

LOWER SUNBURY RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

2024 NEW YEAR NEWSLETTER



LOSRA

www.LOSRA.org

Developers pursuing potential plan for a huge battery energy storage facility on Green Belt next to the EcoPark

We thought it would be timely and relevant to highlight a potential development project about which we have been approached and which if it were to move to the next stages would be of considerable interest, and maybe start alarm bells ringing, for residents of Sunbury and surrounding areas

The project is of particular significance since it would be a very substantial industrial plant which is proposed to be sited on an area of Green Belt land adjacent to the so-called EcoPark in Charlton Lane. Although the EcoPark is working after a fashion now, it was always the wrong thing in the wrong place, partly based on unproven and largely unworkable technology and justified by spurious environmental benefits, which have not lived up to what we were promised. We would hate the same mistakes to be made again.

The facts as we know them are as follows. Until relatively recently there was no direct way to store large amounts of electrical energy - it could only be done indirectly by such means as pumped water storage systems or even flywheels.

The development of Lithium-ion technology however has provided the opportunity to use batteries on a far larger scale than was previously possible. This can be seen in the rapid growth of electric-powered land and airborne vehicles with operational ranges beginning to approach those of their hydrocarbon-fuelled predecessors.

The parallel move towards renewable electricity generation, using the sun, wind or water as energy sources, has exposed the need for electricity storage to allow those intermittent sources to be effectively exploited.

The result has been the development of battery energy storage systems, or BESS for short.

Back in June 2023 LOSRA was

contacted by planning consultants DWD with a request to meet with them to discuss a proposal by developers EcoDev to build a BESS on Green Belt land just north of the Charlton Lane Eco Park, between Charlton Village and Upper Halliford.

DWD saw LOSRA as one of the key local stakeholders to be consulted prior to their submitting a planning application to Spelthorne Borough Council. We had an online meeting with them on 19 June at which we had a chance to ask questions about the proposal.

We then awaited the submission of their planning application, but this has not occurred, although we understand that it is still being prepared. This article is therefore based on the proposal details provided to us in the summer.

The size of a BESS is measured in two ways: its maximum output, and its capacity. The proposed 'Sunbury BESS', as the developers have called it, is very large by current standards.

It is designed to have a maximum output of 200 megawatts, and a storage capacity of 800 megawatt hours - in other words four hours' supply at maximum output.

To achieve this, many hundreds of Li-ion batteries are assembled together in tens of enclosures that are, or are similar to, shipping containers. These are laid out in a grid on the ground, connected together electrically and linked to a single connection and control point.

Our understanding is that the proposed Sunbury BESS would cover an area of roughly six acres (2.5 hectares) - a good deal larger than three football pitches.

From the site a new high voltage cable will need to be routed across the M3 motorway, through Charlton Village and round to the north of the Queen Mary Reservoir to the nearest grid substation, near the Fordbridge Roundabout

in Staines., which could bring some technical and safety challenges.

The BESS would operate by drawing power off the grid when generation was abundant, storing it, and releasing it when generation was constrained.

Although the BESS is being put forward as an enabler of greater effectiveness of renewable energy, it is by no means limited to that role and may, for instance, also be used if there is a dearth or excess of thermal generation.

Proposing to build a large BESS on Green Belt land - and in a Biodiversity Opportunity Area (BOA), adjacent to a major waste processing plant (EcoPark) and a Public Footpath (#70) in a suburban environment - inevitably presents a considerable number of challenges for developers and planners.

It seems obvious that with the growth of renewable energy, such facilities will be necessary and will need to go somewhere, so we won't jump to nimbyist conclusions.

However, this is still an emerging technology and the safety implications are not widely known, although issues of thermal runaway related to exothermic reactions in Li-ion batteries are a known phenomenon.

An initial view might be that such facilities should be the function of integrated central government planning, rather than random opportunist planning applications from landowners, but maybe that's an unrealistic expectation.

The fact that no planning application has been submitted might indicate the developers are running into a few stumbling blocks and are conscious of difficulties they might face from several points of view. We are aware that they have already had preliminary discussions with Spelthorne's officers, which could possibly have given them food for thought.

It remains to be seen how things will transpire, but LOSRA will continue to follow this proposal with interest and will keep you updated!

Spelthorne Council at odds with Minister over decision to delay Local Plan

When we reported on this in our last newsletter we had hoped that the Local Plan would proceed through its Examination in Public (EIP) towards eventual adoption. However it was not to be, with 22 new councillors elected in May, many of whom did not agree with the emerging Local Plan. Our optimism that the six years of hard work by officers would bear fruit was unfortunately misplaced.

At an Extraordinary Council Meeting (ECM) on the 6th June Spelthorne Borough Council formally requested the Planning Inspector to pause the Examination Hearings into the Local Plan for a period of three months to allow time for the new council to understand and review the policies and implications of the Local Plan and after that three month pause the Council would decide what actions may be necessary before the Local Plan examination may proceed.

A further ECM was held on 14th September at which the Council resolved to extend the pause in the examination timetable until the proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework

(NPPF) had been published, (which was expected in the Autumn but we're still waiting at the time of going to print) before determining the next steps. The agenda for that meeting included a further option to "Withdraw the Local Plan from examination and prepare a new Local Plan".

However, just hours before the ECM the Minister of State exercised her powers to intervene under section 27 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, as she determined "*that a local planning authority is failing or omitting to do anything it is necessary for them to do in connection with the preparation, revision or adoption of their local plan. It is considered that withdrawing the plan from examination would be a clear failure by the Council of the statutory test set out in section 27(1) of the 2004 Act.*"

This intervention was clearly a source of great discontent as it became apparent that the withdrawal of the Local Plan and starting again had been a pre-

ferred option by a sizeable cohort, maybe even a majority, of the members present. The leader qualified the choice for a further pause in order to take immediate legal advice to confirm the validity of the Minister's directive.

Since the September ECM the Environment Agency, a statutory consultee, has raised a number of flooding concerns relating to proposed site allocations in both Staines and Shepperton which, if eventual remediation measures are deemed to be impracticable, will significantly reduce the capacity for meeting the 618 dwellings pa the government has determined for this Borough.

One is bound to question, as we have, whether it would not have been a preferable option to allow the EIP to run its course and for the Planning Inspector to determine whether the Plan was sound or unsound and, in either case, to hear his reasons; or any suggested changes necessary to allow the plan to be adopted (known as 'main modifications'). That, we submit, would have been the preferable way of going about it.

Instead, we are left wondering what benefits for residents will eventually accrue from this political stasis and the opportunity costs sacrificed as a result.

River Thames Scheme looks unlikely to deliver significant flood reduction or other benefits in Lower Sunbury

LOSRA's AGM Newsletter referenced the River Thames Scheme (RTS) in an article on the Thames Landscape Strategy, as both initiatives relate to reducing the likelihood of flooding on the river.

In October LOSRA attended an online meeting hosted by the RTS at which it presented the results of the refined river flow computer models used to develop the designs of the infrastructure being proposed to reduce the flooding risk. The main elements of the scheme were given as follows:

- A flood channel in two sections between Egham Hythe and Shepperton;
- Bed lowering downstream of the Desborough Cut;
- Additional gates at Sunbury, Molesey and Teddington weirs;
- New green (land based) and blue (water based) open spaces associated with the flood channel, with access for local communities and facilities such as sports fields, accessible pathway networks, nature play spaces and sculptural landforms;
- Priority areas for habitat creation enhancement and mitigation, which link with existing and new wildlife corridors, improve fish passage and build upon the network of existing wildlife sites;
- New or improved active travel provision and places for recreational access, along and across the flood channel corridor and new open spaces, with connections to the existing network and two new pedestrian

and cycle bridges across the Thames at Chertsey and Desborough Island;

- Incidental utilities and highways alterations and diversions; and
- Temporary construction features such as site compounds and materials processing and storage sites.

The two new flood channels involve the linking of various former gravel pit lakes to form controllable extra capacity when the river is in flood.

The 'bed lowering' downstream between Desborough Cut and Walton bridge aims to increase the river's cross-sectional area to take the extra flow.

The additional weirs to be built at Sunbury (on Sunbury Lock Ait), Molesey and Teddington are similarly designed to increase the flow capacity through those reaches when required.

Remaining elements are incidental to the primary flood relief objectives, but are designed to take advantage of them for additional community benefits.

Intriguingly these include 'two new pedestrian and cycle bridges across the Thames at Chertsey and Desborough Island' that had not hitherto been mentioned in our discussions with SCC about the proposed Lower Sunbury Crossing that LOSRA has been supporting.

SCC, which is a lead partner in the RTS along with the Environment Agency, has since told LOSRA that '*your pro-*

posal is on the infrastructure list but is currently not prioritised for delivery and not part of the RTS scheme. Due to costs and the complexity of the DCO (Development Control Order) process we are including as many nice to haves as possible (in the RTS scheme) but they may not be delivered alongside the flood prevention works.' We are not quite sure what that actually means for the chances of getting our bridge in Lower Sunbury, but we will continue to pursue it!

Of more immediate interest is the likely impact of the RTS on Lower Sunbury, and this is given in the modelling results, accessed via the RTS website www.riverthamesscheme.org.uk.

For Lower Sunbury the conclusion is that 'Downstream of the flood channel (Walton onwards), the reduction in flood extent due to the RTS is small. Generally, the flood extent remains the same through this area and water level reductions are less than 0.2m.'

That means the same areas will be inundated as in previous floods, but the depth of water may be up to 20cm shallower due to the RTS. The graphs in the RTS Modelling Summary show an anticipated flood level reduction of between about 12-17cms upstream of Sunbury Lock, and about 4-8cms downstream of it - surely an insignificant change.

Subject to DCO approval, construction of the RTS is not programmed until 2027 at the earliest, with proposed completion three years later.

LOSRA is represented on the RTS Working Group and we will continue to monitor and question its design and the impact on Lower Sunbury.

LOSRA contributing to Surrey County Council's Liveable Neighbourhood Zones project

Surrey County Council have recently engaged with residents, businesses, schools, and organisations in Lower Sunbury to get views on key local transport issues and what could be changed to improve the streets in Lower Sunbury.

The aim is to create a "Liveable Neighbourhood" making streets safer, healthier, and more attractive with increased perception of road safety, incorporating lower speed limits and better facilities for walking, wheeling and cycling particularly for the vulnerable road user groups.

Two engagement sessions were held at Sunbury Adult Learning centre on 19th and 28th October - not all residents received notification, so we publicised it on the LOSRA website.

LOSRA has provided feedback to SCC Officers about the Liveable Neighbourhoods engagement. A Lower Sunbury walking meeting with SCC officers was held on 28th Sept., to show the current challenges and issues in Lower Sunbury.

We have also discussed the historical context within Lower Sunbury and the Sunbury Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) which included engagement events in 2021 and covered

the same purpose of improving facilities for walking and cycling. We have discussed the connection and importance of Sunbury Cross and school children travelling from Sunbury Common.

The recent Liveable Neighbourhoods Engagement follows approval in June for further development of schemes within Surrey's Infrastructure Plan, with identified schemes to be further developed and delegated to the Surrey County Council's Executive Director of Environment, Transport, Infrastructure & Growth.

Funding has been allocated for the programme with £1.7million specifically allocated to the The Lower Sunbury Liveable Neighbourhood but with only an initial tranche of DfT awarded funding of £302,800 to progress design and stakeholder engagement.

SCC is assessing the initial feedback with further engagement planned, and we will keep you informed.

Construction of any scheme(s) will be subject to further public consultation. SCC have noted there may be additional Funding requests to Active Travel England to offset the total funding needed .

Sunbury Cricket Club's Rhianna Southby plays for England Women's A team on tour of India

These are exciting times at Sunbury Cricket Club. Not only did the Club's 1st XI win the Premier Division of the Surrey Championship, securing the title in a nail-biting winner-takes-all final match of the season at Guildford where they chased 284 in 50 overs with a few balls to spare, but the 4th and 5th XIs also won their leagues and the 2nd and 3rd XIs finished 3rd.

On top of that, wicket-keeper Rhianna Southby, a Sunbury club member, was called up to train with the England Women's 'A' squad in Oman and was selected for the England 'A' team tour of India in December where England won the two T20 games in which she played.

This is another deserved advancement for Rhianna, a former Sunbury Junior, who signed a new contract with the Southern Vipers, for whom she took 10 catches and five stumpings in 14 matches as the Vipers won the Rachael Heyhoe Flint Trophy in the 2023 Women's Hundred competition.

Rhianna is a product of Sunbury CC's Junior set-up which has an expanding programme of competitive girls' cricket with women's cricket planned for the future, building on the Club's outstanding record in developing young cricketers within its Junior/Colts system

Surplus to Supper recognised with three Spelthorne Business Awards

The community food distribution charity Surplus to Supper, based at Sunbury Cricket Club in Lower Sunbury, has had its achievements recognised by winning three categories at this year's Spelthorne Business Awards, organised by Spelthorne Council

Those prestigious awards were as **Best Sustainable Business**, making the **Best Community Impact**, and the ultimate title of overall winner of **Best Business in Spelthorne 2023**.

Surplus to Supper, which has a total of over 200 volunteers, has made an extraordinary impact during the few years of its existence, and it now operates a fleet of half a dozen vans, collecting surplus food from supermarkets and other sources, working with over 20 local food banks and food hubs, supporting 150 local charities, and in the last 3 years rescuing over 3 million meals' worth of food.

Operations Director Claire Hopkins comments about the Awards that: "*This incredible achievement would not have been possible without the unwavering support and dedication of our amazing team members, volunteers, and partners. Together, we have been able to make a real difference in our community and*

promote sustainability in the most delicious way possible!

We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to the Spelthorne Business Group for recognising our efforts and for this incredible honour. It is truly humbling to be acknowledged alongside so many other outstanding businesses in our area.

But most importantly, we want to express our gratitude to our incredible supporters and customers. Their unwavering belief in our mission and continued patronage have been the driving force behind our success."

Those familiar with Surplus to Supper will be very aware of the vision, imagination, professionalism and dedication behind its success, and the drive and determination of its directors in achieving their objectives of reducing food waste, creating a more sustainable future, helping those in need to have nutritious meals and making a positive impact on the community.

We would like to think that the success of Surplus to Supper typifies the community spirit that we believe genuinely exists in Lower Sunbury, and we heartily congratulate them .

Jazz legend Tony Kinsey's Embroidery Suite to be performed in January

A special concert is taking place at the Hampton Hub on Sunday 28th January featuring music composed by Sunbury resident Tony Kinsey, the legendary jazz drummer, composer and bandleader who is one of the pioneers of British modern jazz.

Although Tony will be present only as composer and arranger, the 14-piece ensemble is billed as The Tony Kinsey Big Band, and will be playing several of his compositions, including the Embroidery Suite, written for the opening of the Sunbury Gallery.

Tony is a founder member of the London jazz collective Way Out West, and as well as recognising Tony's contribution to British jazz, the concert is dedicated to former member Neil Hamilton, whose legacy is helping Way Out West continue its work presenting jazz in West London.

The evening will also feature the world premiere of Tony's latest composition "For Neil", written in Neil Hamilton's honour.

Some top-flight musicians will be playing , including John Horler, Henry Lowther, Andy Panayi and Mark Nightingale.

Tickets are £18 in advance from the web site at www.hamptonhub.com., or £20 on the door, although advance booking is advisable, as this event is sure to attract a lot of interest within the jazz fraternity.

Friends of Sunbury Park **Bat boxes installed and the range of informative booklets expands**

Friends Of Sunbury Park has had an active year, with the work of the group helping to enhance the habitat and improve everyone's knowledge of the wildlife, flora and fauna of the local area.

With funding from Cllr. Buddhi Weerasinghe, the Friends purchased ten bat boxes and bat detectors. The boxes have been installed at sites on the haha and in the woodland suggested by the Surrey Bat Group, and the first evening walk for a group of residents took place in early September, during which three different species were both heard and observed. The species of bats observed included Common Pipistrelle, Soprano Pipistrelle and Noctule. Later surveys also discovered Daubenton's Bats flying above the river near King's Lawn.

Cllr. Weerasinghe also funded the purchase of hedgehog tunnels, which were used in different places in the Park, Orchard Meadow and The Walled Garden to establish whether hedgehogs are present.

The latest in the series of booklets about the different aspects of the Park is now about to go to print, which is "The Fungi And Lichens of Sunbury Park and Hawke Park" written and with photographs by local resident Dr. Phil Cribb and mycologist Professor Brian Spooner, both formerly senior figures at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. Once again, support from the Your Councillor Community Fund helped in the production of the booklet.

There are now booklets available from the Embroidery Gallery and Skinners Newsagents on the Birds, Butterflies Wild Flowers, Trees and Fungi of the Park, which will enable to people, especially families with children, to get even more enjoyment from the Park.

THE LOSRA COMMITTEE

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Sunbury Embroidery Gallery urgently needs volunteers

When The Sunbury Embroidery Gallery opened in 2006 it was largely staffed by volunteers, many of whom had been involved with the project from the start. As the business grew, and some of those volunteers retired, they were replaced by paid staff to ensure the Café could guarantee to maintain its level of service, although volunteers still comprise a significant element of the workforce.

With the Covid crisis and increasing passage of time, the Gallery's volunteer base was further depleted. Subsequent years have seen huge increases in utility prices, cost of ingredients as well as statutory increases in staff wages. The Gallery is therefore currently looking to rebuild the volunteer base for the future and to fill existing vacancies.

Opportunities are mainly for helping in the café, for which any necessary training will be given. They are looking for people of all ages and abilities. It's a really enjoyable place to work, with a lovely social atmosphere in a pleasant environment.

We are conscious that quite a lot of people have moved into the area, and it may be that there are those keen to get involved in the community who can spare a few hours a week to help and to meet new people. It's also a chance for students to get valuable work experience.

If you can help, either visit the Gallery in person or call 01932 788101 and speak to Michiko, or email info@sunburygallery.org

Please help by paying your 2024 LOSRA subscription

We are now into a new year as far as LOSRA subscriptions are concerned, so it would help us greatly if you could chip in with your contribution, which remains pegged at £5.00 per annum, with an alternative of Life membership for £100.00.

We have our usual programme of newsletters and other activities to fund, plus the ever-present threat of needing to pay for legal advice and representation for major planning issues. You can pay your subscription by using one of the methods set out below.

LOSRA MEMBERSHIP FOR 2024 PAYMENT OPTIONS

By Standing Order

You may pay by setting up a standing order with your bank. Please make payments to Lower Sunbury Residents Association at Barclays Bank, Account number: 90581194 Sort Code: 20 46 73. Subsequent payments to be made on 1st January each year. Please use LOSRA with your house number and post code as a reference.

By cheque or cash

The annual subscription is still just £5 per household and voluntary donations are always welcome. For payment by cheque or cash, please use the form below and deliver to Colleen Cuthbert, Membership Secretary, 8 Maryland Way TW16 6HR or any other committee member as listed. Alternatively drop your payment into Skinners Newsagents/Post Office in Avenue Parade, or The Good Estate Agent, 101 Green Street. Please make cheques payable to Lower Sunbury Residents Association.

Via PayPal

This can be done on the web site at www.LOSRA.org

Life Membership

There is also the option of Life Membership of £100 with a one-off payment.

If you are not sure that you are up to date with your payments or you need further information about membership, please contact Colleen Cuthbert, Membership Secretary, on 01932 783606 or by email colleen.cuthbert@btinternet.com and we will be pleased to advise.

Thank you very much for your continued support.

Membership payment slip 2024 for CHEQUES OR CASH

I wish to pay the annual subscription to LOSRA of £5.00 per household or a Life Subscription of £100.00

I wish to make a donation to LOSRA of £.....

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