

Simon Dunn
The Planning Inspectorate
3/05 Wing, Temple Quay House
2 The Square
Bristol BS1 6PN

16 June 2014

Dear Mr Dunn,

[Appeal by Huddlestone Farm Solar Park Ltd \(ref DC/13/2420 APP/Z3825/A/14/2218035\)](#)

On behalf of Steyning 10:10 Climate Action Group, I am writing to express strong support for this appeal which has been reinforced by a survey we have conducted in the past two weeks to test local opinions on the solar farm plans.

Steyning 10:10 is a community group working to promote action on climate change. We expressed our support in principle for the Huddlestone scheme early on in the planning process, and followed up with a detailed submission outlining the reasons we were in favour of the scheme once we had looked into it more closely and negotiated an attractive package of community benefits with its developers, Inazin.

The Survey

The original planning application was turned down by Horsham District Council on landscape and visual amenity grounds. There is indeed a trade-off to be made, as with any significant energy generation scheme, renewable or otherwise. We decided to test local opinions on this trade-off by mounting a survey. This ran from 31 May to 15 June 2014.

The survey was advertised widely as we wanted to reach beyond our immediate support base. Besides publicising it via Steyning 10:10's email list, and on Twitter and Facebook, we ran a stall at Steyning's Farmers Market, had a poster outside the Coop (our main local supermarket), handed out questionnaires at several Steyning Festival events, and had articles published in the [Steyning Herald](#) (front page) and [West Sussex Gazette](#).

To inform people of the details of the scheme, and why Steyning 10:10 supports it, we encouraged them to look at an online presentation before they filled in the survey. This included photographs of the site from all directions, and is attached as **[Annex A](#)**.

The Response

- We received 230 responses in total, 197 electronically (using the Survey Monkey online survey package) and 33 on paper.
- While not fully representative, as it was a self-selecting group, we believe the response was large and diverse enough to be meaningful.
- 83 people indicated they are already on the Steyning 10:10 email list, implying that 64% of respondents were from outside the group's current membership base.
- Of those who filled in their postcodes, 87% were from Steyning and the immediately adjoining postcodes, so the response was overwhelmingly local.

Headline Results

- An overwhelming majority (86.7%) of respondents felt the benefits of the Huddlestone scheme outweigh the landscape impacts.
- Overall, 91% of respondents were in favour of the scheme, including 67% who were strongly in favour. This compared to less than 5% who were against, or strongly against it, a margin of nineteen to one in favour.
- 67% are very concerned about climate change, and 26% quite concerned. Only 3% were not concerned.
- 77% feel taking action here in Sussex is a big priority, and a further 19% that we should be doing something about it. Less than 4% were not convinced action is necessary, or were not sure.

The [full survey results](#), including all the comments submitted, are available on the Steyning 10:10 website. Summary results are attached in [Annex B](#).

Community Benefits

The fact that the scheme will provide an unusually good package of direct benefits to the local community is an important added attraction. Huddlestone Solar Park Ltd have issued a letter spelling out their intention to:

- Provide 30kW of PV panels for Steyning Grammar School.
- Contribute £10,000 per annum (index linked) for 20 years as a community payment to fund local energy projects. This could be real spur for local green initiatives.
- Launch a Huddlestone Community Bond, offering an innovative and low risk way for people to invest in the solar farm themselves. This is the first bond of this kind we know of and fits well with the Government's intentions to encourage local ownership of renewables set out in their 2014 Community Energy Strategy, and reinforced in the [recently announced](#) "Community Electricity Right to Buy In" provision being built into the Infrastructure Bill 2014/15.

Details of these arrangements are still to be finalised, but we would urge you to take them into account in your decision, and include them as a condition if the scheme is approved.

Conclusions

Steyning 10:10 believes the Huddlestone solar park would be a real boon to our community and a significant contributor to local energy supplies. Armed with the results of our survey, we also think it would be popular, as the weight of local opinion is strongly behind it. We urge you to approve it and set Steyning on the path towards a clean, renewable energy future.

Best regards

Geoff Barnard

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