

Record of Decisions

Brokenbury Solar Farm

Decision Taker

Cabinet on 11 June 2024

Decision

1. that subject to 2 below the Director of Pride in Place be authorised to proceed with the project to deliver a solar farm at Brokenbury;
2. that Cabinet recommends to Council that up to £2,750,000 of prudential borrowing be approved subject to securing a unit rate per MWh that exceeds the loan repayments, covers projected maintenance and other operational and equipment replacement costs and provides an appropriate surplus per annum over the life of the scheme commensurate with level of risk; and
3. that the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Council, Finance Director and Cabinet Member for Finance should review and agree the final business plan after the EPC tender and Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) stage are complete and subject to that agreement is then authorised to agree and finalise the detailed terms and enter into contract with South West Water (SWW) or another purchaser of the electricity.

Reason for the Decision

To support the delivery of the Council's Energy and Climate Strategy which will help minimize the economic, social and environmental costs of climate change by demonstrating leadership and providing encouragement in working toward emission reductions and resilience to our changing climate. To also support the Government's net zero strategy "Build Back Greener". This strategy sets out policies and proposals for decarbonising all sectors of the UK economy to meet Central Governments net zero target by 2050. Renewable energy including solar power forms part of that strategy.

Implementation

This decisions in 1 and 3 will come into force and may be implemented on 24 June 2024 unless the call-in procedure is triggered (as set out in the Standing Orders in relation to Overview and Scrutiny).

The recommendation in 2 will be considered at the Council meeting on 18 July 2024.

Information

The submitted report provided an update on the original decision in respect of Brokenbury Solar Farm, taken in May 2020 as considerable time had passed and sought updated authorisation for prudential borrowing to bring the project forward, subject to the income generating a positive margin. The margin would be defined on completion of procurement and a final refinement of project costs.

An overall scheme budget of up to £2,750,000 had previously been approved by Cabinet in May 2020 subject to conditions set out in the submitted report with the latest project costs

remain within that budget.

Councillor Chris Lewis proposed and Councillor Tyerman seconded a motion that was unanimously agreed by the Cabinet as set out above.

Alternative Options considered and rejected at the time of the decision

To build out the planning consented scheme after negotiating the Power Purchase Agreement and receiving EPC and O&M tender responses which confirm that the scheme was viable.

As an alternative to the private wire connection with an end user there was the potential to sell the renewable power direct to the national grid. However, the wider grid network has limited capacity. The earliest possible connection may not be until 2028 but this was likely to extend out to 2036 when more capacity within the network was expected. The issue with the wider network was that it needs upgrading to be able to handle significant extra capacity. Such upgrades delay the timeframe for a connection to be made. In addition to the programme delays there were also financial considerations. To connect to the grid will cost at least £250k (September 2021 estimate – this was likely to be more now). Furthermore the unit price when feeding into the national grid was likely to be considerably less when compared to a private wire end user scenario which would make the project unviable.

Is this a Key Decision?

No

Does the call-in procedure apply?

Yes in respect of 1 and 3 but no in respect of 2 as this is a recommendation to Council.

Declarations of interest (including details of any relevant dispensations issued by the Standards Committee)

None

Published

14 June 2024

Signed: _____
Leader of Torbay Council on behalf of the Cabinet

Date: _____