



Upper Leigh Solar Farm

Statement of Pre-Application Community Involvement



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1. Introduction

- 1.1. The proposed Upper Leigh Solar Farm is a 49 MW output solar array on land to the west of Leigh Lane, Upper Leigh, Staffordshire.
- 1.2. The site straddles two Local Planning Authorities: Staffordshire Moorlands District Council, and East Staffordshire Borough Council.
- 1.3. As a result of increasing cases of COVID-19, Lightrock Power did not feel that it was in the interest of public health to hold in-person public events during the initial consultation period. Instead, Lightrock Power resolved to adopt a comprehensive and broad approach to consultation, providing as many avenues as possible for members of the public to engage, in an accessible way.
- 1.4. The proposed Upper Leigh Solar Farm was publicly announced on 7th March 2022, and a four-week public consultation period followed, with the consultation closing on 4th April 2022.
- 1.5. Confidential briefings were offered to local community representatives and the closest neighbours prior to the project being announced.
- 1.6. An online virtual consultation platform (website) was established (appendix A), which provided information on all the key features of the project, accompanied by an online survey (appendix F).
- 1.7. An information leaflet (appendix B) including details of the online exhibition and survey was sent through the post to 81 local residents.
- 1.8. In order to address the issue of accessibility – specifically, reaching those who cannot access online information - the leaflet stated, “If you cannot access our online material, please call or write to us and we can share further details with you by post.”
- 1.9. A press release (appendix C) was issued on 7th March to five local news outlets.
- 1.10. All of Lightrock Power’s consultation materials were available in a variety of accessible formats that could be provided on request.
- 1.11. The website received 88 unique views.
- 1.12. 12 people completed the survey.
- 1.13. One person contacted the team via email.
- 1.14. The survey results showed that 100% of respondents (12 people) said they think it is important for the UK to be generating more of its own renewable energy, and 83% (10 people) are supportive of Upper Leigh Solar Farm specifically.

Community engagement plan

- 1.15. The overall strategic aim of the community engagement was to ensure that the community, local elected representatives, and planning authorities were well informed, and that Lightrock Power understood the concerns of the local community, so that steps could be taken to mitigate any issues within the scheme as far as possible.
- 1.16. Whilst consultation on planning applications of this nature is not currently a statutory requirement, Lightrock Power shared their public consultation plans with the with the Planning Officers at Staffordshire Moorlands District and East Staffordshire Borough Councils beforehand and sought advice on any further consultation measures that might need to be incorporated.
- 1.17. The team at Lightrock Power believe that good community and stakeholder engagement is a priority and that this part of the development process is invaluable in shaping and informing the planning application.
- 1.18. Overall Lightrock Power found the exercise helpful and informative and particularly valued conversations with the closest neighbours, who provided useful feedback.

2. Engagement with Key Political Stakeholders and Parish Councils

- 2.1. The site straddles two Parliamentary Constituencies, two Local Planning Authorities, two County Councils, and two Parishes.
- 2.2. Key political stakeholders and Parish Councils were first approached in confidence via email on 22nd February 2022 (appendix D). The email contained basic information about the project, a copy of the resident information leaflet (appendix B), and Lightrock Power's contact details.
- 2.3. Lightrock Power offered meetings at this point in order to equip these stakeholders with any information that they may require prior to their communities getting in touch. Where phone numbers were available, emails were followed up with a courtesy phone call on 24th February 2022.

MP for Stone

- 2.4. Rt Hon Sir William Cash MP's office confirmed that the email had been forwarded to Sir Bill's parliamentary office for his attention.
- 2.5. Lightrock Power did not have any further correspondence from Rt Hon Sir William Cash MP.

MP for Burton

- 2.6. Rt Hon Kate Griffiths MP confirmed receipt of the email and that she would forward any concerns raised by constituents to us.
- 2.7. She would be keen to attend an in-person exhibition if one is to be held.

Staffordshire Moorlands District Council

- 2.8. Ward councillors for Checkley, Cllr Mark Deaville, Cllr Peter Wilkinson & Cllr Alan Hulme, and Cabinet Members for Communities and Climate Change, Michael Bowen and Joe Porter, did not respond to the email.
- 2.9. Lightrock Power followed up with phone calls on 24th February 2022.
- 2.10. Cllr Mark Deaville's voicemailbox was full and Lightrock Power were unable to get through to him despite several attempts throughout the consultation period.
- 2.11. Lightrock Power spoke to Mark Deaville on 20th June 2022 to offer the last chance for a meeting before the application was submitted. He confirmed that he would like a meeting and Lightrock Power emailed him details to forward to his PA.
- 2.12. Cllr Peter Wilkinson confirmed that he will call us back if he has any questions. He is on the Planning Committee and is concerned about lobbying.
- 2.13. Lightrock Power had several long telephone conversations with Alan Hulme, who expressed his concerns around the project. He would like a joint meeting with Lightrock Power and Cllr Mark Deaville. Mark Deaville was un-reachable throughout the pre-application consultation, however, at the time of writing, a pre-submission meeting is being arranged.
- 2.14. Cllr Michel Bowen explained that he likes to get his information from planning officers and is not in favour of replicating information, however he appreciates Lightrock Power's thorough consultation.
- 2.15. Cllr Joe Porter replied to the voicemail via text message, requesting further information. Lightrock Power replied via text message however did not receive any further response.

East Staffordshire Borough Council

- 2.16. Ward councillor for Abbey, Colin Whittaker, and Cabinet Member for Planning, George Allen, did not respond to the email.
- 2.17. Lightrock Power followed up with phone calls on 24th February 2022.
- 2.18. Cllr Colin Whittaker's voice mailbox was full, but Lightrock Power were able to leave a message on 1st March 2022. Lightrock Power did not receive a response to the voicemail.
- 2.19. Lightrock Power left a voicemail for George Allen and did not receive a response.

County Councils

- 2.20. County Councillor for Cheadle and Checkley, Cllr Mark Deaville, did not respond to the email and was unreachable via phone during the pre-application consultation period. See 2.11 for later contact.
- 2.21. County Councillor for Uttoxeter, Cllr Philip Atkins OBE, did not respond to the email or the voicemail left by Lightrock Power.

Parish Councils

- 2.22. Checkley Parish Council and Leigh Parish Council both received the information email and follow up phone call.
- 2.23. Lightrock Power received an email from Checkley Parish Council on 2nd March 2022 explaining that they already have a solar farm presentation scheduled for their next parish meeting, but suggesting that they attend in the future.
- 2.24. Checkley Parish Council have not suggested a suitable date.
- 2.25. Lightrock Power spoke to the chair of Leigh Parish Council on 24th February 2022. He confirmed receipt of the email and advised that he'd be in touch when he'd had time to read it. He explained that the Parish Council is receiving a large number of emails from solar developers and that it can be hard to establish which one is which. He suggested that the local community will oppose such schemes.
- 2.26. Lightrock Power did not hear anything further from Leigh Parish Council.

3. Engagement with Local Residents

- 3.1. Due to rising cases of COVID-19, in-person public information events were not planned for the initial consultation period.
- 3.2. The risks of not holding in-person events in the community were evaluated. Lightrock Power felt that there was a risk that some residents might not have been able to engage with the online exhibition, and this was mitigated by sending a leaflet to the community, and providing written copies of all online material on request.
- 3.3. In-person public events could have been arranged had there been desire from the local community, however they were not requested.
- 3.4. Lightrock Power adopted a comprehensive approach to consultation in an attempt to reach as many people as possible. The public consultation included the following activities and measures:

Information leaflets

- 3.5. A single-sided, A4 information leaflet (appendix B) was sent via Royal Mail to all households within 1km+ of the proposal and along the local transport route, totalling 81 households. The entire villages of Upper Leigh and Lower Leigh were included. See appendix E for the distribution map. The leaflet was sent via second class mail on 4th March 2022.
- 3.6. The leaflet provided information about the project and invited people to view the website (appendix A), visit the online exhibition (appendix G), and complete the survey (appendix F). Details of the dedicated email address, telephone number and postal address to contact the Lightrock Power team were provided on the leaflet. Members of the public also had the option of requesting printed material to be sent through the post.
- 3.7. Nobody requested printed material.

Press release

- 3.8. A press release (appendix C) was distributed to Cheadle and Tean Times, Uttoxeter Advertiser, Uttoxeter Post and Times, Cheadle Post and Times, and Uttoxeter Cheadle Voice on 7th March 2022.
- 3.9. While none of these papers picked up the press release, Cheadle and Tean Times had previously carried the story, taking details from Lightrock Power's EIA screening request made in June 2021. <https://www.timesechoandlife.co.uk/solar-farm-on-the-cards-for-farmland/>

Website

- 3.10. The website www.upperleighsolarfarm.com was launched prior to the key stakeholder email on 22nd February 2022. The content was as follows:
 - Home page – overview of the project, interactive map, contact details, survey link, and a link to the online exhibition
 - Timeline
 - Why Solar
 - Why Lightrock
 - Why Now
 - Why Here
 - FAQs
- 3.11. The online exhibition (appendix G) was representative of that which would have been held in a public meeting prior to COVID-19. Boards were as follows:
 - Welcome
 - Site Location
 - Solar Energy
 - Community Benefits
 - Ecology and Wildlife
 - Transport and Access
 - Timeline and Planning Process
 - Frequently Asked Questions

- 3.12. The website received a total of 88 unique visitors. Page views totalled 349.
- 3.13. Of those visits, the online exhibition was viewed 39 times.

Social Media

- 3.14. Lightrock Power monitored local public groups on social media but found no discussion of Upper Leigh Solar Farm during the consultation period.
- 3.15. There had been a post referring to Upper Leigh Solar Farm in a local Facebook group in June 2021. Whilst the post was in opposition, there was a mixture of support and opposition in the comments beneath.

Phone calls

- 3.16. Lightrock Power identified eight close neighbours to be contacted via phone for a more in-depth introduction to the project, prior to the wider community being informed.
- 3.17. Neighbours that could not be reached via the phone received a letter with contact details to use, should they wish to find out more about the project. Once such neighbour was contacted via email rather than post.
- 3.18. Further detail of the content of these phone calls can be found under 6. Key Feedback Themes and Lightrock Power's Response.
- 3.19. The landlord of one of the neighbouring properties contacted Lightrock Power with concerns about property value and desirability.

Contacting the project team

- 3.20. The leaflet, press release and website clearly detailed ways for the public to contact the team by email, telephone, survey, and post. One person emailed, and nobody aside from the close neighbour mentioned above telephoned or wrote in. There were 12 responses to the survey. Feedback is discussed in section 5 (Online Survey) and section 6 (Key Feedback Themes and Lightrock Power's Response) below.
- 3.21. Early feedback via email and survey responses suggested that the local community was largely supportive.
- 3.22. To Lightrock Power's knowledge every query via email and phone was answered.

Community meetings

- 3.23. Lightrock Power have not yet attended any community meetings, however they expect to attend Leigh Parish Council's meeting in May. This will not be too late to request meaningful change to the project's design.

Website Updates

- 3.24. The project website was updated to confirm the closure of the pre-application consultation period on 4th April 2022.

4. Engagement with Groups and Societies

- 4.1. Lightrock Power are delighted to have a corporate partnership with the RSPB, who provide advice on biodiversity enhancement.
- 4.2. Lightrock Power had a useful conversation with the Recreational Fields Committee in relation to a new play area.
- 4.3. Lightrock Power contacted Staffordshire Moorlands Climate Action in relation to their Energy Fair.
- 4.4. A representative from Staffordshire Moorlands Climate Action called for further information about Upper Leigh Solar Farm. Discussions are ongoing.

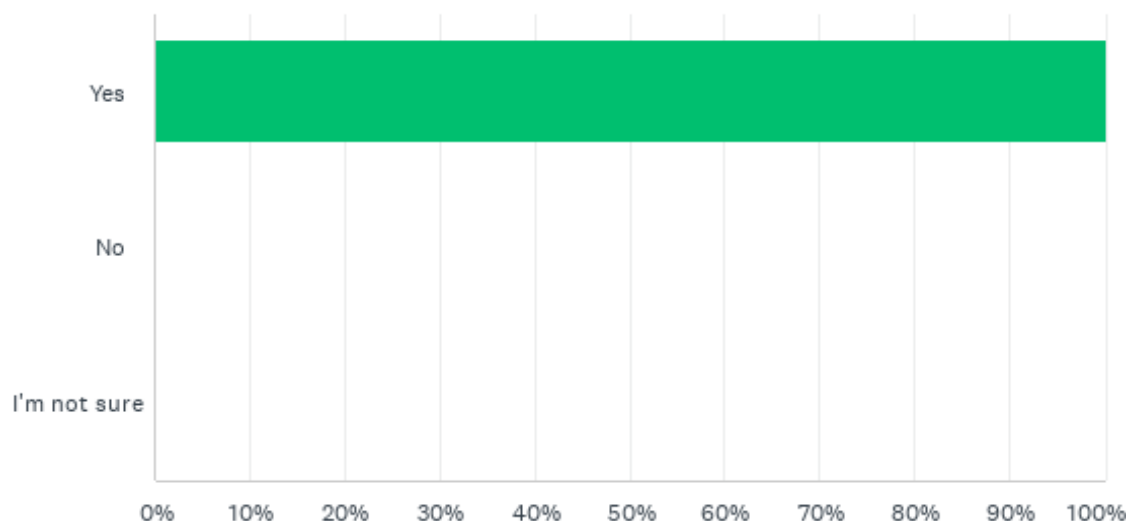
5. Online Survey

Online survey feedback

- 5.1. The online survey (appendix F) comprised eleven questions, a mixture of multiple choice and open-ended. 12 people responded to the online survey.
- 5.2. Results are representative of surveys completed up to 4th April 2022.
- 5.3. Participants were asked direct questions about climate change, solar, and specifically about the proposal: 83% (ten people) indicated that they were supportive of Upper Leigh Solar Farm.
- 5.4. These results indicate that there is significant support for the project in the community.
- 5.5. Responses to each question are detailed below.

Do you think it is important for the UK to be generating more of its own renewable energy?

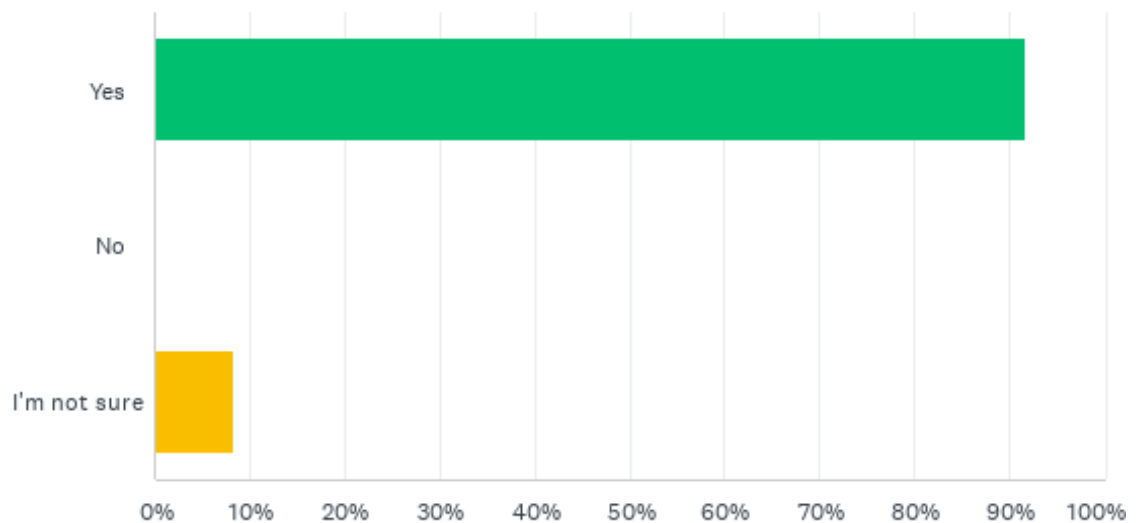
Answered: 12 Skipped: 0



There was strong support for the UK to generate more of its own renewable energy, with 100% (12 people) answering yes.

Solar farms are low maintenance, quiet, and provide a safe habitat for local wildlife. Do you think solar is a good option for renewable energy generation in this area?

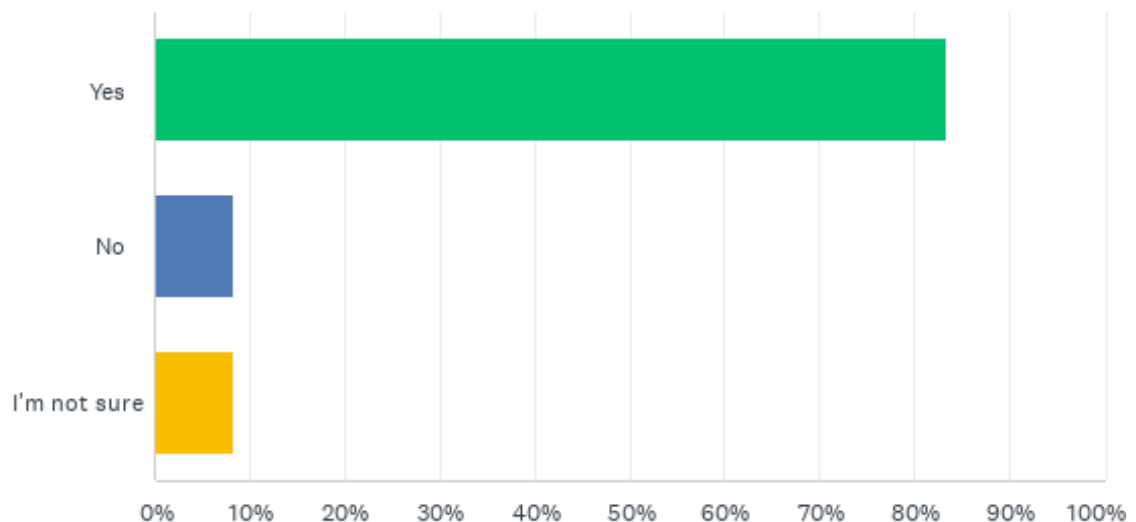
Answered: 12 Skipped: 0



There was significant support for renewable energy generation in the area. 92% (eleven people) indicated that they think it is a good option, with 8% (one person) answering "I'm not sure."

Are you supportive of Upper Leigh Solar Farm?

Answered: 12 Skipped: 0



83% (10 people) responded with Yes; "No" and "I'm not sure" received one vote (8%) each.

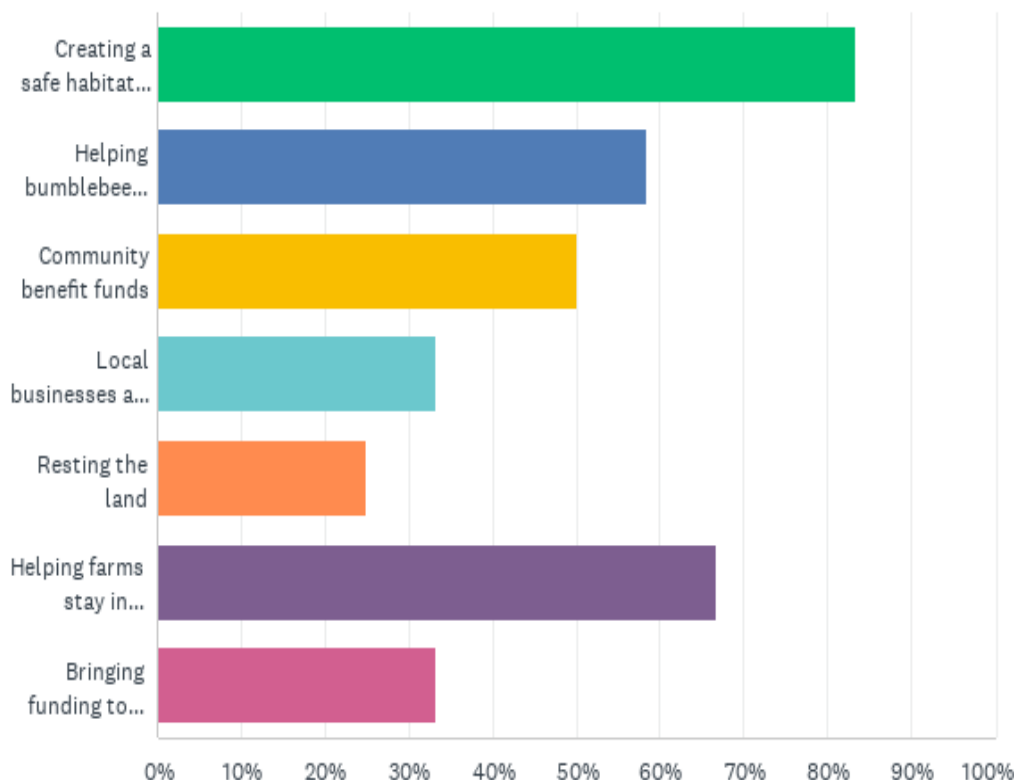
Respondents were asked why they answered the above question in the way that they did. The responses are detailed under section 6. Key Feedback Themes and Lightrock Power's Response.

Can you explain why you answered question 5 the way you did?

Eleven people provided a response to this question. Their responses are incorporated under section 6. Key Feedback Themes and Lightrock Power's Response.

Solar Farms can help with all of the following. Which ones are important to you?

Answered: 12 Skipped: 0



This question was designed to better understand personal motivation and the importance people attached to some of the benefits that solar farms can bring to a site and/or the area. All categories listed were important to a good proportion of respondents. Creating habitat at the site, helping bumblebee populations, and helping farms to stay in business were the most important factors for respondents.

If you think there is a local organisation, project or cause which could benefit from the community benefit fund, please leave details here

Seven respondents provided useful suggestions for the community benefit fund:

"Local village school and playground"

"Leigh School"

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"Leigh School"

"Local church, village groups etc"

"Village school"

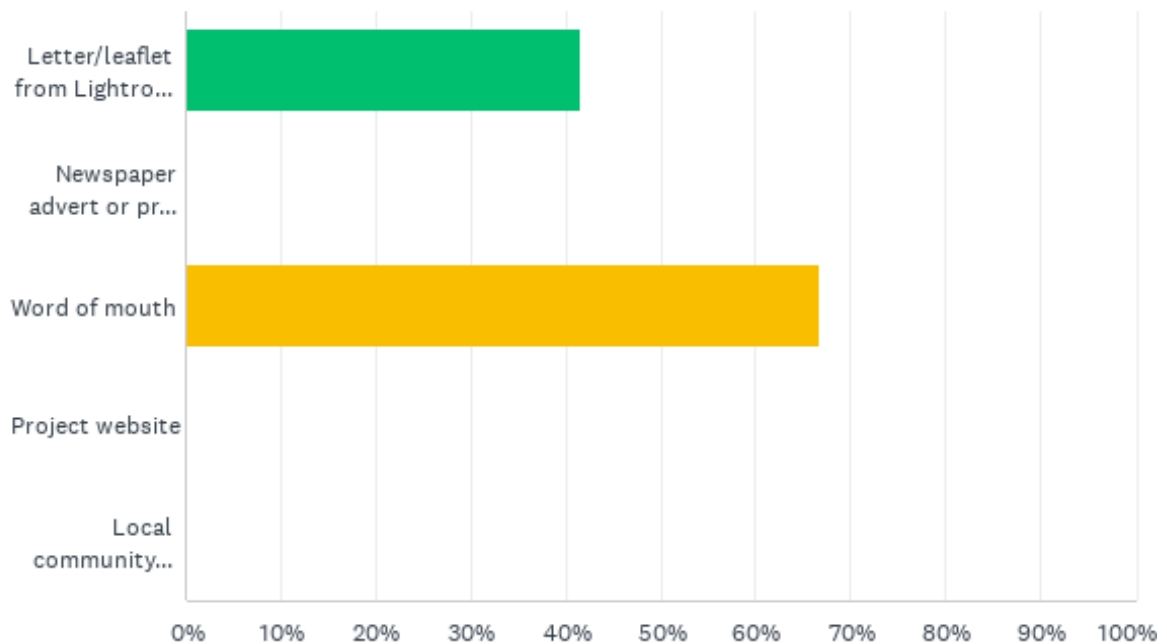
"Leigh recreation playground needs updating"

"Leigh Parish Council"

"Why don't you give the upper Leigh village area free/discount electric or free vehicle charging points? Just an idea to help the village become greener? More free vehicle charging points might make people purchase "clean green" electric vehicles?"

How did you hear about the solar farm proposal?

Answered: 12 Skipped: 0

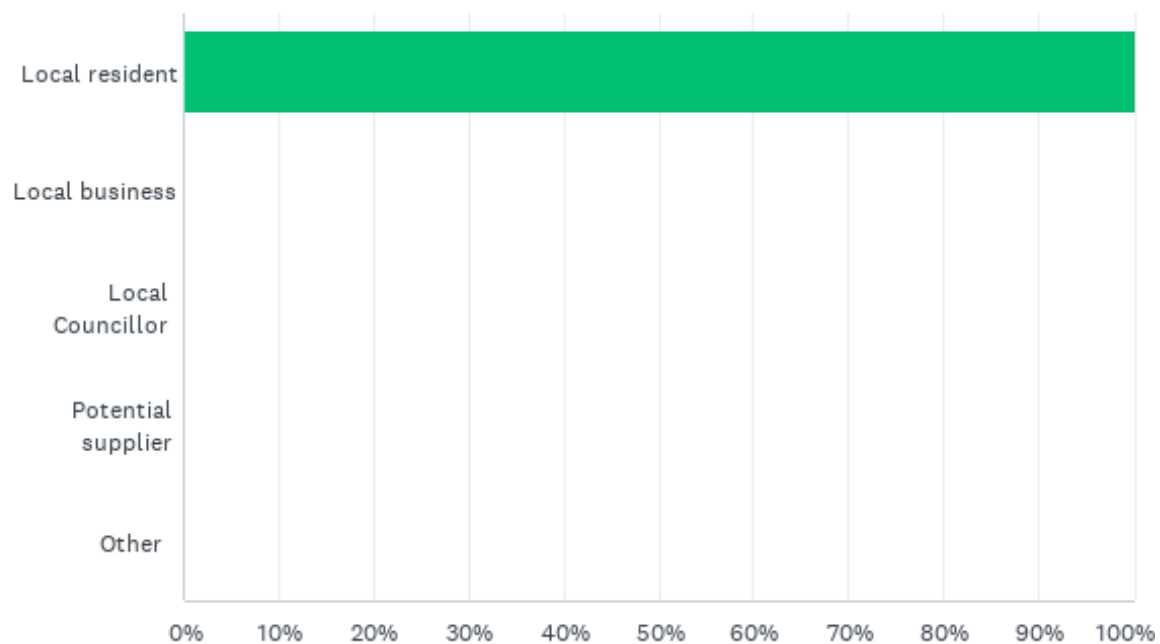


Respondents heard about the proposal via a mixture of Lightrock Power's leaflet and word of mouth.

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Please choose one of the following which best describes your interest in the scheme

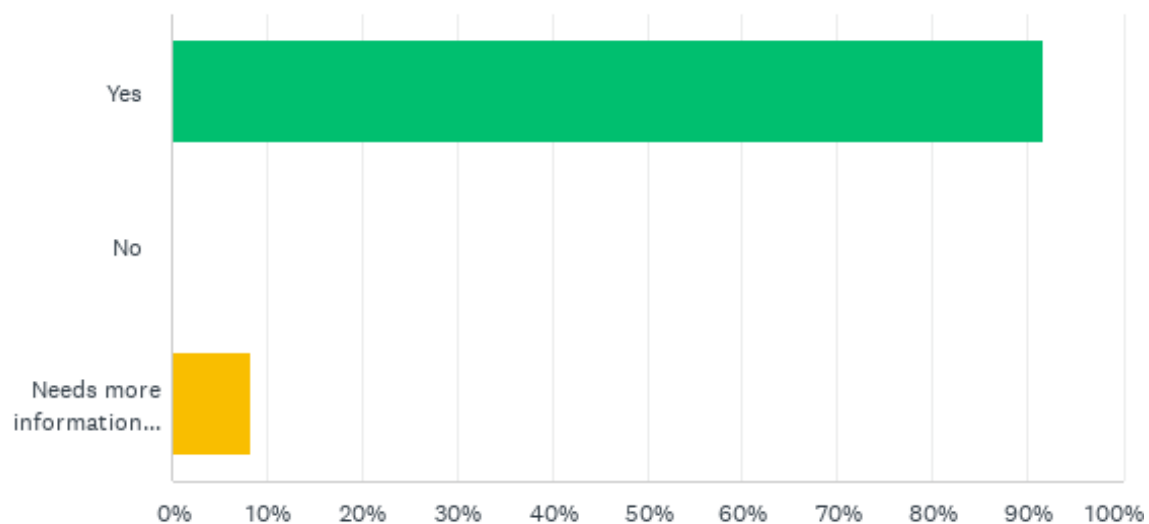
Answered: 12 Skipped: 0



All of the respondents indicated they were interested in the scheme because they were local residents.

If you have seen our project website, was it helpful?

Answered: 12 Skipped: 0



92% (11 people) found the project website helpful.

Any further comments or questions? Please leave details here and we'll answer as many as we can on our website.

Answered: 0 Skipped: 12

RESPONSES (0)

WORD CLOUD

TAGS (0)

Sentiments: OFF

Filter: by tag

Search responses

Showing 0 responses

Nobody had any further comments or questions, therefore the website was not updated.

6. Key Feedback Themes and Lightrock Power's Response

- 6.1. Of the 13 written responses to the proposed Upper Leigh Solar Farm - 12 via the survey and one via email - the majority (11) were supportive. Lightrock Power find this encouraging.
- 6.2. One local councillor voiced some concerns and three close neighbours voiced concerns via the telephone.
- 6.3. The feedback is illustrated below along with Lightrock Power's response.

Concern: Proximity to neighbour

Two people were concerned about the proximity to a close neighbour, and the effect that it might have on selling their house

"the plans for the panels show that my neighbours [sic] house will be completely surrounded on all 4 sides"

"[...]spoilt sale of [my] house"

- 6.4. This concern was not shared by a closer neighbour

"do what you like on your side of the hedge"

- 6.5. Lightrock Power are in an ongoing discussion with the site's land owner and the concerned neighbour to come to an agreement.

Concern: Food Production

- 6.6. One person suggested that the land would be better used for food production.
- 6.7. Lightrock Power understood their concern. The UK is facing an energy crisis and solar farms are a government-backed method of stabilising supply.

- 6.8. The National Food Strategy (July 2021) does not see solar farms as a threat to food security¹.

Concern: Traffic Management

- 6.9. Two people had concerns about construction traffic.
6.10. Lightrock Power explained that construction traffic is subject to a Construction Traffic Management Plan.
6.11. Traffic will be lighter in the long term due to the reduction in farming machinery being used on the land.
6.12. One resident expressed relief that Hen Lane will not be used.

Concern: Biodiversity

- 6.13. A councillor was concerned about biodiversity:
"The first thing you'll do is bulldoze all the trees and hedges"
6.14. Lightrock Power explained that they avoid removing trees or hedgerows wherever possible. They explained their relationship with the RSPB and their focus on increasing biodiversity.

Concern: Fire Safety

- 6.15. A councillor was concerned about fire safety concerning batteries, particularly in light of a battery bomb in Beirut and a car battery that combusted.
6.16. Lightrock Power explained that batteries are encased in fire-proof containers, fitted with fire suppression systems. Any battery project must be reviewed by the relevant authorities.

Support for the project

- 6.17. There was significant support for the project - the following comments are illustrative of feedback received:

"I personally think it's a great idea"

"we need cheaper energy that isn't reliant on other countries"

"The uk [sic] needs the power"

"Definitely need to focus more on green energy"

"At least the land is still there under the panels for wildlife and sheep grazing. Still allows the land a purpose unlike houses that are built in the countryside because people want an unspoiled view"

¹ The National Food strategy (July 2021): <https://www.nationalfoodstrategy.org/>

"With the current climate and war with Russia and Ukraine it shows how important it is for power to be produced in the UK so we aren't dependent on other countries and extravagant prices"

"Because we need cheaper energy and id prefer panels than the land being developed for houses"

"We need more easily sustained energy especially with the current climate and the soaring cost of electricity, gas and oil."

- 6.18. As there have been no requests for amendments to Upper Leigh Solar Farm, no fundamental changes have been made to the design as a direct result of the pre-application community consultation.
- 6.19. As engagement has been low there are currently no plans to hold an in-person exhibition. Should this change prior to determination there is scope to reverse this decision.

7. Appendices

Appendix A: Project website

Lightrock Power

HOME WHY SOLAR WHY LIGHTROCK WHY NOW WHY HERE FAQs Sign up

UPPER LEIGH SOLAR FARM

View our online exhibition

Our pre-application consultation period is now over - but we're still here! Please email or call us on 014 2862217 if you have any feedback.

UPPER LEIGH SOLAR FARM

This is the information hub for Upper Leigh Solar Farm - a project we are considering in your community.

We are in the very early stages of development, but will have more detailed plans to share with you later in the year. We are aiming to submit a planning application in Spring 2022 and begin building work in Summer 2023. We hope to begin harvesting energy from the site in 2027.

Our plan is for this project to produce up to 49MW output of solar energy, with the potential to supply power to the equivalent of 15,000 homes, or 19,000 electric vehicles. It could prevent 20,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide from entering the atmosphere every year.

Lightrock Power pay particular attention to biodiversity on our solar farms. At our Upper Leigh site we plan to create valuable wildflower habitats for pollinators, enhance hedgerows and grasslands for amphibians and reptiles, and protect existing trees for birds and bats. We're delighted to have a corporate partnership with the RSPB, and working with them really helps us optimise the ecological opportunities for local wildlife - a recent Lightrock Power solar farm has been projected a 208% biodiversity net gain. This means that not only are our solar farms good for the environment, they also benefit local ecology.

The below plan shows the area under consideration. Solar panels may be located within the shaded areas, but might not cover all of this land.

Please click [here](#) to open further location detail.

Area under consideration.

We're currently in the very early stages of our [consultation](#), so our design is still flexible. We'd love the local community to help shape the final project, so please get in touch with your ideas. You can contact us via [email](#), or by filling in our [online survey](#), or find answers to our most commonly asked questions [here](#).

In the meantime further information can be found by visiting our [online exhibition](#) or clicking through the tabs at the top of this page.

We are here to listen, so if you have any questions please let us know.

Lightrock Power are proudly in partnership with:

giving nature a home

"The team at Lightrock are a real example of how businesses can be able to nature, creating the biodiversity and green spaces that we need to sustain the planet and the people who live on it."

Simon Paine, RSPB Business Conservation Partnership Manager

If you would like to join our list of supporters please provide your name and email address below.

Name

Address

City

Postcode

Country

Phone

Email

Sign up

CONTACT US

upperleigh@lightrockpower.com | 014 286 2217 (during office hours)

*By contacting us you are agreeing to our [terms & conditions](#) and [privacy policy](#)

Appendix B: Resident information leaflet

Upper Leigh Solar Farm



We are writing to introduce ourselves and advise you of a development that we are considering in your community.

We are a UK based company called Lightrock Power and we develop wildlife-friendly solar farms that can be sensitively designed into the landscape. Our projects help meet national and Local renewable energy targets, whilst providing valuable habitat for pollinators and other small animals.

We are currently assessing a new site for a solar farm on land north west of Leigh Lane, near Upper Leigh. The 49MW output site could supply power to the equivalent of 15,000 homes, or 19,000 electric vehicles. It could prevent 21,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide from entering the atmosphere every year.

We pay particular attention to biodiversity on our solar farms by creating valuable wildlife habitats at our sites. We're delighted to have a corporate partnership with the RSPB, whose wide-ranging expertise helps us to exceed industry best practice.

The UK is importing more gas than ever, which is increasing electricity prices and de-stabilising supply. Government statistics from Autumn 2021 show that support for solar energy is at its highest ever at 90%, so solar can play a big part in our energy recovery. Solar does not mean that farmland gets taken out of production – it just means we can diversify land use, harvesting renewable energy while also supporting wildlife and conservation grazing among the panels.

Further details about the proposal can be viewed at our information hub –

www.upperleighsolarfarm.com. We're currently in the very early stages of planning (the build won't start until 2026), so our design is still flexible. We'd love the local community to get in touch and help to shape the final project. If you cannot access our online material, please call or write to us and we can share further details with you by post.



The map above shows the approximate location of the site; we hope to arrange panels within the shaded area, but they may not cover all the land.

Contact Us:

Email: upperleigh@lightrockpower.com

Website: www.upperleighsolarfarm.com

Phone: 0114 286 6217

Survey: www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/upperleighsolarfarm — or access using the QR code

Write to us: Lightrock Power, Electric Works, 3 Concourse Way, Sheffield, S1 2BJ



If you cannot access our online material, please call or write to us and we can share further details with you by post.

Appendix C: Press Release

 PRESS RELEASE 7th March 2022 Harvesting solar energy in Staffordshire Lightrock Power is proposing a wildlife-friendly solar farm at land north of Upper Leigh. It could provide enough electricity to power the equivalent of 15,000 homes, or 19,000 electric vehicles, every year. A number of ecological and feasibility studies have been carried out and Lightrock Power, who have already had a number of conversations with community representatives, are now inviting local people for input on the proposal ahead of submitting a planning application later in the Spring. There is growing concern about climate change and reliance on the international energy supply chain, which is currently having a significant impact on energy prices. The 49MW output Upper Leigh Solar Farm could prevent more than 21,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide from entering the atmosphere every year, helping meet national and local renewable energy targets. There are plans to enhance biodiversity on site with measures such as installing bird and bat boxes, providing habitat for reptiles and small mammals, and improving local flora to attract bees and other pollinators. The team at Lightrock Power are delighted to be working in partnership with the RSPB. Chris Sowter, Co-Founder and Director at Lightrock said: "This is an excellent site for solar. It is open, well screened, and has good access. We are pleased to be able to enhance local biodiversity through our ecology programme, and we can connect to the local electricity network on-site, meaning minimum disruption to the local community. Upper Leigh Solar Farm will help the UK meet its 2050 net zero targets. We are aware there are several other solar farms being proposed locally so we're keen to hear feedback from the community to ensure we're planning things sensitively." Lightrock Power has now written to residents inviting them to find out more about the project and provide feedback. The early community consultation runs from 7th March to 4th April, and an online exhibition detailing the plans is available on the Upper Leigh Solar Farm website. Subject to consultation and further site assessments, the company intends to submit a planning application in the Spring, but there is no intention to begin building work in 2026. Ends	Notes for Editors About Lightrock Power Lightrock Power are a small and experienced team based in the UK. They develop wildlife-friendly solar farms across the country and have delivered a number of successful operational projects. They focus on schemes that can be sensitively designed into the landscape, helping meet national and local authority renewable energy targets. They want to make a difference and are passionate about doing the right thing for our planet, communities and natural habitats. Upper Leigh Solar Farm The scheme will consist of rows of solar panels mounted on metal frames no more than 2.8 metres in height. The site, which is approximately 70 hectares, is on land at Lower Leigh Farm and Moor Farm, north-west of Leigh Lane, at Upper Leigh. Access will be from the A522 via Leigh Lane. Existing entrances to the site will be used. As well as helping meet national climate change commitments, Upper Leigh Solar Farm also supports policy aspirations in Staffordshire Moorland District Council and East Staffordshire Borough Council's local plans. About the consultation Lightrock Power are hosting an exhibition on their website and inviting local people to ask questions and provide feedback online, by email, telephone, or by post. The early community consultation runs from 7th March to 4th April 2022. • www.upperleighsolarfarm.com • upperleigh@lightrockpower.com • 0114 286 6217 • Chris Sowter, Lightrock Power, Electric Works, 3 Concourse Way, Sheffield, S1 2BL All online material is available as a printed copy on request. Why Solar? Solar is the fastest-growing energy technology in the world. National support for solar is at 90% – the highest it's ever been. It's a clean green energy source for our National Grid. To meet climate change commitments, deal with volatile energy prices, and make our nation more energy secure we need innovative energy solutions and smarter grid systems. Solar energy can play a big part. Solar energy does not mean we have to take land out of production – it just means we need to use land differently. It's productive in a different way – harvesting renewable energy whilst supporting wildlife and local habitat. Solar farms generate energy without releasing greenhouse gas emissions – a cleaner way to produce energy.
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Appendix D: Stakeholder email

UPPER LEIGH SOLAR FARM - Message (HTML)

File Message Help Tell me what you want to do

Delete Archive Reply Reply All Forward Quick Steps Move Tags Editing Immersive Translate Zoom Send to OneNote

UPPER LEIGH SOLAR FARM

Upper Leigh Solar Farm
To [redacted]
Tue 22/02/2022 16:33

Upper Leigh - community leaflet.pdf
322 KB

Dear [redacted],

We wanted to introduce ourselves and advise you of a wildlife-friendly solar project that we are considering in your community.

Our Proposal

We are assessing a site on land at Lower Tean Leys Farm and Moor Farm, north-west of Leigh Lane, at Upper Leigh.

<https://www.google.com/maps/d/edit?mid=1iMnRC7pEi8TLZrgF7ZdldORpagiV-0uL&usp=sharing>

The proposed development is for a solar farm, small substation, and associated infrastructure, with the majority of the site consisting of ground mounted solar PV panels. The intended generating capacity is 49MW output, which could provide power to approximately 15,000 homes or 19,000 electric vehicles. The development is in its early stages, as are discussions with Staffordshire Moorlands District Council and East Staffordshire Borough Council, so the information we have available at present is high-level, with further detail becoming available as the project progresses. Should the project gain planning permission, we would not start building until 2026.

Planning

We take a slow and steady approach to our planning process to make sure that we get it right the first time. Our early community consultation period will start on or around 7th March and run for at least four weeks. We'll open the community consultation with the attached leaflet and an accompanying press release, and we'll continue to engage with local residents throughout. Further information will be available in an online exhibition, with hard copies available on request.

There will be an anonymous survey where people can leave their views, and several other ways to contact us. The online material is already live and can be viewed [here](#).

Now that social interaction is becoming a possibility again, we are also looking to hold a village hall exhibition, so that we can meet the community face to face.

We'll leave plenty of time between the consultation closing and submitting our planning application so that we have time to make genuine changes based on the feedback that we've received.

About Lightrock Power

Ben and I founded Lightrock Power in 2017 having worked in solar development since 2010. Lightrock was created with the determination to develop solar farms in the right way – implementing all the gains to Environment, Ecology and Education that they can bring. We pride ourselves on being transparent and acting with integrity, not only with our landowners and funders but also, crucially, with the communities that we join.

- Lightrock is purposefully structured as a small development team with a flat structure – if you call us, you will be able to speak with either Ben or me directly
- We listen to feedback and implement it wherever we possibly can. We can demonstrate projects where community feedback has heavily influenced design.
- Lightrock develop Wildlife-Friendly projects. We have a corporate partnership with the RSPB, who advise us on how to optimise our sites for the local ecology. Thanks to this partnership a recent project has been predicted a 208% biodiversity net gain.
- Locally produced solar energy can help our society transition electricity generation away from fossil fuels and reduce our reliance on overseas supply, but we understand that this must be done sensitively. We want to develop sites that optimise the benefits to the communities we join.
- Lightrock are able to offer a community benefit fund at this site. We are already in discussion with a local group but are keen to hear from other causes that fit with our three key pillars of Environment, Ecology and Education. We will work with [The Community Foundation for Staffordshire](#) to allocate funding.

Why I'm contacting you now

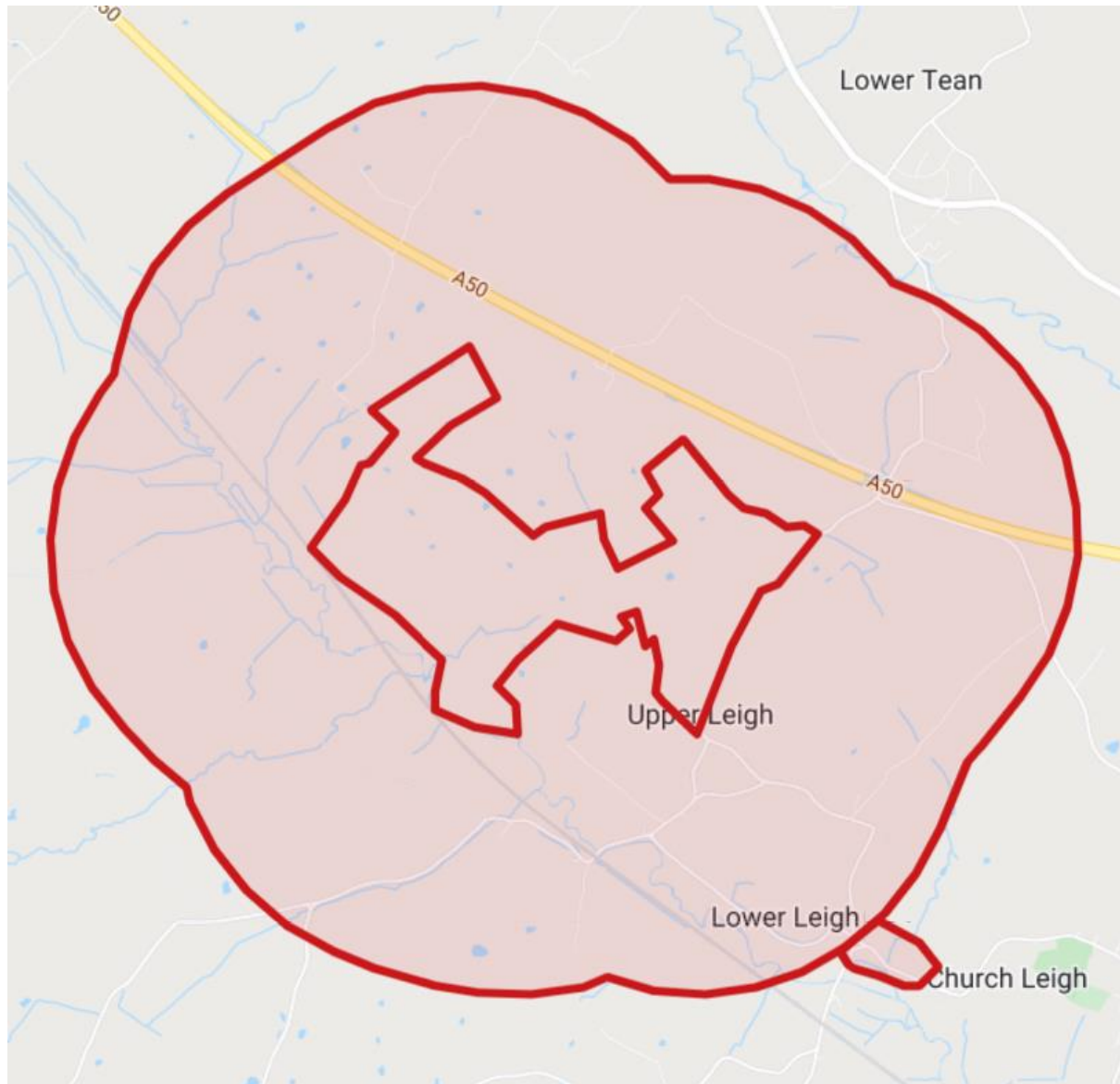
I believe that successful consultation is born from open dialogue. As a key local representative, I'm keen to meet with you prior to the consultation period, to enable you to provide the community with project information. I'd also appreciate your insight as to how we can best benefit the local community, local interests and issues, and of any other local community groups or societies that may have an interest. I'd be happy to attend a Parish Meeting so we can speak directly to the community.

We'll be in touch again shortly to arrange a meeting, but in the meantime, please feel free to contact me on the below details if you have any questions.

Yours sincerely,

CHRIS SOWERBUTTS

Appendix E: Leaflet distribution map



Upper Leigh Solar Farm - Statement of Pre-Application Community Involvement

Appendix F: Survey

UPPER LEIGH SOLAR FARM

This survey is about Upper Leigh Solar Farm. Your feedback will help inform the proposal. We may analyse the question responses to help inform us but at no point will we share personal details. For more information on how Lightrock Power manage data, visit our website, www.upperleighsolarfarm.com.

The survey begins with some questions about renewable energy and then moves onto questions about the site. We are grateful for your feedback so please complete as much of it as you can. It will only take a few minutes. Thank you for your time.

1. Do you think it is important for the UK to be generating more of its own renewable energy?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ I'm not sure

2. Solar farms are low maintenance, quiet, and provide a safe habitat for local wildlife. Do you think solar is a good option for renewable energy generation in this area?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ I'm not sure

3. Solar farms can help with all of the following. Which ones are important to you?

- ☐ Creating a safe habitat for local wildlife
☐ Helping bumblebee populations
☐ Community benefit funds
☐ Local businesses and supply contracts
☐ Resting the land
☐ Helping farms stay in business
☐ Bringing funding to local amenities through business rates

Other (please specify)

4. If you think there is a local organisation, project or cause which could benefit from the community benefit fund, please leave details here.

5. Are you supportive of Upper Leigh Solar Farm?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ I'm not sure

6. Can you explain why you answered question 5 the way you did?

7. How did you hear about the solar farm proposal?

- ☐ Letter/leaflet from Lightrock Power
☐ Newspaper advert or press piece
☐ Word of mouth
☐ Project website
☐ Local community website/social media group

Other (please specify)

8. So we understand where feedback is coming from, please give us the first section of your postcode e.g. GU10.

9. Please choose one of the following which best describes your interest in the scheme.

- ☐ Local resident
☐ Local business
☐ Local Councillor
☐ Potential supplier
☐ Other

10. If you have seen our project website, was it helpful?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Needs more information (please specify below)

11. Any further comments or questions? Please leave details here and we'll answer as many as we can on our website.

Done

Powered by
 SurveyMonkey
See how easy it is to create a survey

[Privacy & Cookie Notice](#)

Appendix G: Online exhibition



Upper Leigh Solar Farm - Statement of Pre-Application Community Involvement

