

Kirby to lead the way with provision of new Eco-Hub infrastructure



2021 Ford Mustang Mach-E and 1915 Ford Model T

Credit: Matt Alexander/PA

“We are in the middle of the biggest revolution in motoring since Henry Ford’s first production line started turning back in 1913.”

Justin Rowlatt of the BBC¹

Fields near Kirby-le-Soken and Kirby Cross are set to become one of first locations across the UK to benefit from a brand-new Eco-Hub.

The project comprises a public electric vehicle charging station off the Halstead Road powered by its own solar panels as part of a proposed £12-15 million investment from developer, Naturalis.²

By 2030, the sale of new petrol and diesel cars and small vans will be banned in Britain. Replacing them will be a range of electric vehicles. Customers will use projects like this one to recharge their cars and small vans.

The Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders believes that in order to have the world-class infrastructure required for 2030, at least 700 public charging points must be installed each day until 2030.³

Wider proposals

The Eco-Hub is all-encompassing and sustainable. It will produce electricity to power homes, businesses and vehicles while helping to manage the National Grid through the provision of battery storage.

The Eco-Hub includes:

- Public electric vehicle station with at least 12 charging points.
- Battery storage to help the National Grid manage its network.
- Solar panels that will generate electricity at source in Kirby, powering electric vehicle chargers and homes.

Fact: During a full year, the proposed solar project would produce electricity equivalent to the demand of around 6,500 average UK homes.⁴ That’s more than three times the number of homes in Kirby Cross and Kirby-le-Soken, combined.

Britain: a global leader in renewables

Whether it is petrol or gas, these fossil fuels are imported from various locations around the world such as the Middle East and Russia to meet British demand.

Britain’s reliance on imported energy is minimised by projects like the Eco-Hub. As the Secretary of State said recently “...it is the case that the UK is still too reliant on fossil fuels. Our exposure to volatile global gas prices underscores the importance of our plan to build a strong, home-grown renewable energy sector to strengthen our energy security into the future.”⁵



Transport for London Glass Yard electric vehicle charging hub

Kirby: doing its bit for Britain

Electric vehicle sales are growing fast but there are concerns that investment in public electric vehicle charging is missing out large parts of the UK, especially smaller towns, and rural areas.⁶

The £12-15million Eco-Hub investment will ensure that Kirby avoids this risk and benefits from cheap, clean electricity generation that will power homes and vehicles alike. The project will be designed to “rapid charge” at least 12 electric cars at the same time, no matter the make or model.

Moreover, Kirby will be doing its bit for the nation through the production of clean electricity that will feed into the National Grid and help reduce the impact of climate change.

The project will create local jobs, during construction and during operation, and expressions of interest from local contractors can be made through the website.

Saving the Green Gap

Housing developers want to build on land between Kirby-le-Soken and Kirby Cross, an example of which is the new housing scheme on Halstead Road, in Kirby Cross. Current planning policy and farming have not stopped houses from being built.

Massive housebuilding in the Kirby area could eventually lead to the merging of the communities of Kirby-le-Soken and Kirby Cross in the way that housing has effectively joined together Walton, Frinton and Kirby Cross in recent years.

The location of this Eco-Hub would preserve the Green Gap. It would prevent new homes from being built on 40-50 acres of this sought-after development land during its 40-year life, ensuring Kirby-le-Soken and Kirby Cross remain separate villages with separate identities.

Consultation and next steps

Naturalis brings together the combined renewable energy experience of Falck Renewables and REG Power Management.

As Naturalis seeks to progress the Eco-Hub proposal, it will be undertaking a consultation on the scheme ahead of the submission of a planning application to Tendring District Council likely in December 2021. Further details to follow.

You can stay up to date with progress on this proposal, including the latest updates and news by visiting:

www.halsteadroadecohub.co.uk

¹ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-57253947>

² A Joint Venture between Falck Renewables and REG Power Management.

³ SMMT (March 2021) Delivering the Triple Bottom Line: A Blueprint for the Electric Vehicle Revolution.

⁴ The UK average for solar photovoltaic project capacity factors in 2020 was 11.2% (Source: 2021 Digest of UK Energy Statistics, BEIS, table 6.5). 25MWp (the project’s assumed capacity) x 1,000 (converting from MW to kW) x 8,760 (hours in a year) x 11.2% (assumed capacity factor) = 24.5m kWh, to one decimal place. The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, “Energy Consumption in the UK” Table C9, 22 October 2020, average, temperature-corrected domestic consumption in 2019 @ 3,772 kWh. 24.5m kWh divided by 3,772 kWh = 6,495 homes.

⁵ Taken from the “Statement on the UK gas market by the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, Rt Hon Kwasi Kwarteng MP, 20 September 2021”.

⁶ Chief Secretary to the Treasury, Simon Clarke MP, 2 February 2021.

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