due to restrictions, Viking Link has been unable to support community environmental initiatives. Sally informed attendees that they are passionate about supporting environmental initiatives and look forward to being able to do so.
- 4.6.11 Sally outlined that Viking Link will procure locally, where possible, as this benefits the environment and supports the local community. Viking Link aims to create a register of local businesses, that will be shared with the main contractors.
- 4.6.12 Businesses can register on Viking Link's procurement database by providing company details to vikinglink@communityfeedback.co.uk

5. Questions and Answers

- 5.1 Attendees were invited to ask questions of the project team.
- 5.2 Councillor Paveley asked if both schools in Stickney had been invited to participate in Viking Link's education programme.
- 5.3 Amrit Viridi advised that Viking Link is currently engaged with the primary school, not the secondary school. Amrit noted that many schools in the area had been invited to participate in the schools programme and that Viking Link can make contact with the secondary school again to see if there is any interest.
Action: Ms Amrit Viridi
- 5.4 Councillor Kelly mentioned that residents of Bicker had raised concerns over the condition of the road surface on Vicarage Drove and the metal fencing along the road that is in a poor state of repair.
- 5.5 Scott Williams noted that this may be related to works on the AC cable, as Vicarage Drove lies alongside the Bicker Fen substation. He thanked Councillor Kelly for bringing it to his attention and offered to investigate the matter as quickly as possible, as fencing contractors were still working on site.
Action: Mr Scott Williams
- 5.6 Mr Jack referred to consultation with Viking Link's consent team in March 2020, regarding the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and landscape protection plans. Mr Jack asked if himself or Natural England would be receiving an update from Viking Link on the matter.
- 5.7 Aaron Ward stated that commitments would be outlined in Viking Link's Landscape Restoration Plan which is due to be finalised shortly and submitted to the Lincolnshire Wolds and Natural England for comments and input.

- 5.8 Mr Jack referred to the community contributions criteria, outlining focus on providing time and materials and asked if this support would extend to tree planting schemes, possibly involving schools?
- 5.9 Amrit Virdi stated that there will be some restrictions on support offered, based on distance from the cable corridor, but went on to say that Viking Link welcomed suggestions for community contributions and that any received will be assessed against the criteria.
- 5.10 Mr Jack queried whether information about the archeological finds will be available to the public, stating that he would be interested to learn of any finds uncovered in the AONB.
- 5.11 Amrit Virdi advised that it is Viking Link's intention to hold an archeological finds exhibition event, when possible. All finds are being recorded and Viking Link intends to make available and display this information.
- 5.12 David Arrowsmith added that Balfour Beatty was looking into having a community engagement building on their compound at West Keal, where interesting finds will be showcased and available for the public to view.
- 5.13 Ms Fortune queried if Viking Link's community contributions criteria would be made publicly available.
- 5.14 Amrit Virdi replied that, once finalised, the criteria will be available to view on the project website.

6. Closing Remarks

- 6.1 Mike Elmer thanked everyone for attending the meeting. He commented on the progress of the project and stated that he hoped the easing of lockdown restrictions would allow Viking Link to better support the community on their community contributions requests going forward. Mike also thanked the community for their patience during this period.
- 6.2 Mike outlined the broad benefits of the project and the need for interconnectors for energy security, whilst highlighting that he understands many CLG members represent the communities and landowners most affected by the work.
- 6.3 Mike stated his appreciation for attendees bringing certain issues to the project team's attention, such as road damage and compound lighting, these can be looked at and solutions investigated.
- 6.4 Mike encouraged CLG members to get in touch regarding any further concerns or suggestions via vikinglink@communityfeedback.co.uk.