



Wilton Town Council

Report of the Town Clerk for consideration by the Council at its special meeting to be held on 12th March, 2019.

PV Solar Panels at Castle Meadow Pavilion



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The purpose of this report

Further to consideration of this matter at the Full Council meeting held on 5th March 2019, this report sets out a more detailed feasibility assessment of the proposal to install PV (solar) panels at the Castle Meadow Pavilion. While members supported the idea in principle, they asked for a full assessment and financial cost breakdown.

Recommendation

That, subject to the receipt of deliverable tenders, Wilton Town Council proceeds with the installation of PV panels at Castle Meadow Pavilion – this to be funded from reserves and contingencies 2019/20.

1. Background

- a) Wilton Town Council is supporting an ecoTown initiative and has included budget provision in 2019/20 for a range of low carbon and sustainability projects in the Town.
- b) During the preparation of the 2019/20 budget, the possibility of installing solar PV panels at the Pavilion in Castle Meadow was discussed by the budget working party. The pavilion has a large expanse of roof and only moderate electricity demands - making it an ideal site.
- c) The project was supported by the working party as a flagship initiative to launch the ecoTown programme.
- d) During the discussion, it was suggested that Nadder Community Energy's (NCE) – a local community benefit society - may be able to finance the project. It was decided to pursue this approach and make no specific budget provision.
- e) The Council contacted NCE on 30th January to discuss the matter.
- f) On Monday 4th March NCE completed its assessment and confirmed that the project would not represent a good investment for the Society.
- g) In view of the advice received, the Clerk discussed the issue with the Mayor who agreed to raise the matter at Full Council on Tuesday 5th March 2019. In addition, the Clerk submitted a grant application to the South West Wiltshire Area Board for consideration at its meeting on 20th March.
- h) The Council agreed to support the scheme in principle, subject to a technical and financial assessment.

2. Nadder Community Energy and Nadder Energy

- a) NCE is a Community Benefit Society that owns 11 solar PV installations in the Tisbury area, these were funded by raising capital through a community share offer. NCE has recently raised further funds through a second share offer to install solar panels on local schools.
- b) NCE is not an installer and its Board of Directors are all volunteers.
- c) Following initial discussions with Wilton Town Council, NCE investigated the possibility of including the Wilton pavilion site in a potential third share offer, but financially the scheme did not meet the Society's financial viability criteria.
- d) NCE work closely with another independent consultancy, Nadder Energy (NE). The two companies are not linked in any way. NE provide technical PV consultancy services.
- e) NE have subsequently assessed the viability of the project as a standalone scheme financed by the Council.

3. The proposal

- a) Nadder Energy's advice to is to install a 6-8kW PV panel array on the pavilion roof, subject to a survey by the selected installers. This will generate renewable energy for the facility and produce surplus electricity that can be provided back to the National Grid.
- b) The cost of installing the PV panels has been estimated by NE at £1,000 per kilowatt – around £6,000 - 7,000 in total.
- c) Currently, the pavilion consumes £1,000 of non-renewable electricity per annum (2019/20 budget).
- d) If the PV panels are installed, the Council can benefit from the Government's 'feed-in' tariff that 'buys' back any surplus renewable energy generated at a fixed rate.
- e) The financial forecast provided by Nadder Energy suggests that, typically, a scheme of this size and type works on a parameter of 50% usage and 50% export.
- f) NE advise that a similar sized installation at a local school has been calculated to generate around 5,000kWh annually. This represents income of approximately £200pa from the Feed-in-Tariff @ 3.79/kWh and £130pa from the deemed export to the grid of approximately 2,500 kWh @ 5.24p per kWh, and a saving of a further £300 pa.
- g) Based on these figures, it can be predicted that the Council will reduce its energy costs at the pavilion by approximately 60% – dependent on the size of the installation, the percentage of the generated electricity used and subject to securing the 'feed-in' tariff.
- h) NE advise that the Council would expect to see a return on its investment within 6 years based on these estimates.
- i) The 'feed-in' tariff will be discontinued on 31st March 2019. Although this would not preclude the delivery of the project, it would lengthen the 'pay-back' period significantly.
- j) The installation would also be the Council's first flagship ecoTown project and form the basis of a publicity and public awareness campaign.

4. Project delivery

- a) The Council has submitted a grant application in the sum of £3,000 to the South West Wiltshire Are Board to support this project. It is anticipated that the Board will consider this application at its meeting on 20th March, 2019.

- b) Subject to the outcome of the grant bid, the total cost of the project is likely to be between £4,000 and £6,500. Currently, no provision has been included in the 2019/20 budget.
- c) The Council could finance installation by either:
 - i) Funding the costs from its reserves.
 - ii) Virement of funds from an alternative budget (such as the office WC refurbishment)
- d) The financial viability of the scheme will also depend on securing the green energy 'feed-in' tariff before 31st March, 2019, although as stated earlier this would not preclude the project – it would extend the 'pay-back' period significantly.
- e) The final costs would be subject to the outcome of a procurement process for the supply, installation and commissioning of the PV panels and any technical consultancy required.
- f) Nadder Energy work with a number of local installation companies including Dorset Energy Solutions, Energy-Tec and others.
- g) Because of the number of consumers seeking to benefit from the 'feed-in' tariff before the end of the month – the market is very stretched with contractors extremely busy. Therefore, it may be difficult to secure a contract completion date within the time available.
- h) Nadder Energy will assist with this aspect of the proposal.

5. **Recommendation**

That, subject to the receipt of deliverable tenders, Wilton Town Council proceeds with the installation of PV panels at Castle Meadow Pavilion – this to be funded from reserves and contingencies 2019/20.

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