

This report will be made public  
on 4 July 2023



Report Number **C/23/17**

**To:** Cabinet  
**Date:** 12 July 2023  
**Status:** Non - Key Decision  
**Responsible officer:** Andy Blaszkowicz – Director, Housing & Operations  
Ewan Green – Director of Place  
**Cabinet Member:** Councillor Martin, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member  
for Otterpool Park and Planning Policy  
Councillor Scoffham, Cabinet Member for Climate, Environment  
and Biodiversity  
Councillor Speakman, Cabinet Member for Assets and  
Operations

**SUBJECT: SOLAR PARK OPPORTUNITY - LYMPNE**

**SUMMARY:** This report sets out an opportunity for a solar park at Lympne, adjoining Otterpool Park and makes a recommendation that the opportunity be explored further.

**REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Cabinet is asked to agree the recommendations set out below so that the opportunity to establish a solar park at Lympne can be explored further.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. To receive and note report C/23/17.
2. That Cabinet provide authority for the Otterpool Park LLP to explore the opportunity of a solar farm at Lympne as described in this report.
3. To continue with the soft market testing exercise to explore the options available to the Council of developing a Solar Park at Lympne.
4. To note that a detailed business case on the proposal will be developed by the Otterpool Park LLP and brought back to Cabinet for further consideration.

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The team at Otterpool Park have identified an opportunity to deliver a solar park on Council owned land to the southwest of the proposed town which it is recommended should be explored further.

## **2. Potential Site**

- 2.1 The land for the potential solar park is on the boundary of Otterpool Park, this land is shown red on the attached plan (Appendix 1).
- 2.2 The land is currently occupied by a farmer under a Farm Business Tenancy for which the Council receives a rental income.

## **3. Should the Council Pursue this Opportunity?**

- 3.1 The team at Otterpool Park has produced a note (appendix 2) setting out what they perceive to be the benefits of a solar park. It is, of course, for the Council to assess these benefits, the costs of pursuing this idea and consider these against the Council's other priorities.
- 3.2 It is proposed to continue with a soft market testing exercise to explore the benefits of such a scheme without entering into any formal commitment.
- 3.3 Following the soft market testing exercise a detailed business case will be developed and brought back to Cabinet for consideration.
- 3.4 The team at Otterpool Park will develop the business case with support from officers at the council including the Chief Officer for Corporate Estate and Development and the Council's Low Carbon Advisor.
- 3.5 The business case will detail a number of considerations as set out (but not limited to) below-
- Environmental Impact of the scheme
  - Various operating models and income potential
  - Power generation capacity
  - Implications to the Otterpool Park development grid connections and possible cost savings
  - Planning considerations
  - Risk analysis of the project

## **4. LEGAL/FINANCIAL AND OTHER CONTROLS/POLICY MATTERS**

### **4.1 Legal Officer's Comments (AK)**

There are no legal implications arising directly from this report. Having said this it is vital that legal advice is sought at each stage of this project including the delivery of proposals outlined in this report.

## 4.2 Finance Officer's Comments (BT)

This proposal would need a full financial feasibility study and risk assessment to assess whether this is a financially viable project and that the possible rewards will outweigh the potential risks, including the investment required to develop such a solar park. Investments in technology often carry significantly higher risks when compared to other council capital investment projects such as land and/or housing.

Members of the Cabinet should be aware that two months ago, it was reported that Toucan Energy, one of the largest solar park owners in the UK left an outstanding debt of £692 million to Thurrock Council in Essex. Thurrock council issued a S114 notice in December 2022 and are currently under inspection as a result of government intervention.

The soft market testing and investigative work that is required by the LLP will probably require additional resources via further loan financing from the council as the LLP rely solely on council loan funding to provide their operational budgets as they do not have their own source of income.

The council will have to identify additional internal budget resources to execute the feasibility work if this cannot be contained within existing budgets of the council.

## 4.3 Diversities and Equalities Implications (GE)

There are no equality and diversity implications directly arising from this report.

## 4.4 Climate implications (OF)

There are no climate implications arising from this report however if the proposed solar farm becomes viable, there are several positive climate implications such as a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, generation of renewable energy, energy independence and resilience etc. Proposals arising as a result of the exploration will be subject to climate impact assessment as applicable.

## 5. CONTACT OFFICERS AND BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Councillors with any questions arising out of this report should contact the following officers prior to the meeting:

Ewan Green (Director of Place) and Andy Blaszkowicz (Director of Housing and Operations).

Email: [ewan.green@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk](mailto:ewan.green@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)/[Andy.blaszkowicz@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk](mailto:Andy.blaszkowicz@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)

The following background documents have been relied upon in the preparation of this report.  
None

Appendices to this report

**Appendices:**

Appendix 1: Plan of site

Appendix 2: Note prepared by Otterpool Park Team