

Pucklechurch Parish Council:

Clarifications concerning the Leigh Farm Renewable Energy project

31 July 2025

On 14th July 2025 South Gloucestershire Council's cabinet discussed a report regarding a renewable energy project at Leigh Farm with a view to approving *'the masterplan and development of the areas known as Leigh Farms I and II to support the objectives of the Climate and Nature Emergency, and designations to support the Local Plan'*.

The report provided information on three initiatives:

- Bristol Energy Network (BEN) proposals regarding the installation of two wind turbines at Leigh Farm, which is South Gloucestershire Council-owned land in Pucklechurch.
- The creation of new woodland and a proposal to lease land to Pucklechurch Parish Council with a view to developing a biodiverse wildlife haven and community asset with the use of S106 monies.
- Sites proposed within the draft Local Plan for Gypsy & Travellers and for Travelling Show people at Leigh Farm.

While Pucklechurch Parish Council has had direct discussions with South Gloucestershire Council regarding the potential use of S106 funds at Leigh Farm I, the proposal Pucklechurch Parish Council brought forward was entirely independent of the other two matters that it has been conflated with in the South Gloucestershire Council report. With regard to the sites proposed for Gypsy & Travellers and for Travelling Show people, Pucklechurch Parish Council responded to these proposals through the Local Plan consultation process.

Wind turbine proposals.

Pucklechurch Parish Council would like to make it clear that it has had no discussions with either the Bristol Energy Network or South Gloucestershire Council with regard to the proposed wind turbines. In addition, it has not been invited to take part in, or been involved at any time in, any local community consultations referenced in the report, or in the creation of a Community Interest Company that *"would serve the people of Pucklechurch, Emersons and Lyde Green and Westerleigh and other affected communities"*.

With regard to the CIC, the report states that *"The BEN has worked with the local community to launch a Community Interest Company (CIC). The CIC was registered in April 2025"*. This statement suggests the CIC is a new initiative. However, Pucklechurch Parish Council understands that the CIC that has been formed is the 'Emersons and Lyde Community Energy C.I.C (ELCE)' as referenced in Appendix C of the South Gloucestershire Council Cabinet papers, and ELCE was incorporated on 18th Jan 2024 (Company Number 15425098). The connection with BEN is not immediately apparent on the ELCE website although as per Appendix C *"Bristol Energy Network has carried out local consultation and created a specific company, Emersons and Lyde Community Energy"*

C.I.C (ELCE). The CIC was registered in April 2025. This is to ensure that the local community benefit from the surplus income generated from the turbine/s."

Pucklechurch Parish Council is deeply concerned that at present, Emersons Green and Lyde Green appear to be the priority focus for the CIC when the proposed turbines will be situated in Pucklechurch Parish, and immediately adjacent to Westerleigh & Coalpit Heath Parish. It is not clear why the parishes immediately impacted by the proposed turbines have not been directly involved in preliminary discussions or consultations to date. South Gloucestershire Council's cabinet gave approval at its meeting on the 14th July for BEN to work up *"the full business case and proposals for how the money received from selling the power generated could be channelled to local communities"*. As part of this BEN will, according to South Gloucestershire Council's Newsroom article, *"engage with local residents, Councils and groups about how the plans will evolve, before coming back to South Gloucestershire Council and making a planning application"*. Pucklechurch Parish Council will ensure that it plays a full role in the consultation and engagement process that arises from this. It will also be making a strong case for any financial benefits arising from the future delivery of the proposed turbines to address local needs within those parishes immediately and directly affected by their physical presence.

Lease of land to Pucklechurch Parish Council

In November 2023 Pucklechurch Parish Council adopted a position paper/policy regarding the potential for South Gloucestershire Council to use Leigh Farm I to help address its commitment to climate change. It specifically wrote to Cabinet members and Executive Directors asking for South Gloucestershire Council to recognise the long-term environmental importance of Leigh Farms and to take action to protect these valuable assets.

In March 2024 Pucklechurch Parish Council put forward a proposal to work with South Gloucestershire Council to both plant a small woodland on South Gloucestershire Council land and protect the hay meadows at Leigh Farm I under an agreed suitable lease/license agreement. Pucklechurch Parish Council acknowledged it would not be able to pursue this independently and sought the support of South Gloucestershire Council's Nature and biodiversity team and others. The proposal was based on Pucklechurch Parish Council's desire to protect and enhance the significant biodiversity it is aware of at these sites, as well as meet targets relative to climate change. The initial proposal was to offer circa £60.6K of S106 monies (natural and semi-natural open spaces) towards this scheme. The details of the scheme or any lease/license arrangement, which is referenced in the report to cabinet, however, are currently unknown.