

Solar Farm gets backing of Parish Council

Plans to develop a new 200 acre solar farm at Forest Gate have received a boost, with the backing of Calne Without Parish Council.

The scheme is being promoted by Wiltshire-based Eden Renewables, and will provide a 49.9MW capacity solar farm, with battery storage, saving an estimated 20,000 tonnes of CO₂ each year. The project comes with a commitment to improving biodiversity, with new tree planting and hedgerows, wildflower meadow management, bird and bat boxes, ponds, scrapes and hibernacula, together with new permissive footpaths and a bridleway. The scheme also provides for a Community Benefit Fund, an Education Fund and an opportunity for Community Investment.

On Thursday 22nd July, Calne Without Parish Council held a public meeting to give local residents the opportunity to have their say. Councillors heard a wide range of views from residents both supportive and opposed to the project.

This was followed by an Extraordinary Parish Council meeting, at which councillors debated the project before voting by **nine votes to three to back the Solar Farm (with one abstention)**. The successful motion also committed the Parish to writing to Wiltshire Council requesting that they undertake a strategic review of solar energy generation potential within the county, to establish the optimum capacity and locations for projects.

Cllr John Barnes, who lives in Old Derry Hill overlooking the site, said: "I am really pleased that the Parish Council has voted to back this scheme. If we're serious about tackling the Climate Emergency, we will have to make some tough choices. This was one of them, but I think we've done the right thing."

John Barnes 23 July 2021