## Green Martinstown

## Further Consultation Regarding Proposed

## Community Asset Transfer of Dorset Council Land

**North of St. Martinsfield and the Church**

**Saturday May 10th 10.00 -12.00**

**Martinstown Village Hall**

**Come and see the proposed ideas and layout on the land.**

 **Come and have your say.**

**John Scott of Dorset Community Energy**

 **will be present to answer**

**questions about proposed solar array.**

**All Welcome**

**……………………………………………………………….**

## Martinstown Community Meeting

## Date: 21 March 2025

## Location: Martinstown Village Hall

## Hosted by: Green Martinstown CIC

**Minutes of meeting**

## 1. Welcome and Introduction

The evening began with a welcome from the chair, who provided basic housekeeping details and an outline of the agenda:

* Emergency exits and toilet locations were noted.
* A sign-in sheet was circulated to record attendance.
* The main topic of the meeting was an **update on the Community Asset Transfer (CAT) application for two fields north of St Martinsfield.**
* **Andy Daw (Green Martinstown)** presented the update.
* **John Scott** from **Dorset Community Energy** later presented on the potential for a community solar array.
* Attendees were invited to stay for refreshments and to sign up for future involvement or offer relevant skills.

## 2. Update from Andy Daw. Who Are Green Martinstown?

Green Martinstown is a **Community Interest Company (CIC)**  open to anyone in the valley interested in sustainability.

* Currently has around 60 members and has been active for several years.
* Organises educational events, activities for children, tree planting, and community gatherings.
* Governed by a core group of volunteers with two directors (**Colin Tracey** and **David Milner**).
* Operates on a not-for-profit basis, with full financial transparency via Companies House.

## Aims and Values

* Promote sustainability in Martinstown.
* Remain non-political, inclusive, and respectful of all views.
* Encourage positive change in land use and behaviour.

## Community Asset Transfer (CAT) Application Background

The **CAT process allows councils to lease public assets to community groups for local benefit.**

Commonly used for buildings (e.g., public toilets, community centres); less frequently for land.

Green Martinstown first held a public meeting about the CAT application on 22 March 2024.

## Current Status

The original CAT application was submitted in two phases. After delays and changes in council guidance, the project is now entering the final stage.

**The final application is due to be submitted in April 2025.**

The lease may be either short-term or long-term, but this has not yet been confirmed.

## Proposed Use of the Land

**Site Description:**

Two fields north of St Martinsfield, currently unused and owned by Dorset Council.

Previously part of a county farm; not currently leased or earmarked for other use.

**Proposed Features:**

* Allotments and Compost Area – approx. 10 plots based on initial expressions of interest.
* Community Orchard and tree planting.
* Recreational Space – informal open space for families and children (not a formal pitch).
* Ponds, quiet areas, labyrinth walk, wildflower meadow, and a rewilding zone.
* Solar Array – locally generated energy subject to feasibility and planning.

A draft layout plan was shared, showing the above elements. It was emphasised this is not final and may change following community input, feasibility studies, and council feedback.

## Community Engagement and Concerns

Activities and priorities were informed by:

* A 2022 village questionnaire
* Feedback at previous meetings
* Input from Green Martinstown members

Efforts have been made to consider the views of residents, particularly those living adjacent to the site.

**Concerns raised included:**

* Impact on house prices and views
* Possible increase in traffic and noise
* Access routes and fencing
* Scale and visibility of the solar array

**Green Martinstown confirmed:**

* Access will prioritise pedestrians; vehicle use will be minimal and occasional.
* A shrub screen (not trees) is planned along property boundaries for visual screening and flood mitigation.
* The wildflower and grazing area closest to houses will remain relatively unchanged in character.

## Governance and Funding Plans

Each project area (e.g. allotments, orchard) will have a dedicated lead.

Funding will be sought from a combination of:

* Grants and sponsorships
* Volunteer labour
* Donations or in-kind support from local businesses

A draft budget and business plan (approx. 80 pages) has been submitted.

The project aligns with Dorset Council’s strategic aims around sustainability, access, and renewable energy.

## 3. Solar Array Proposal – John Scott, Dorset Community Energy

## About Dorset Community Energy (DCE)

A Community Benefit Society regulated by the FCA.

* Established in 2010 to address Dorset’s low uptake of renewables.
* Has installed solar panels on hospitals, schools, and village halls, including in Martinstown.
* Specialises in community-owned renewable energy.

**Proposal for Martinstown**

**To install a solar array of approx. 1 megawatt (2,000 panels) on the northern part of the site.**

 (Maximum) 2 acres would generate:

* Approx. 1 million kWh/year
* Equivalent to the usage of 250 homes
* Save 202 tonnes of CO₂ annually
* A secure, unobtrusive fence would surround the array.
* Minimal disruption during installation (estimated 2–3 weeks).
* Panels mounted on screw-in frames (no concrete); suitable for grazing underneath.

**Funding and Ownership**

* Fully funded by community share offers (from £10 to £50,000).
* LDCE manages installation, maintenance, and insurance.
* After 20 years, the system would be gifted to the community.
* No cost or risk to Green Martinstown or the village

**Local Energy Club**

Residents could join a Local Energy Club:

* Members receive discounted electricity (e.g. 50% of standard grid rates).
* Requires a smart meter and use of a specific supplier (e.g. Octopus).
* Encourages daytime use of appliances for maximum benefit.
* Not linked to DCE shares; participation optional.

## Considerations and Next Steps

* A connection request will be submitted to the local electricity network operator.
* If the network cannot support the installation, the project will not go ahead.
* A feasibility study is pending and will be funded by DCE and potential grant support.
* Panel design (south-facing vs east-west) is flexible based on planning and visual impact.

## 4. Questions and Discussion

Residents asked thoughtful questions about:

* Visual and noise impact on neighbouring homes
* Access for vehicles and emergency services
* Risk of future development if the CAT is rejected
* Participation of local residents in planning decisions
* Solar panel lifespan, system failure, and maintenance
* How electricity discounts would work and who would benefit

DCE and Green Martinstown responded transparently, welcoming continued input and feedback.

## Next Steps

**Final CAT application due April 2025.**

* Await council response (no fixed timeline).
* Feasibility work to continue on the solar proposal.
* Volunteers, project leaders, and skilled contributors invited to sign up.

## Ways to Get Involved

* **Join Green Martinstown** (membership forms available).
* Sign up to volunteer, offer skills, or take on a project leadership role.
* Express interest in the solar project or energy club.
* Keep informed via local updates or future meetings.