



CLEVE HILL
SOLAR PARK

Cleve Hill Solar Park

Community Newsletter

June 2024

In this newsletter:

We take a closer look at some of the varied ecological works that have been happening across the site. This area is home to a great variety of wildlife, and the project is committed to delivering significant biodiversity gain under the careful watch of our specialist ecology team.

We also look at the latest news on construction progress, and how the project team are engaging with the community.

Construction Update

Construction across the site has been making good progress, despite the frequently challenging weather conditions over the last few months.

The screw piling method allows for the piles to be installed quickly and with minimal noise disturbance (see picture).

As there is no excavation involved, there is very little disruption to the surrounding area of each pile.

The tables (structures that will support the solar panels) are installed onto the piles.

On completion the Cleve Hill Solar Park will have over 550,000 solar panel modules installed once completed. Here is a summary of progress so far as a percentage of this final number, as of 8 June 2024:

Pile installation: 57.4% complete

Solar module installation: 7.4% complete



A two-man team installing screw piles



The support structures for the solar panels following the contours of the landscape

Security Lighting

A recent visit from the site insurers included a survey of the security arrangements. A key requirement is for 24/7 guarding supported by lighting to ensure both a clear visual deterrent in key areas and safe working conditions for security staff.

Following enquiries from residents about the lighting, we have had further discussion within the project team and with our contractors. We have reduced the number of lights used at night to four at the key locations of our offices, welfare and storage areas. This has reduced glare visible from the site and is in addition to mitigation measures set out in the Construction Environment Management Plan.

Colin Freeman, CHSP Construction Project Director said; *“We are listening to feedback from the community regarding the nightly security lighting. We ensure that the lights are angled correctly, shaded with cowls and, where possible, are facing away from residential areas. Now we are also working to the principle of using four lights only whenever possible. Of course, in certain circumstances the security team may need to increase the number of lights used, and we know that the community understands the importance of deterrence as well as the safety of our security personnel.”*

A day in the life – Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW)

This is a busy time of year for the two Ecological Clerks of Works (ECoWs) working at CHSP.

Working in all weathers, our ECoWs monitor the compliance of construction works with regards to the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), covering a variety of topic areas such as ecology, water quality and ornithology. Ecological advice and a degree of enforcement also play a part in the role of an ECoW.



Skylark nest.

Currently, the ECoWs are concentrating on locating and monitoring the nests of breeding birds. Early in the breeding season the team identified three Skylark nests and one Mallard nest, all the chicks from these have now fledged. In the last two weeks, the ECoWs have found that an Oyster Catcher has established a second nest after its original clutch of eggs failed. They have also located an additional 18 Skylark nests on the site chicks yet to fledge. They have also spotted a Kestrel nesting on the border of the site.

An exclusion zone is marked off with stakes and signs around each nest until the chicks have fledged. Exclusion zone size vary with species. For example, for Skylarks the safety area is 10m radius (pictured, with posts marking the area of longer grass), for Mallards it is a 15m radius, and for oystercatchers it is 30m of protection.

Each nest is mapped using what3words (a system where each 3-metre square of the world has been given a unique combination of three words) and marked on a wall map for all contractors to see.

A wetland grazing marsh area has been created in the eastern part of the site, designed to attract over-wintering birds. Another area of previously arable land has now been reverted to grassland. The ECoWs have noted that both these areas have already successfully provided an increasing biodiversity.



Nesting birds exclusion areas, with signposts and unmown grass.

A water vole update from our ecologists

We are working to mitigate possible negative impacts on the water vole population on the solar park site as construction of pathways, fences and ditch crossings are getting underway. This means encouraging the water voles to move away from small areas where these works need to take place.

Ecologists Katie and Charlie from Tetra Tech have been on site surveying for signs of activity so that the animals can be safely displaced from these areas. This work is in line with Natural England licences that have been granted and are required to carry out this work.

Katie explained the process, which is known as displacement and destructive searching; *"We look for signs of feeding, piles of droppings known as latrines and evidence of burrows on the banks of the ditches. Where we find signs of water vole activity we strim the vegetation down to ground level, which makes the habitat less suitable and encourages water voles to move away from the area into adjacent suitable habitat."*

After five days the team return to check again, and if there are no further signs, the top layer of soil is removed, and any



Searching for signs of activity

burrows carefully dug out by hand to ensure there are no water voles present. If further signs of activity are found, this process is repeated until the area is clear.

Katie continued; *"This is the breeding season for water voles, and we need to be sure that areas we previously searched in autumn 2023 are also clear for the minor works to go ahead. So, we also installed motion-triggered camera traps to check which, if any, animals are using these areas."*



We found a friend!

Water voles live along water banks and feed on reeds, grasses, and waterside vegetation. Their extensive burrow systems have sleeping/nest chambers at various levels and usually have underwater entrances. They have three or four litters a year, each with around five young which are weaned at 14 days.

Tetra Tech's team are monitoring the water vole population at Cleve Hill Solar Park for five years, building up data on population densities and distributions across the site.

Birds to look out for

Unfortunately, we are not all lucky enough to spot a rare and exciting appearance by a Sea Eagle passing over the solar park site, although this is exactly what happened to one of our ECoWs recently.

However, many other species can be seen in the area during June, as this list from the ECoW team shows. How many have you seen?

- Grey Heron
- Little Egret
- Wheatear
- Cormorant
- Raven
- Rook
- Marsh Harrier
- Peregrine
- Gadwall
- Shoveler
- Black-headed Gull
- Lesser Black-backed Gull
- Herring Gull
- Skylark

Timetable for the CHSP appeal against Swale Borough Council's decision on Battery Safety Management Plan

Cleve Hill Solar Park has appealed against the decision by Swale Borough Council not to discharge Requirement 3 of the Development Consent Order made in 2020. The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) has confirmed that the submitted appeal was valid and subject to the following timetable:

- Appeal start date: **15 May 2024**
- Deadline for representations from the Discharging Authority (Swale Borough Council) and Statutory Consultees (Health and Safety Executive and Kent Fire and Rescue Service): **30 May 2024**.
- Deadline for counter-submissions from Cleve Hill Solar Park: **13 June 2024**.

The decision on the appeal will be made as soon as reasonably practicable after 13 June.

Upcoming Community Events

Shortly, we will be getting in touch to let you know about upcoming community events that we are planning to hold over the summer. The first event is anticipated to happen in July, with the second event anticipated for later in the summer.

During our events, you will be able to speak to different members of the project team about different parts of the project, whether it is on what is happening with construction on site, the various environmental works that are happening across the site, or the types of community benefits that you would like to see delivered by the project.

Please look out for invites which will be communicated shortly.

Graveney Flower Festival

All Saints' Church in Graveney hosted a weekend of floral displays on 8 and 9 June.

The CHSP team were very pleased to donate some prizes for the raffle held by the Friends of All Saints' Church. In keeping with the garden theme, the prizes were a selection of solar powered outdoor lights.

We hope that the lucky winners enjoy their outdoor lighting over the summer.



Parish Councillor Teresa Bowles with donated prizes of solar garden lights.

Parish Councillors visit the Solar Park

Graveney and Goodnestone Parish Councillors made a second visit to the Cleve Hill Solar Park site on 10 June.

The councillors were given a panoramic view across the construction site from a new viewing platform in the office compound, following presentations on the progress made since their first visit in October 2023.

As well as the CHSP construction project team, the event was attended by an Ecological Clerk of Works, Munnely's logistics manager (in charge of the construction traffic management) and representatives from the contractors.

A Q&A session rounded off the visit, with the opportunity for councillors to discuss all aspects of the project.

We are planning further site visits for community groups and interested parties later in the summer.

Contact Us:

If you would like to be kept updated via email, please get in touch with the project team via the communication channels below:



Write to us at:

Freepost: Cleve Hill Solar



Email us at:

info@clevehillsolar.com



Call our Freephone information line:

0800 328 2850

Available Monday - Friday, 9am-5pm
Saturday, 9am - 1pm
Voicemails can be left outside of these hours



Visit our website at:

www.clevehillsolar.com