

Bengeworth Road Community Liaison Group

Minutes of the meeting

Overview

On Tuesday 7 September 2021, the fourth Community Liaison Group (CLG) meeting was held to discuss the works at Bengeworth Road, as part of National Grid's London Power Tunnels project (LPT). All residents who previously signed up for the CLG were invited to attend the meeting. Emails were also sent to all ward (Herne Hill) councillors, as well as local MP, Helen Hayes. Helen Hayes MP and one local councillor, Cllr Jim Dickson, attended the session, as well as six residents.

The CLG follows three previous CLG meetings held in February, March, and April 2021 and three public information sessions, two held on 7 December 2020 and one held on 20 January 2021.

Meeting called by: National Grid

Date: Tuesday 7 September 2021

Time: 6.00pm – 7.00pm

Venue / format: Zoom

Speakers and panel members (6)

- Gareth Burden, Project Director, National Grid
- Mark Farmer, Project Manager, National Grid
- Georgina Grant, DCO Manager, National Grid
- Sarah Harris, Senior Communications Adviser, National Grid
- Farhan Nomani, Project Manager, UK Power Networks
- Joe Cawley, Director, Grayling

Technical Support and notetakers (2)

- Priya Shah, Grayling
- Natasha Hall, Grayling

Elected representatives (2)

- Helen Hayes MP
- Cllr Jim Dickson

Residents and members of the local community (6)

Presentation

Joe Cawley (JC) opened the meeting by explaining several 'housekeeping' points. JC also explained that the meeting would be recorded for internal purposes only.

JC then ran through the meeting agenda, outlining that the following would be discussed:

- National Grid's needs case
- the works National Grid is currently doing on site and an update on the screening decision
- a UK Power Networks update on their works on site
- timescales through to the end of the project, and
- time at the end for resident's questions.

Needs Case:

JC then handed over to Gareth Burden (GB), who introduced himself and reiterated his role for any new attendees as the Project Director for the National Grid Bengeworth Road site. He explained that this slide (8) had been included to remind residents of the overall scheme, reiterating that the Bengeworth Road site is part of a wider plan to rewire the capital and to ensure that they have a future proofed system that is able to meet the needs of the capital for the next 50 years.

GB then explained that Bengeworth Road is a new substation, following a connection request from National Grid's customer, UK Power Networks (UKPN), to connect the site to National Grid's transmission network, which typically runs at 275 and 400 kV. He used the analogy that National Grid is the 'motorways of the electricity system', whilst the role of UK Power Networks is more similar to A and B roads.

GB then went on to explain that incorporating the Bengeworth Road connection into the wider LPT programme provides the best value for end consumers and the least disruption. He noted that Mark Farmer would touch upon this later in the presentation.

Start of Works and Screening Decision Update:

GB then handed over to Georgina Grant (GG). GG explained that National Grid submitted a request for a screening opinion to Lambeth council in April 2021, including the 'integrated engineering solutions', mentioned at the last CLG. These included a reduction in HGV movements due to the removal of the adits from the tunnel route.

GG explained that the screening decision took longer than anticipated and that the continued delay threatened to cause significant problems for the overall programme, with the potential that they would not be able to include all the previously discussed benefits for the community. GG explained that this is why National Grid progressed with permanent works in August for the shaft. GG explained that under the Electricity Act, National Grid has Permitted Development rights, so if there are no significant environmental effects, National Grid can build their network. GG explained that the negative screening decision that was received in December 2020 was still applicable to the shaft works as there has been no change in design or construction techniques between the two screening requests. The December 2020 opinion confirmed there are no significant environmental effects.

GG mentioned that on Friday 3 September, National Grid received the negative screening decision from Lambeth Council, meaning that benefits presented in previous Bengeworth Road CLGs are now part of the project design. She also explained that the Unilateral Undertaking that accompanied the screening opinion is an agreement that National Grid presented to the Council to allow monitoring of the site works. This is a legally binding agreement to embed all the mitigation that is part of the environmental assessment within National Grid's works. GG explained that a copy of this is readily available on Lambeth Council's planning portal with the decision notice.

Start of works:

GG then handed over to Mark Farmer (MF) to explain the current site activity. MF stated that shaft sinking works have begun on site and are planned to continue until January 2022 and that National Grid also has plans to construct a dividing wall through the shaft and prepare the shaft for the Tunnel Boring Machine (TBM), which is currently on its way from the National Grid site at New Cross.

MF then explained that there should not be any great change in the level of activity between now and January 2022, with the same number of HGVs on site and same working hours of 8am – 6pm, Monday – Friday, with occasional permitted Saturday working, during 8am – 1pm, when necessary. MF then reiterated GG's explanation that, due to the new negative screening decision, National Grid is well placed to deliver works on time.

A photograph of the area around the shaft was then shown to residents. MF explained that National Grid dig a metre deep, then install a ring of precast concrete segments within the shaft, grout behind it to back seal the void, then repeat all the way down until they reach 33 metres deep.

MF then went on to look at the access route to site for HGVs, which will now pass through the King's College Hospital Business Park.

Addressing noise concerns:

MF then handed over to Farhan Nomani (FN) who firstly addressed the noise concerns that have been raised, specifically about UK Power Networks' operational staff, who are using the site as a storage depot. FN explained that, whilst there have been some instances of operatives being on site out of hours, it is not acceptable to UK Power Networks that their staff are creating noise out of hours. FN explained that substantial action will be taken to mitigate these occurrences. FN added that UK Power Networks has moved large amounts of stored equipment further away from properties, which he believes mitigated the noise for a short period of time. However, FN acknowledged that there were still issues with noise and that some residents are experiencing noise disturbances more than others, so UK Power Networks will reach out to these residents individually to address their concerns.

FN went on to mention that there are some reports of rubbish being blown into residents' gardens. He said that UK Power Networks will be speaking to those residents to see if they would like barriers installed, whilst understanding that this may have a visual impact.

Timescales:

FN then handed over to JC again, who talked through the timescales of the Bengeworth Road works.

JC reiterated the August 2021 shaft works have already started. He also mentioned that in October 2021, more welfare facilities will become available for staff which will be in the south-east corner of the site. In May 2022, the shaft and dividing wall that MF previously described will be completed. JC noted that residents want to know what the substation headhouse is going to look like and said that National Grid hope to reveal plans at the end of this year or the beginning of next year (late 2021/ Spring 2022) and will discuss the plans with residents. After this, between 2023-25, the substation and headhouse will be constructed and in 2026, the works will be complete.

The presentation concluded and JC then invited residents to ask any questions they may have.

Questions

Please note that this is a summary of the questions and responses and there is a separate document with all questions and answers for your reference. For ease, we have grouped questions under themes.

Suggestion of a localised hotline

Helen Hayes MP asked for clarification on where residents should go in the short term for their queries – what is the process, if an issue is raised, what is the shared expectation in response, to resolve things as quickly as possible?

JC explained that for National Grid works there is a 24-hour hotline as well as an email address which can be found on the website. From the UK Power Networks side, FN also clarified that there is a contact number, email address, and twitter handle to raise any queries.

FN explained that the query will go through to UK Power Networks call handlers, who will deal with the enquiry. In this particular instance, the UK Power Networks call handlers are aware of the works taking place at Bengeworth Road and therefore know the relevant contacts to forward queries on. These queries would go through the stakeholder management team (Phoebe Adams). Project-related matters will go to FN, while operational matters will go to Adam Champion. FN agreed with Ms Hayes that a solution for more immediate relief for residents' concerns may be necessary, as current complaints go through a centralised system before being redistributed to the necessary points of contact. FN stated that, going forward, a localised number may be more beneficial to deal with out of hours noise on site.

Sarah Harris (SH) added that, while National Grid have their routine working hours, if for any reason workers had to continue works outside of those agreed hours, National Grid would notify residents about that. She reiterated that the Community Relations team is just a call away and things can get rectified very quickly.

Ingress and egress agreement

Cllr Jim Dickson raised a question about the screening opinion, which he said relies upon a previous agreement with King's College Hospital that National Grid would gain entry to the site by using their access road, but not exit. Cllr Dickson stated that the presentation notes that King's College Hospital would allow ingress and egress under the agreement, but that it fails to address the possibility of this agreement being reneged on. Cllr Dickson asked for a guarantee that this position would hold and that, if HGVs wanted to gain access to the site, there is no potential for them to use residential roads, except in an emergency.

JC responded by agreeing with Cllr Dickson that a request for both ingress and egress was not in the screening assessment, as the two-way access was secured subsequent to National Grid submitting their screening assessment. JC then explained that National Grid is looking to put an addendum onto the screening assessment to include egress as well as access, but in the meantime National Grid is entering and exiting through the hospital at risk, as they consider this access change to be to the benefit of residents. GG added that National Grid submitted the request for this addendum on the day of the CLG (07.09.21) and are expecting the Council to turnaround a decision in the next 21 days, pending holiday season.

The next query on this issue was a request for clarification, that it is National Grid's intention to add an addendum to the current legal agreement for egress from as well as access to the site. The resident said that he does not believe that a formal 'agreement' is enough.

GB responded first, by saying that all on-site activity by National Grid is in line with the Unilateral Undertaking. GB added that he did not want to delay the Council's decision by making changes after submission. GB went on to explain that adding an addendum to the agreement is purely for administrative purposes and that National Grid are using the hospital access both ways now.

GB also explained that he will have to, occasionally, use the option of accessing the site through Bengeworth Road, under exceptional circumstances such as a hospital emergency. GB reassured residents by saying that National Grid will write to residents when this very occasionally happens and hoped that this mitigates any worries. GG added that the revised drawing of the site, which showed the new agreed access and formed part of the legal agreement, was submitted on the day of the CLG (07.09.2021).

Commencement of headhouse works

Cllr Dickson raised a query about when the headhouse works are going to start and what opportunities residents will have to contribute and see their responses considered reasonably.

JC explained that the sizes of the headhouses will be determined by the equipment required on site. JC explained that the Council will have their own consultation before the works commence, but that National Grid also want to do their own engagement with residents prior to this.

The next query on this issue came from a resident who would like to know more about the building design and explained that their fellow residents have a lot of ideas about how they can reduce the visual impact of the building. The resident mentioned that they do not expect a response to this comment but would like to mention it for the sake of the minutes.

UK Power Networks out of hours work

Cllr Dickson raised queries about UK Power Networks' arrangements for out of hours works. Cllr Dickson explained that, upon meeting with UK Power Networks' representative Adam Champion (AC), many of the residents' queries about night-time disturbances were answered. Based on his description of the operations, Cllr Dickson stated that he had little faith in the reduction of night-time working and the noise that comes with it. Cllr Dickson added that he is consulting council officers on powers available to challenge UK Power Network's night-time work.

FN then agreed that there have been various arrangements that have been trialled on site to reduce noise for residents, such as moving materials further away. FN stated that one incident is more than

enough. FN agreed that there are no explanations as to why materials are being on and offloaded at 11 pm. FN noted that UK Power Networks is taking this very seriously from a delivery perspective and will be taking actions with the operation team.

FN then explained that while it is not desirable to hear that there are some actions that could be taken by the council, he will welcome discussion and will try to resolve this with the help of the council and give the residents some level of reassurance.

A resident opened his query by saying that they second everything that Cllr Dickson has said about noise at the site and agreed that it is an issue with UK Power Networks. He then stated that, whilst he was grateful for FN's concern, he would welcome more action. He also seconded Cllr Dickson's comment that, whilst AC's words were helpful to an extent, further action was required by the Council. The resident explained that he has over 400 video clips wherein UK Power Networks operatives have come to the site and have made unnecessary noise and is confused as to how this could be, as AC says, 'emergency work'.

FN responded by saying that he agrees with many of the resident's complaints about night-time activity and that he has responded to the resident's questions privately and explained that they will be commencing a thorough investigation internally into the issues raised. FN explained that he and Phoebe Adams would be coming back to the resident on these issues directly with an explanation as to why the night-time movements took place, as well as working closely on comments that Cllr Dickson previously raised. *Please note that the individual noise queries are being dealt with separately.*

Record of complaints

A resident raised a question in relation in the Zoom chat function around National Grid's record of complaints:

Has NG been keeping a record of complaints received in relation to the works carried out?

JC responded by assuring the resident that National Grid do keep a record of complaints across LPT, not just in relation to the Bengeworth Road site.

Commencement of permanent works

A resident asked in the Zoom chat function which authority National Grid was allowed to commence permanent works in August:

As you just stated NG progressed with the permanent works of the shaft back in August prior to the publication of Lambeth Planning's decision notice on the 2nd of September 2021 in relation to 21/01789/EIASC. Under what authority were such works carried out? Please indicate and detail the relevant piece of legislation.

GG explained that the permissions in the negative screening from December 2020 allowed National Grid to start permanent shaft works. Further to this, the shaft has not changed since this screening, so National Grid has used their Permitted Development rights, which can be found in the Town and Country Planning General Permitted Development Rights Order Amendment 2015. GG further clarified that National Grid has been conservative in how they approach the screening and that, in collaboration with the Council, National Grid wanted to get everything into the new integrated engineering request for screening opinion in April 2021. Because of the delays in the Council's outcome, they took the decision to use the negative screening decision from last year to start permanent works for the shaft.

Monitoring

A resident raised a query in the Zoom chat function around National Grid's use of air monitors on site:

Have NG installed one or more automatic continuous monitors for NO2, PM10, and PM 2.5 and if so could you indicate the date this was carried out and how much data has NG captured and recorded to date?

GG responded by saying that air quality monitors have been on site since late-spring to early-summer and that a report is created each month. The council can request this at any time, as it is under National Grid's obligations, as part of the Unilateral Undertaking, which was mentioned previously.

Another question on this issue was raised by a resident, who wanted to know more about the legal agreement and how monitoring features in the agreement. The resident said that National Grid's activities will negatively impact air pollution levels in the area and would like clarification on whether National Grid is going to pay Lambeth Council to monitor the site. The resident requested that National Grid should regularly monitor the air pollution and give residents access to the results of the monitoring.

GG responded by saying that National Grid is paying Lambeth Council so that they can monitor the works. GG said that she has had extensive conversations with the environmental health officer about the best way to monitor the air quality and that its current location, directly adjacent to the shaft access, is the right place to accurately monitor the air quality. Air quality is continually monitored, and the results can be requested at any time and are also shared on a monthly basis. GG went on to encourage the resident to reach out through the community line if they would like to see the results of monitoring.

The next question on this issue echoed the previous concern. The resident said that they would appreciate a further presentation on mitigation and monitoring at the next CLG, so that residents can understand practically and in uncomplicated language, how monitoring and mitigation are going to take place. Whilst the resident understood that it is the responsibility of Lambeth, the resident would appreciate NG's goodwill to explain it in simpler terms than what is laid out in the documents provided.

GG confirmed that National Grid would be happy to do this for the next meeting.

Emergency Diesel Generator

A resident raised a question in the Zoom chat function asking whether National Grid are using an Emergency Diesel Generator:

Is NG using an Emergency Diesel Generator and / or will it be doing so, in which case, could you give us the relevant specs?

GG explained that, whilst National Grid do have an Emergency Diesel Generator, this is only to be used in emergency working conditions and if it is needed to be used at any time, National Grid need an agreement in writing from the Council to use it. It is a backup system for the operational phase of the works and will not be used routinely.

Frequency of CLG meetings:

Cllr Dickson asked about the frequency of CLG Meetings going forward.

JC clarified that the intention is to have them once a month, more specifically the first Tuesday of the month. This would schedule the next CLG to fall on 5 October. JC also noted that if there was a view from residents that this is too frequent, National Grid would be open to altering that schedule.

Personal question

A resident made a complaint about personal grievances with National Grid.

GB responded by saying that this is a personal issue, and this would be dealt with offline.

Closing remarks

Joe Cawley drew proceedings to a close and thanked everyone for their time.

MEETING ADJOURNED
