

## Planning Officer's Report - LDCA JUNE 2018

<b>APPLICATION</b>	<b>2017/98</b> – Proposed Installation of Phase 2 of the Solar Farm (incorporation the western and eastern wings as approved in principle on the 3 <sup>rd</sup> of October 2016 by EXCO with Planning Reference Number 2016/50)
<b>PERMISSION SOUGHT</b>	Permission in <b>Full</b> to Develop Phase 2
<b>REGISTERED</b>	3 October 2017
<b>APPLICANT</b>	Connect Saint Helena Ltd (now in collaboration with PASH <sup>1</sup> )
<b>PARCEL</b>	Approved Solar Farm Site: HTH 1159  Proposed Wings: form part of the greater Crown Land HTH 1350 – portions of which to be subdivided and incorporated as part of the Solar Farm – supported by Crown Estates
<b>LOCALITY</b>	Ex-Rifle Range Site – Half Tree Hollow – Now “HTH Solar Farm”
<b>LAND OWNER</b>	Currently Crown Land
<b>ZONE</b>	Intermediate Zone
<b>CONSERVATION AREA</b>	None
<b>OTHER RESTRICTION</b>	None
<b>CURRENT USE - LAND</b>	Vacant Land alongside Approved Solar Farm and south of installed Solar Farm Phase 1
<b>PUBLICITY</b>	The application was advertised as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Independent Newspaper on 9 November 2017</li><li>▪ Sentinel Newspaper on 10 November 2017</li><li>▪ A site notice displayed in accordance with Regulations.</li></ul>
<b>EXPIRY</b>	24 November 2017
<b>REPRESENTATIONS</b>	None Received
<b>DECISION ROUTE</b>	<del>Delegated</del> / LDCA / EXCO

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<sup>1</sup> Appointed Renewable Energy Consultants

## Diagrams 1: Site Orientation



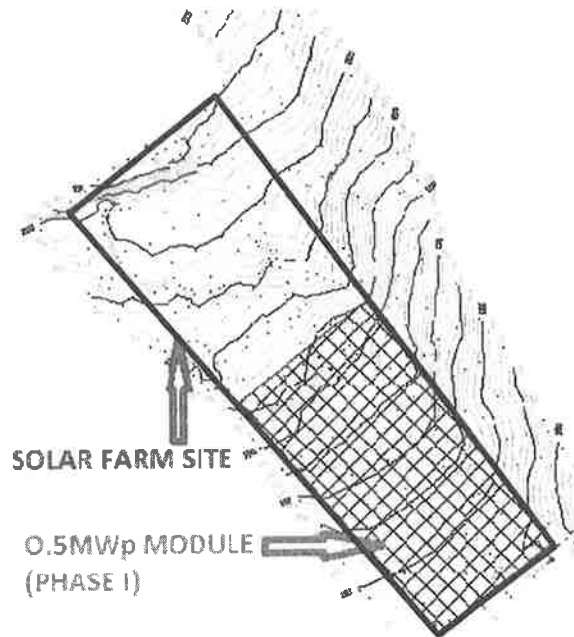
### A. CONSULTATION FEEDBACK

a) Water Division	No Objection
b) Sewage Division	No Objection
c) Energy Division	No Objection
d) Fire & Rescue	No Response
e) Roads Section	No Objection
f) Heritage	No Response
g) Environmental Management	The submitted Ecological Survey Conducted for the extended area (project Area encompassing initial Phases 1 to 4) is comprehensive and covered all of the environmental issues apparent.
h) Public Health	No Response
i) Agriculture & Natural Resources	No Response
j) Property Division (Crown Est)	No Objection – land allocated previously for this purpose wings to be incorporated
k) Police Services	Not Consulted
l) Aerodrome Safe Guarding	Not Consulted
m) Enterprise St Helena (ESH)	No Comments
n) National Trust	No Response

## B. PLANNING HISTORY AND THIS APPLICATION

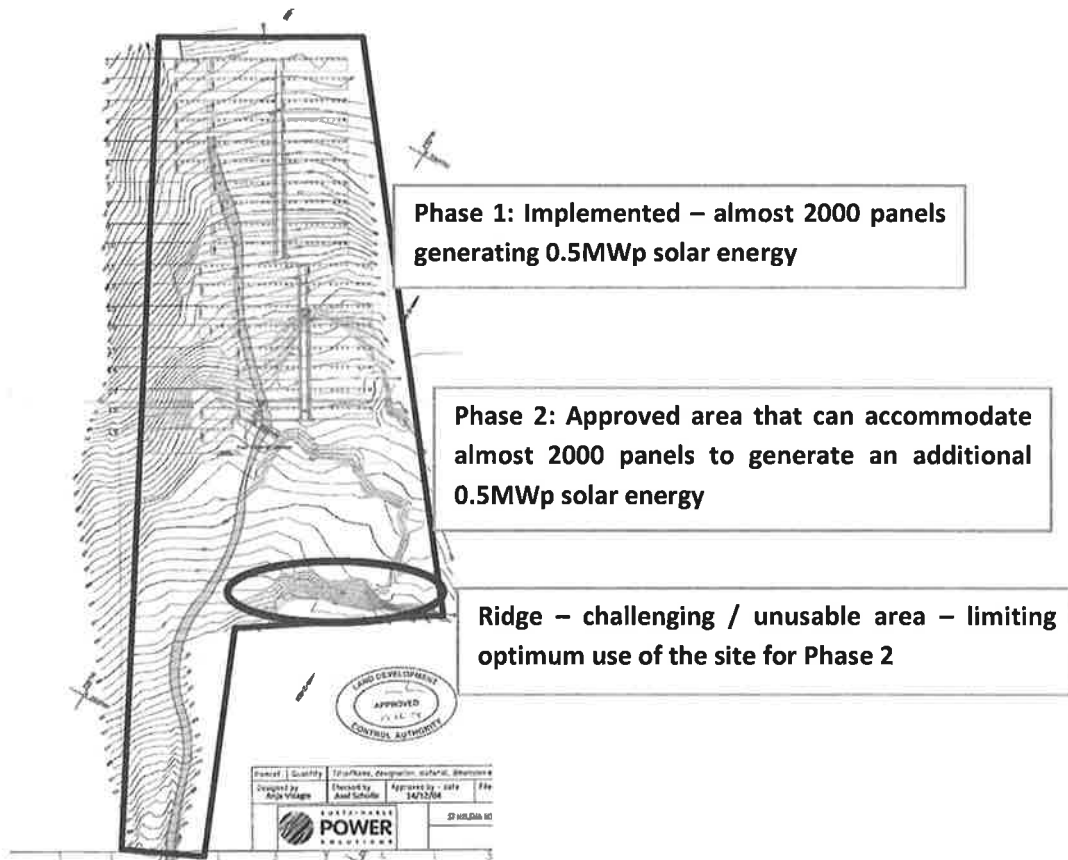
- 1) **Planning Application 2014/56:** This **Outline Development Permission** was granted by Governor-in-Council for a 2MW Power Solar Farm (Photovoltaic) and related operations including supply connection, at the Rifle Range, Ladder Hill in accordance with the recommendation by the LDCA on the 14<sup>th</sup> of October 2014 – Refer to Diagrams 2 below;

### Diagrams 2: Outline Development Permission – 14 October 2014



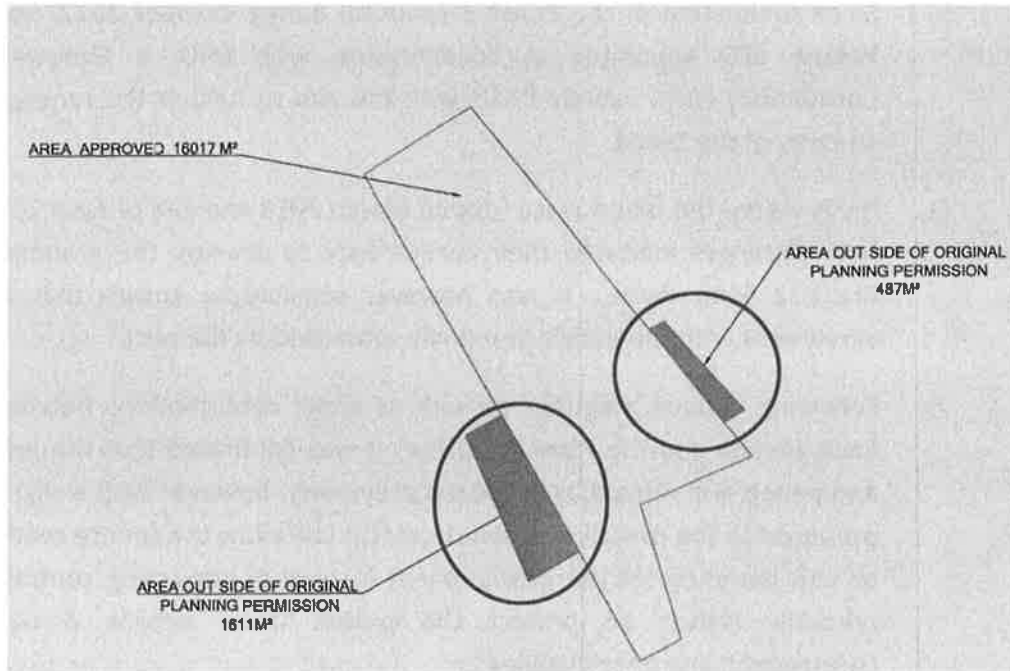
- 2) **Planning Application 2014/78:** **Full Development Permission** obtained for development of Phase 1 and allocation of Land for Phase 2 on the 19<sup>th</sup> of December 2014. The boundary has been slightly re-defined to accommodate also the service access road to the Solar Farm. Phase 1 was completed during 2015. (Diagram 3 below).

Diagram 3: Full Development Permission – 19 December 2014



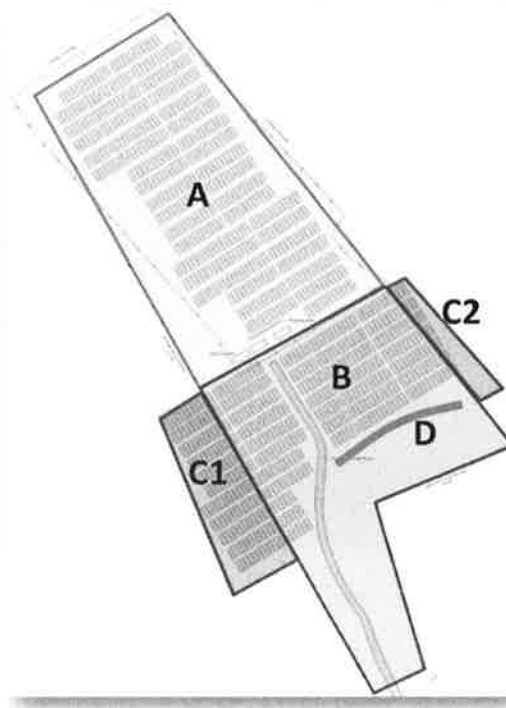
- 3) **Planning Application 2016/50: Outline Development Permission** obtained for redefining the footprint of Phase 2, by adding two small “wings” (to the east and west) of the existing approved area, which will enable a more “compact” and less intrusive layout of the Solar Farm in overall as it will be formed **below** the existing ridge line. Following a Site Visit by Members of EXCO, this Outline Development Permission was approved by Governor-in-Council on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of October 2016 as per Diagram 4 below.

**Diagram 4: Outline Development Permission – 3 October 2016**



- 4) **This Planning Application 2017/98: Full Development Permission** submitted on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of October 2017 requests to incorporate the two sections (wings) into the design in order to Implement Phase 2 of the Solar Farm (refer to **Diagrams 5** on the next page).

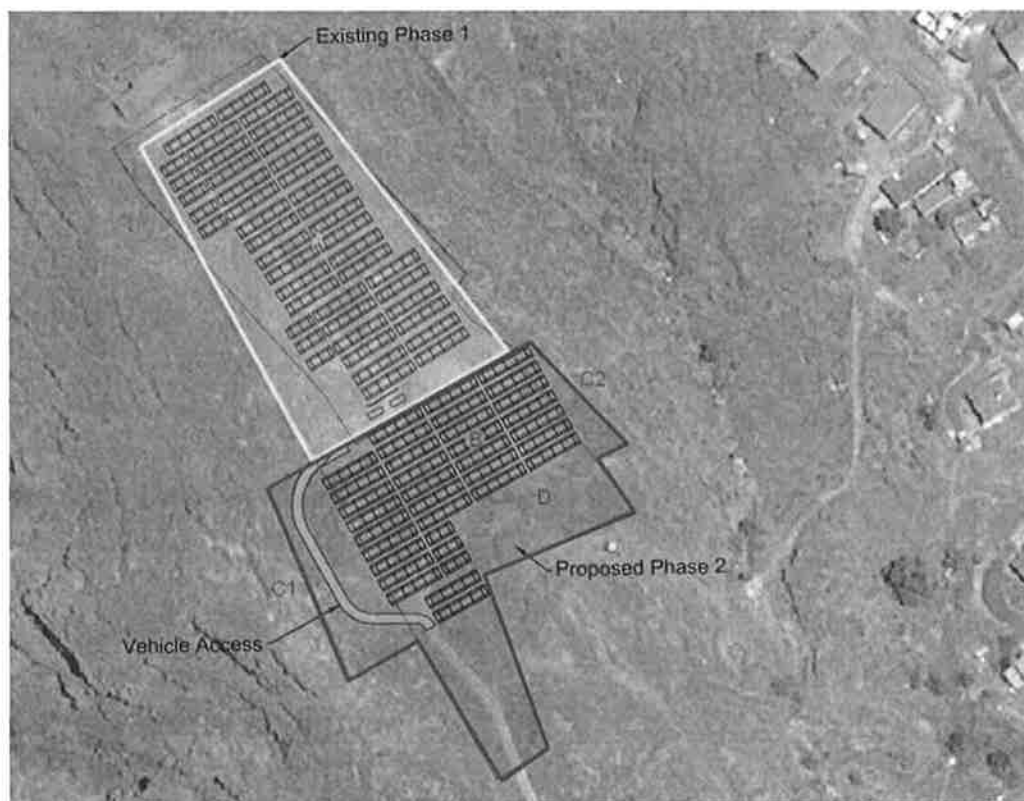
**Diagrams 5: Request for Full Development Permission to Implement Phase 2 as follows – initial submission 3 October 2017:**



- A. **Yellow:** Approved and Implemented Solar Panels Phase 1
- B. **Purple:** Approved not yet Implemented Phase 2 (note that no further Permissions will be required to enable implementation of this area)
- C. **Red:** Phase 2 - proposed Wings (east and west and the subject of this Planning Application) – to allow improved layout due to existing “ridge”
- D. **Orange:** Area of Natural Ridge

- 5) Since submission of the Phase 2 proposal during October 2017, Connect Saint Helena LTD appointed in collaboration with SHG, a Renewable Energy Consultancy Firm, namely PASH with the aim to further the renewable energy strategy of the Island.
- 6) PASH visited the Island twice (during March 2018 and end of April 2018) – and in both instances indicated their concurrence to develop the proposed site as a Phase 2 Solar Farm. It was however sensible to ensure that they are in agreement with the details as initially submitted by Connect.
- 7) Following various meetings as well as email confirmations between Connect Saint Helena and the Planning Office, it was confirmed that the orientation of and panels will remain as proposed previously, however with a slight alteration proposed to the overall site layout– as this will allow the service road to traverse on the periphery of the development instead of traversing centrally with the primarily reason to protect the panels (from vehicle damage) during construction and once installed.

**Diagrams 6: Layout as per 25 May 2018 submission**



8) The Solar Farm will otherwise be implemented similarly as for Phase 1, consisting of:

- **Solar Panels:** An additional almost 2000 Non-reflective PV Panels arranged as arrays to be raised from the ground on structures at approximately 12 degrees from the horizontal, generating 0.5MWp Solar Energy. Note that the design and placement of solar panels may vary slightly from the concept drawing.
- The submissions indicate that the *“PV panels are (to be) constructed from specially-treated low-iron glass, designed to minimise reflection and maximise transmission of light through the glass. Standard low-iron glass reflects approximately 7% of light. As an example, Sunarc AR-Glass panels (as proposed) reflect a total of approximately 2% of the light”*.
- **Associated Equipment and Infrastructure:** There are currently two 20ft containers on site, installed during Phase 1, with the one housing 8 Inverters and air conditioning units to keep them cool and the second one housing a 1.2MW Transformer. These were installed to serve the first 0.5 MWp Solar PV Farm.
- A third 20ft Container will be installed as part of Phase 2, which would house eight additional Inverters and associated air conditioning units. The 1.2MW Transformer installed during Phase 1, was sized larger than required to provide seamless integration of Phase 2, hence there is no need for the upgrading or an additional Transformer for Phase 2. Other than this, there will not be any further bulk electricity infrastructure to be provided.
- **Security Fencing:** Installation of 1.8m high fencing.

9) **Implementation Strategy:** Implementation and Construction Methods will be similar as during Phase 1. It was concluded that the existing Ecological Survey that was conducted at the time of approval of the greater area (i.e Areas A and B will suffice, and if need be the document just slightly adapted to include Areas C1 and C2).

Further to this, and in compliance with the Outline Approval, the Applicant provided a Solar Glare Hazard Analysis (Flight Path) and necessary details regarding Solar Modules, Mounting Structures, Fence-line and Container. (Refer to attached Annexure 1) – by using non-reflective panels, glare is effectively estimated as 2%.

Note that with the benefit of Phase 1 being installed already, there are much more insight in terms of construction methods and eventual visual impacts.

## C. RECOMMENDATION

An area for Phase 2 of the Solar Farm has been approved previously (19 December 2014) and the Permission will lapse on the 19<sup>th</sup> of December 2019. Land has therefore already been allocated and earmarked for the development of a Solar Farm.

The Applicant requested to alter the boundary slightly (and as such approved in principle as part of the Outline Application) in order to develop below the existing ridge-line instead of above.

Phase 2, similarly to Phase 1, will consist of approximately 2000 panels in order to generate a further 0.5MWp solar energy and thus optimise the solar farm as far as possible given the existing infrastructure. Following perusal, this concept (as proposed) was agreed by the appointed Renewables Consultancy Firm – PASH, apart from a small alteration to the alignment of the access road.

The follow two key aspects were considered again by the Applicant in consultation with the Consultancy Firm PASH:

- i) **Risk of Glare:** Due to its orientation and the angle of the panels as well as given the type of panels which will be used (latest technology) glare is therefore not regarded a high risk at all, both to residents living in proximity of the Solar Farm as well as to Aircraft; as well as
- ii) **Uniformed Appearance:** The Applicant indicated that they are re-considering their “mounting process” which will, with improved equipment and technique ensure a more uniformed and level appearance of the panels across Phase 2.

It can be noted that PASH is a significantly larger consultancy with more exposure to International Best Practice, Standards and Technique – and the reason also for winning the bid to become the Partners with SHG (through Connect St Helena) in its quest to make the Island 100% reliant on renewables only.

It is true that there will inevitably be an impact in that land is allocated for purposes of generation of renewable energy and a utility function. It is however in proximity to a significant development area and existing bulk infrastructure which make it sensible. Further to this, it is unfortunately visible from certain areas, but given the make-up of the Island, this will inevitably always be the case (to some or another extent), noting that the experts indicated that there are not many other areas which presents similar optimum / key attributes as this particular site – as a number of factors influences the ultimate optimal location.



According to the experts (appointed to conduct the analysis and advice) this site remains the most suitable, economical and functional option at this point in time and as such it can be concluded that the benefits outweigh the potential disadvantages if the Island are to become 100% reliant on renewables in the near future.

**Recommendations:** That Development Permission in **FULL** is granted subject to the following Conditions:

- 1) This **permission will lapse** and cease to have effect on the day, 5 years from the date of this Decision Notice, unless the development has been begun by that date.  
**Reason:** required by Section 31(2) of the Land Planning and Development Control Ordinance 2013.
- 2) The development shall be **implemented in accordance** with the details specified on the Application Form; supporting information stamped as approved by the Chief Planning Officer, on behalf of Governor-in-Council, unless the prior written approval of the Chief Planning Officer is obtained for an amendment to the approved details under Section 29 of the Land Development Control Ordinance 2013.  
**Reason:** For the purpose of clarity, to ensure that the development is implemented in accordance with the approved details.
- 3) The mitigation recommendations set out in the **Ecological Report** dated 11 October 2014 (which included an extended area beyond the boundaries of the additional wings) shall be implemented during the construction phase and for the lifetime of the development.  
**Reason:** In the interests of nature conservation and to accord with LDCP Policy NH3.
- 4) Between September and March in any year, during the construction stages of the development, an appropriately qualified 'Ecological Clerk of Works') ECOW shall be available to direct implementation of the development to avoid disturbing protected **Wire Bird Nesting** sites, to ensure that sensitive features are avoided, and that habitat enhancement works and all mitigation and restoration measures recommended by the Ecological Survey Final Report dated 11 October 2014 are fully implemented. The Ecological Clerk of Works shall liaise with the Environmental Manager (Environmental management Division) the role of the ECOW shall be clearly conveyed to all personnel prior to their commencement of work on the site.  
**Reason:** In the interests of nature conservation, to accord with LDCP Policy NH3 and to safeguard nesting of species protected under the Birds Protection Ordinance 1996 and the Endangered Species Protection order 2004.

- 1) No development shall commence until information detailing the **Construction Method / Placing Footings** for the Panel supporting structures is submitted and approved in writing by the Chief Planning Officer.  
**Reason:** Inadequate information has been provided by the applicant in support of the application and to exercise planning control over piled construction methods with potential to cause disturbance detrimental to residential amenity.
- 2) **Existing Footpath(s)** which cross the site shall either be retained by the developer on present alignment and retained free from obstruction unless alternative provision has been implemented with the prior written approval of the Chief Planning Officer in consultation with the Crown Estates Advisor.  
**Reason:** To provide for alternative routes of pedestrian access and to accord with LDCP Policy RT 4.
- 3) No development shall take place until the applicant has submitted for the written approval of the Chief Planning Officer proposals for **Earth Moving and Removal** of arisings from the application site and thereafter the development shall be implemented in accordance with the approved scheme.  
**Reason:** To regulate the management of waste arising from the development and to prevent unauthorised deposit of waste onto adjoining land.
- 4) No earthworks, piling loading or construction activity of any kind; shall be undertaken on the site between the **hours** of 6.00 pm and 7.00 am; on any **day** excepting Sundays and Bank Holidays when such activity shall not be permitted at all.  
**Reason:** In order to protect the amenity of the area.
- 5) If by reason of any circumstances not foreseen by the applicant or operator, the photo voltaic panels fail to produce electricity, for a continuous period of 24 months then it will be deemed to have ceased to be required, and unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Authority, the photovoltaic panel arrays and its ancillary equipment, including containers shall be dismantled and removed from the site, and the site reinstated within a period of 6 months unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Authority.  
**Reason:** To ensure that the full and satisfactory restoration of the site takes place should the solar energy farm become redundant or fall into disuse and in the interests of the proper planning, development and amenity of land.
- 6) The Development Permission shall be for a period of 30 years from the commencement of the commercial operation of the development, the date of which shall be notified in writing to the Authority. Within 12 months of the end of that period, unless a further application for development permission is submitted and approved, the photovoltaic panel arrays shall be dismantled and

removed from the site and the land reinstated to the satisfaction of the Authority.

**Reason:** In order that the Authority has the opportunity to review the circumstances pertaining to the consent, which is of a temporary nature and in the interests of the proper planning, development and amenity of land.

**Right of Appeal:** If you are aggrieved by this decision you may, within 28 days of the date of this Notice, appeal to the Land Development Appeals Tribunal, with payment of a fee of £150, addressed to the Clerk of the Tribunal, using the prescribed form which is available from this office.

# ANNEXURE 1

- 1. Planning Application Form**
- 2. Implementation Plan Proposal**
- 3. Site Layout**
- 4. Ecological Survey Report**
- 5. Solar Glare Hazard Analysis**
- 6. Inverter & Container Layout**
- 7. Mounting Structure & Fence**
- 8. Solar Modules**

**(A Hard Copy is available for perusal or sections of the submission can be emailed to Members on request)**