Scott Hobbs Planning

Planning Statement on behalf of:

Blackford Renewables Ltd.

Date:

15 May 2025

Pre-Application Consultation Report

Proposed BESS, at Land at Middleton of Blackford, Rothienorman, AB51 8YN (GR: NJ696358)

Typical Illustration of Battery Unit

Info

Proposed 500 MW BESS and associated infrastructure:

Land at Middleton of Blackford, Rothienorman, AB51 8YN (GR: NJ696358)

Summary

Blackford Renewables Ltd., a subsidiary of Equinor New Energy Limited, and is proposing a 500 MW Battery Energy Storage System ('BESS'), with associated infrastructure and development. This report forms part of a suite of documents, submitted to the ECU of Scottish Government, to support the proposed development. This PACR details the Pre-application Consultation activities carried out prior to the submission of the application.

Contents

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The Pre-Application Consultation Report (PACR) is submitted on behalf of the application, Blackford Renewables Ltd ('the Applicant'), to support the application for consent under Section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989 for a 500 MW BESS facility, with associated infrastructure, on Land at Middleton of Blackford, Rothienorman, AB51 8YN (GR: NJ696358) ('The Site'). The application is for a 500MW Battery Energy Storage System ('BESS'), with associated infrastructure ('the Proposal').

1.2 This PACR details the Pre-application consultation carried out by the Applicant prior to the submission of the application.

2.0 The Proposal

2.1 This development is for a 500MW Battery Energy Storage System (BESS), solar generation (2MWp), and associated infrastructure located at Land at Middleton of Blackford, Rothiernoman, AB51 8YN, on agricultural land.

2.2 The description of development is:

"*Construction and operation of a 500MW Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) with associated infrastructure including solar PV panels, access roads, sub-station buildings, supporting equipment, fencing, drainage infrastructure and landscaping"* at Land at Middleton of Blackford, Rothienorman, AB51 8YN (GR: NJ696358).

2.3 The land is approximately 16.13 Ha. The 500MW BESS is to be connected to the existing Rothienorman 400kV substation via underground cable at the west boundary of the site. The solar PVs will only provide auxiliary power for the parasitic systems rather than charging the batteries and not for generation of energy to the grid.

The proposal includes:

- A BESS with a capacity of 500MW
- Green palisade or close-boarded timber security fencing and acoustic screening, ranging from 2.4m to 3m in height around the site
- Rows of battery containers units, 332 total (20ft ISO container size; 6.03m (L) x 2.48m (W) x 2.95m (H))
- Power Conversion System (PCS), 138 total (20ft ISO container size; 6.03m (L) x 2.44m (W) x 2.88m (H))
- Battery units and PCS units are RAL Colour 6007 (Green)
- Emergency Auxiliary Generator (2.08m (L) x 1.78m (W) x 2.4m (H))
- Welfare cabin (2m (L) x 2m (W) x 2.5m (H))
- Electrical Switchgear building (9.55m (L) x 2.48m (W) x 3.72m (H))
- High Voltage Switchgear proposed for the southwest portion of the Site at a maximum of 13m height.
- Deer fence protecting all planting areas.
- Access track with a passing bay, connecting the unnamed road to the BESS site, with all construction traffic approaching from the west, as specified in the Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP).
- Hard-surfaced site access and foundation slabs for units, with uncompacted gravel within the compound, and asphalt surfacing for at least the first 10 metres from the public highway.
- Landscaping measures, including the retention of all existing trees, the planting of native tree belts, woodland blocks, hedging and species-rich grass verges along the access

road and around the site.

- Catchment / attenuation pond which will releases surface water into watercourse to the north east of the site along with buffer water tanks to collect water.
- 3 x Fire Water tanks.
- An underground cable connection to the adjacent substation at the west boundary.
- The containers will be laid out in rows running circa south east to north west across the site's gradient. The rows are situated on four terraces.
- Earth bunds / berms up to 8m in height are proposed around the sites north and east boundaries, as well as separating the proposed batteries from the proposed switch gear infrastructure.
- Each terrace will be provided with a access track for accessibility and maintenance as well as a perimeter track.
- Drainage channel runs will be provided for each terrace feeding into the attenuation pond.
- Access to the site will be provided from the south from unnamed road.
- An emergency access point connects to existing track at the sites west boundary.
- 4608 number Solar PV panels. Generally, these are located at the north west of the site in a concentrated area, but also on the south and south west facing slopes of the perimeter berm.

2.4 Access to the approved 50MW BESS facility to the west will be maintained.

3.0 The Site and Surroundings

3.1 The application site covers an area of approximately 16.3 hectares and lies within the Rothienorman / Blackford area of Aberdeenshire Council administrative boundary. The subject site lies in the countryside, approximately 2.5km from the centre of Rothienorman and 500m from the Blackford hamlet. The site is located to the east of the B992, to the north of an unnamed road connecting the B992 to Blackford and Rothienorman beyond.

3.2 At the south west of the site, a BESS development (49.9MW), was granted planning permission under application ref: APP/2022/2252 for Installation of Battery Energy Storage System (49.9MW) and Associated Infrastructure. The proposed development will however have an independent connection to the Rothienorman Sub-station. On this and the application site's west boundary, the Rothienorman 400kv substation is located which heavily influences the site.

3.3 The wider area generally has countryside characteristics with agricultural fields and a scattering of houses along narrow country roads which has some industrial appearance due to overhead transmission lines and the sub-station.

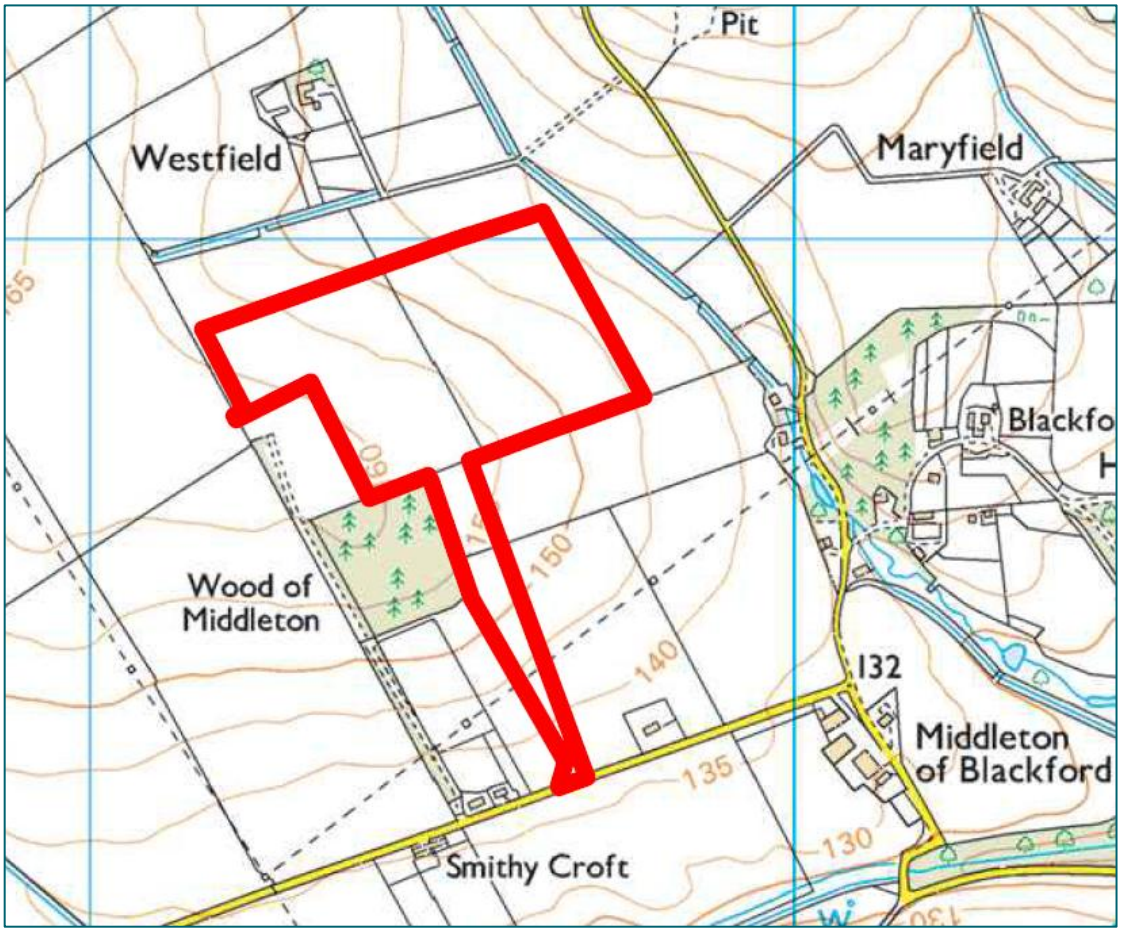

Figure 1: Extract of Site Location

3.4 The nearest residential properties lie more than 200m from the proposed BESS facility and are:

- To the north, beyond the larger field boundary - 'Westfield Croft' (c. 250m from site boundary),

- To the south located at the existing access track junction with the unnamed road - ‘Smithy Cottage’ and ‘Kininvie’ (c. 450m from site compound and c. 100m from site entrance) and
- To the southeast, beyond the proposed access - ‘Middleford Grange’.’ (c. 450m from site compound and c. 100m from site entrance)
- To the east, beyond the larger field boundary – ‘Glenhead’ property. (c. 200m from the proposed compound)

3.5 More specific site descriptions are contained within the supporting documents.

4.0 Pre-Application Consultation

4.1 There is no statutory Pre-application process for S36 applications for consent for battery storage sites, although the ECU has issued best practice guidance and encourages applicants to carry out such Pre-application consultation. The best practice refers to all types of S36 application including significant wind power proposals.

4.2 This BESS project is distinctly different to those forms of renewable energy projects, and due to its characteristics, has a significantly less impact, being substantially lower in height and generally comprising less area of land.

4.3 The applicant has carried out the following forms of contact to statutory bodies and stakeholders:

- Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Request to ECU (Submitted 7th March 2025).
- Pre-application consultation with the ECU (Submitted 26th November 2024).
- Pre-application consultation with the appropriate planning authority Aberdeenshire Council (Submitted 12th November 2024).
- Unique website which contains details of the proposed development, information regarding the application and contact details for further information regarding the application.
- Advertising the events in local press (5 publications).
- Notification of events to stakeholders including elected members, MP and MSP as well as three Community Councils.
- Postal notifications to local residents.
- Two in person presentation/exhibitions manned by members of the Applicant team to answer questions and provide additional information where able.
- Direct presentation to Fyvie, Rothienorman and Monquhitter Community Council (25th March 2025)
- Direct email correspondence with members of the public.

EIA Screening Request

4.4 Whilst not a specific form of Pre-application consultation, due to the scale of the development an EIA Screening Request was submitted to the ECU 7th March 2025, in which detail on the proposed development and the environmental effects were explained. The ECU consulted Aberdeenshire Council as the appropriate planning authority.

4.5 On 2nd April 2025, the ECU provided a formal Decision Notice with the opinion, that the likely environmental effect was unlikely to be significant and that the development was not to be considered EIA development.

4.6 This Decision Notice can be found as Appendix 4.

Pre-Application Consultation with the ECU

4.7 Pre-application submission was originally made to the ECU on 26th November 2024. No further correspondence was received from the ECU in relation to pre-application enquiry as this is predominantly undertaken with the Local Planning Authority (LPA).

Pre-Application Consultation with Aberdeenshire Council

4.8 The application site is wholly contained within the Aberdeenshire Council area and accordingly, a Pre-application submission was made to Aberdeenshire Council in accordance with its processes 12th November 2024.

4.9 A meeting with AC including representations from the following Council teams was held online on 20th February 2025.

- Planning
- Transport / Roads
- Environmental Health (Noise / Air Quality / Lighting)
- Natural Environment
- Heritage
- Archaeology
- Contamination

4.10 A response was received on 23rd March 2025 with the Council's advice. In terms of matters of principle of development, there were no concerns raised, and it acknowledged that the proposed development was for renewable energy which was supported by both National and Local planning policies (subject to compliance with other specific policies). All of these matters have been addressed in the application documentation:

- Planning and Policy Compliance Statement
- Community Wealth Building Plan (CWBP)
- **Pre-Application Consultation Report (PACR)**
- Design and Access Statement (DAS)
- Confidential Ecological Survey Report [note, contains sensitive information]
- Confidential Protected Species Report [note, contains sensitive information]
- Biodiversity Net Gain Feasibility Report
- Tree Survey and Report
- Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA)
- Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) and Landscape Strategy

- Noise Impact Assessment (NIA)
- Drainage Strategy
- Flood Risk Assessment (FRA)
- Private Water Supply Impact Assessment
- Topographical Surveys (2D and 3D)
- Construction Traffic Management Plan / Transport Statement (CTMP)
- Fire Assessment
- Desk Study Constraints Report

4.11 It is considered that the application package addresses the matters by AC during the Pre-application stage.

Pre-Application Consultation with Local Community

Website

4.12 To facilitate the consultation, a publicly accessible website was set up that held the project detail and information pertinent to the consultations. The website (Appendix 12) was www.Blackfordenergypark.com . To date of writing the website has achieved 1520 visitors.

4.13 The website was activated prior to the first consultant event and remained live.

4.14 Visitors could also request contact/ information by providing their email address (info@blackhillockflexpower.com) through the website.

4.15 Visitors to the website were able to leave comments to the applicant and project team using a feedback form (appendix 12).

First Consultation Event

4.16 The first consultation event took place on Thursday 6th March 2025 at the Side Hall of the Rothienorman Village Hall, AB51 8UD between 4pm to 7pm. During this event there were members of the applicant team in attendance to offer answers for any questions the public had about the proposed development.

4.17 A public notice was placed in The Banffshire (25th February 2025), The Huntly Express (25th February 2025), The Buchan Observer (25th February 2025), Ellon Times (27th February 2025), Fraserburgh (27th February 2025) and the Press and Journal (27th February) to advertise the in-person consultation in accordance with the statutory requirements (shown at Appendix 5).

4.18 The public notices included the following information:

- Description and location of the proposed development,
- Details as to how (including by what electronic means) further information may be obtained concerning the proposed development,
- The date, time and address of the public consultation event,
- A statement explaining how, and when by, persons wishing to make comments to the prospective applicant relating to the proposal may do so, and
- A statement explaining comments made to the prospective are not representations to the planning authority and there will be an opportunity to make public comments to the planning authority once a formal planning application has been made.

4.19 An email (Appendix 8) was circulated to key stakeholders on the 26th February 2025 further advertising the event. This email was sent to the following:

- Councillor Alastair Forsyth
- Councillor Gordon Lang
- Councillor Anne Sterling
- Councillor Iain Taylor

- MSP Gillian Martin
- MP Harriet Cross
- MP Andrew Bowie
- Fyvie, Rothienorman and Monquhitter Community Council
- Auchterless and Inverkeithny and Fisherford Community Council
- Bennachie Community Council

4.20 Letters with printed notifications of the event were issued to residents identified to be living within close proximity of the application site. A search for addresses was undertaken and seven were identified and letters posted first class on 24th February 2025 (see appendix 7).

4.21 Copies of the exhibition material presented at the Events can be found at Appendix 10.

4.22 A total of 45 members of the local community attended discussing the proposal with members of the Applicant Team during the consultation event. A total of 11 feedback forms have been received, 2 at the in-person event and a further 9 through the website. Additional correspondence via email with commenters has also been held post event.

Figure 2: Consultation Event 1 in progress

Second Consultation Event

4.23 The second consultation event took place on 3rd April 2025 at the Side Hall of the Rothienorman Village Hall, AB51 8UD between 4pm to 7pm.

4.24 A public notice was placed in The Banffshire (25th March 2025), The Huntly Express (25th March 2025), The Buchan Observer (25th March 2025), Ellon Times (27th March 2025), Fraserburgh Herald (27th March 2025) and the Press and Journal (26th March 2025) to advertise the in-person consultation in accordance with the statutory requirements (shown at Appendix 6).

4.25 During both events presentation boards displaying the proposal and the next steps of application were available for the attendees to review. Whilst no physical feedback forms were completed at the event a further 6 online / email commenters made online representations within the stated timescale and at the time of drafting this report.

Figure 3: Consultation Event 1 Set Up

Figure 4: Consultation Event 2 in progress

4.26 In addition to these public consultation events a direct presentation of the proposals was made to Fyvie Rothienorman and Monquhitter Community Council (FRMCC) on 25th of March 2025. FRMCC submitted online comments, following both events, to the Applicant and formally objected the proposed development. Following the second consultation event members of the public were asked to provide their comments not later than the 25th April 2025. Despite this additional comments have been received from a number of sources. All online / website comments / queries were responded to, and email discussion will some commenters was extensive. The themes and main topics of the comments received are captured and summarised in the below table.

4.27 The comments received from the consultation activities undertaken for the proposed development are summarised in table 1 below.

5.0 Comments and Responses

5.1 The following table summarises the comments and responses, and demonstrates the actions that the Applicant has taken, resulting in the application as submitted.

Issues	Comments	Feedback/ Actions
Consultation Process	Ensure that consultation has been thorough and appropriate.	The consultation process has been detailed in this report. Efforts were made to notify all stakeholders and residents in accordance with best practice and to provide detail and feedback at consultation events in accordance with guidance. It is acknowledged that the application has progressed quickly, but efforts were made to maintain lines of communication with commentors and provide opportunity for comments to be made well after the events themselves were held (3 weeks). It is acknowledged that not all members of the public could attend events in person which is why a dedicated website with all consultation documents was made available. We were encouraged by the turnout at consultation events and welcomed feedback and thanks from members of the public for undertaking the events and providing answers to questions.
Need for Battery Storage	There is an oversupply of Battery Storage	There is a recognised national need for Transmission scale projects such as the proposed development and more battery storage is required to properly facilitate the transition from fossil fuels in the long term. It was noted to members of the public that NESO selected this project for accelerated connection.

Land / Site	Why this location? Can the development be on a brownfield site?	The applicant carries out rigorous site selection process for projects of this type. The applicants have to balance a combination of local and national planning regulations, the type of land, access, topographical and geographical features, population density, proximity to substation and many other factors that determine its location. The grid connection given by NESO for this projection is the Rothienorman electrical substation which was expanded to increase the capacity and transmission of renewable electricity connected to the grid. Transmission-connected battery storage provides grid substation and frequency services as well as arbitrage services and is a technical requirement for the transition to renewable energy generation. This grid connection was offered by NESO to provide services to the national transmission network from the Rothienorman electrical substation where these services are needed. BESS are being constructed in industrial and brownfield sites, even previously heavily contaminated land that has been reinstated, but it is also required to locate them close to areas of generation. This BESS project is connected directly to the Rothienorman electrical substation via a short underground cable at 400kV. Locating a battery project further from its point of connection could potentially mean the use of overhead powerlines, the sterilisation of land and the disruption of laying cables in or across the road network if the cables are buried to connect it to the substation.
	This development will change the character of the area.	The applicant recognises the changes these projects bring. Mitigation of adverse effects through sensitive design is sought to be incorporated wherever possible and design has been led by a suite of technical and environmental assessments. A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) is prepared and has indicated how the proposed site should be designed, with terracing, berms and tree belts to minimise visual impact and change to the wider character of the area. Whilst this is mitigated, the site itself will see change during operation. However, the land will be fully reinstated at the end of the project's lifecycle and monies are set aside in bond prior to any work starting to ensure financial viability of restoration. A supporting landscaping plan detailing tree planting, introduction of nature corridors and creation of connected habitats will be submitted with the application. Ecology assessments have been conducted and protected species protected through necessary mitigation. These assessments indicated an improvement in terms of biodiversity from the existing arable field by more than 50%.

Construction	How will construction traffic disruptions, noise and construction light pollution be managed? The surrounding roads are not suitable or safe.	The applicant has been made aware of the volume of construction traffic and personnel that have been using the lanes around Rothienorman in recent years. The applicant are also aware that some sites have been illuminated throughout the night, leading to significant temporary light pollution during their construction periods, and understand the impact this has on the community. Therefore, the applicant is instigating a robust plan for the movement of construction traffic and personnel via a CTMP which will be submitted to the application. Construction traffic movements are directed away from Rothienorman and will approach the site from the west. Temporary signage and speed limits for site traffic will be enacted to control site access. This route has been assessed by a qualified Transport Consultant and pre-application engagement with the Council has confirmed acceptance of this strategy Construction lights will not be left on overnight or past construction hours. Vehicles reported to the site manager to have been in breach of the approved routes can be enforced against directly.
	How can it be guaranteed that the site will be restored after 25 years?	The project lifespan is between 25 – 40 years. After the site reaches the end of its life, all equipment will be removed and repurposed, reused, or recycled where possible. All construction materials and cables at a depth of up to 1m are also removed and are recycled where appropriate. The berms around the site are to be formed from the removal of the topsoil during construction and this will be reinstated at the end of the project's life. By storing the topsoil in the same field from which it was removed, this reduces the amount of traffic during both construction and reinstatement, as new topsoil does not need to be reintroduced. Photographic evidence of the land will be documented prior to any construction work to ensure it is reinstated to the required state as mandated by the planning authorities and the Landlord. A reinstatement plan will be completed by the applicant and agreed with the planning authority post determination. The applicant will endeavour to follow the reinstatement plan as agreed. The applicant will accept a condition on the consent to this effect.
Noise	How is the noise managed.	A Noise Impact Assessment (NIA) will be submitted with the application and shall assess the noise emitted from this project. The noise report will consider the cumulative effects of nearby developments, including the substation, Grid Stability Facility, and directly adjacent BESS project. A baseline assessment of this project has already been completed by specialist noise consultants, which takes into account the nearby developments and existing background noise as part of assessing against Council requirements. All development of this nature is required to comply with strict noise thresholds (NR20) that limit noise impact on noise sensitive receivers. This compliance will exist for the project's life span.
Health and Safety	How will fire risk be managed.	An emergency response plan will be written for the site during the engineering phase. The emergency services will be consulted and informed throughout, any impacted residents will be updated accordingly. The site has been designed to minimise risk and impacts so that in the exceptional event of one battery catching fire, it will not

		spread to other battery units. Fire cannot spread between individual sites as each site is significantly isolated from the others. The composition of the batteries is still under consideration but is likely to be: Chemistry: Lithium Nickel Cobalt Aluminium Oxide (NCA) Type: ISO Container.
Water	How will water for the site be sourced. Will there be an impact on our Private Water Supplies.	There will be large water tanks spaced around the site that could be used for fire containment if required. They will be sized according to the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) guidance and store approximately one million litres in total on site. Once filled, they will not need to be replenished unless used. The initial filling will not impact other water supplies in the area. It is likely there will be a private water supply installed for maintenance workers. It was identified through pre-application enquires to the Council and at the first consultation event that safeguarding PWS would be a key consideration for the proposed development. As such, the applicant commissioned a PWS Assessment. Members of the public in proximity to the site were contacted during the preparation of this reporting and visits were conducted by the consultant to assess the nature and location of PWS. Based on the responses and other available information there was no impact on the surrounding PWS identified.
	How can you protect the bio-diversity features against water contamination.	Highlighted by comments from the first public consultation, we understand this has become a primary concern for those who could be impacted. To mitigate the risk of water contamination, our proposal now includes an impermeable membrane to stop any contaminated fire water leaking into the environment. The applicant has completed an updated drainage plan with additional catchment ponds/tanks to contain any firewater run-off which can be automatically disconnected from the sites discharge to retain polluted water on site. The applicant has also significantly increased the size of the main catchment pond to enhance flood control in line with the new drainage strategy.
Environment	This project will have a negative impact on the environment and physical health of the area. How are you preventing contamination / water seepage into the ground?	The proposed project would not start construction until 2028. The applicant will continue to modify and update the proposed plans to minimise the impact on the daily lives of residents during the construction and operation of the site. Any discharge into watercourses will be done in a way that ensures that the project does not impact private water supplies, increase the flood risk, or contaminate watercourses. The applicant carry out extensive modelling and employ consultants to ensure that issues do not arise. The consultants' reports are independently verified and will be made public when planning is submitted to the Scottish Energy Consents Unit. It was raised in the first public event that there was no detail in respect of prevention of fire water / water used to cool units in the event of thermal runaway, from seeping into the ground. The applicant was grateful for this feedback and amended the designs to include a membrane underneath batteries to prevent this from occurring.
Community Benefit	What economic benefit / compensation will there be for the community that is hosting the proposed development?	A Community Wealth Building Plan will be submitted with the proposed development that will outline the opportunities for local economic stimulation. Where possible, labour and resources will be acquired locally. Whilst employment on the site during operation is limited, the proposed development has the capacity to support nearly

		110 jobs during the construction process.

6.0 Conclusion

6.1 The proposed BESS development is a much needed- renewable energy project on countryside land in an area of limited environmental, ecological, heritage and amenity value.

6.2 The Pre-application consultation has been carried out with the statutory body, with relevant local authority and with the local community in accordance with due process.

6.3 In all respects, it is considered that the Pre-application consultation has been effective relative to the proposal and site.

Appendix 1- Location Plan

Appendix 2- Pre-application Form to ECU

NOTIFICATION OF NEW PROJECT FORM

Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot

This form applies to prospective applications to Scottish Ministers under

- **section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989 (whether EIA or not EIA)**
- **section 37 of the Electricity Act 1989 – EIA development ONLY.**

Why complete this form?
The information you provide in this form will allow the Energy Consents Unit to ensure your project can be resourced according to its requirements. Submission of this form should be the first step a prospective applicant takes in engaging with ECU in relation to a project. It must be provided to ECU before submission of any screening or scoping request.

For **section 37 'non EIA' development** please refer to the relevant guidance. Do not complete this form.

How will this information be processed?
The information you provide in this form will be logged on the Scottish Government's systems and used for internal purposes to plan resources. A Privacy Notice which provides further details on how we use your information is published at http://www.energyconsents.scot/Documentation.aspx.

In most cases, a meeting will not be considered to be required, and the next step for prospective applicants will be submission of a scoping or screening request. However, if you feel a pre application meeting is required, please indicate with an X below:

Yes ☐ No ☒

Why: _____

ECU will decide on a ~~case by case~~ basis whether a pre application meeting is deemed to be required for EIA development.

In all cases where the applicant proposes ~~non EIA~~ development, submission of a screening request will be the next step following submission of this form.

Where the next step is submission of a screening or scoping request, you should register to upload your request to www.energyconsents.scot if you do not already have an account.

If your project remains inactive for over 9 months from submission of this form, it is likely that we will request you to submit a new form should your project become active again.

Submission of this form
Please submit this form by email to Econsents_Admin@gov.scot

NOTIFICATION OF NEW PROJECT FORM

Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot

ECU Ref No: *To be completed by ECU staff*

Applicants Details – The Company or person who proposes to seek consent -

Title:		**Forename:**		**Surname:**	
Company Name:	Scot Stability Ltd.			**Building No:**	272
Address:	Bath Street, Glasgow				
Companies House number	SC668729			**Postcode:**	G2 4JR
Telephone:	c/o Agent			**Mobile:**	
E-mail Address:					

Agents Details (if applicable as main point of contact)

Company Name:	Scott Hobbs Planning Ltd.				
Title:	**Mr**	**Forename:**	**Hugh**	**Surname:**	**Shepherd**
Building No:	**24a**			**Agent Ref:**	**241003**
Address:	Stafford Street, Edinburgh				
				Postcode:	EH3 7BD
Telephone:	0131 226 7225			**Mobile:**	
E-mail Address:	hs@scotthobbsplaning.com				

Type of Development (please highlight, or remove those that do not apply)

Type	S36 EIA Construction / S36 non-EIA Construction

Key information

Project Name – (please consider other projects in planning and avoid duplication)	Rothienorman 2 500MW
Site Address and/or Nearest settlement(s)	Land North East of Rothienorman, at Land at Middleton of Blackhills, AB51 8YN (GR: NJ696358)
Proposed generating Capacity (MW), or voltage of OHL	500
Local Authority Area	Aberdeenshire Council
Indicative project timelines	screening request circa winter 2024/5 submitted, spring 2025
Project Commencement Indicative date	2029
Existing Land Use	Agricultural;
Existing infrastructure	Please indicate if the proposed development is within the consultation zone for: • a licenced explosives site; • gas (or other) pipeline; • existing overhead electric lines; • underground cables; • water pipes; • telecommunications links.
Hazardous Substances	Other than the proposed BESS equipment no other chemicals / materials will be stored on site.
Additional Information (any additional information about the proposal you feel may be relevant at this stage)	Installation of 500 MW battery energy storage system (BESS) including associated PV panel array, infrastructure and landscaping.

Declaration
The information supplied in this form is accurate to the best of my knowledge. I have read the Privacy Notice and understand that information held by the Scottish Government may be required to be disclosed under the Environmental Information (Scotland) Regulations 2004 or the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002.

Name: Hugh Shepherd……

On behalf of Company: Scot Stability Ltd……

Date: 25/11/2024……

Appendix 3- Pre-application form to Aberdeenshire Council

Aberdeenshire COUNCIL

REQUEST FOR PRE-APPLICATION ADVICE FOR ENERGY, TRANSMISSION AND INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

Please complete all sections of this form. Please email your completed form to planningonline@aberdeenshire.gov.uk or by post to: ePlanning Team, Aberdeenshire Council, Viewmount, Arduthie Road, Stonehaven, AB39 2DQ.

This Pre-Application Advice Service is available for large scale energy, transmission and infrastructure projects. These projects will consist of national and major development under the Planning Acts and development proposals under the Electricity Acts for generating stations and transmission infrastructure (S36 and S37 applications). Refer to the Council website for the relevant criteria.

For all other major development, the major development pre-application form should be used.

Applicant Details	
Title:	
Forename:	
Surname:	
Company Name:	Scot Stability Ltd
Address Line 1:	272 Bath Street
Address Line 2:	
Town/City:	Glasgow
Postcode:	G2 4JR
Telephone:	0131 226 7225
Email:	hs@scotthobbsplanning.com

Agent Details	
Title:	Mr
Forename:	Hugh
Surname:	Shepherd
Company Name:	Scott Hobbs Planning
Address Line 1:	24A Stafford Street
Address Line 2:	
Town/City:	Edinburgh
Postcode:	EH3 7BD
Telephone:	0131 226 7225
Email:	hs@scotthobbsplanning.com

Address of Proposed Development (including postcode and grid reference, if possible):
Land North East of Rothienorman, at Land at Middleton of Blackhills, AB51 8YN (GR: NJ696358)

Existing Use and Interest in the Property/Land (e.g., owner/occupier/ prospective purchaser etc.):
Agricultural Land

Serving Aberdeenshire from mountain to sea – the very best of Scotland

Aberdeenshire COUNCIL

Description of Proposed Development (please provide as much detail as possible). For example, for wind development given an indication of the number and height of turbines and energy output; for solar the type of panels and energy output, details of overhead and underground works etc.:
Installation of 500 MW battery energy storage system (BESS) including associated PV panel array, infrastructure and landscaping.

Site area (in hectares):
12 Ha

Site Visit
When a site visit is undertaken, can the site be accessed without prior permission? ☐ Yes ☒ No If no, provide reason why. If you would like to conduct a site visit, please contact the agent for access details.

How to submit supporting information and paying a fee
Once you submit your completed application form to the ePlanning Team you will receive a reference number for this application.

Once you have received this, please upload all supporting information using the ePlanning.scot Portal by selecting the Post Submission Additional Documents (PSAD) form and attach all of the documents to it.

When submitting the supporting documents, please provide a full description and/or list of the details which are being submitted for approval for each condition. Please state which condition each document relates to.

There is a fee for this service, please check our planning fees for more details on how much you need to pay and how to pay. The reference is also required for paying the fee. **Please make a payment ONCE you have received a reference number.**

The following details must be submitted to allow the Pre-App Advice Service to commence
• **A completed form** • **A fee** • **A location plan (scale 1:1250 or 1:2500) with the site outlined in red**

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Other relevant supporting/additional information:
Please refer to the Pre-Application Discussion Document (PADD) for further details.

Declaration	
Signed:	Hugh Shepherd
Printed Name:	HUGH SHEPHERD
Date:	1st November 2024

Note: The information held with your submission will be managed by the Council in accordance with the principles set out in the General Data Protection Regulations 2018. For further information on how we use your information, who we share this information with and how long we keep information is detailed in our Privacy Notice.

Last update 30 Sept 2023 – v1.0

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Appendix 4- EIAR Decision Notice

Energy and Climate Change Directorate
Energy Consents Unit

E: alice.creasy@gov.scot

Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot

Hugh Shepherd
Scott Hobbs Planning Ltd
By email only

By email only to: hs@scotthobbsplaning.com

Our ref: ECU00006121

2nd April 2025

Dear Hugh Shepherd,

ELECTRICITY ACT 1989

THE ELECTRICITY WORKS (ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT) (SCOTLAND) REGULATIONS 2017

SCREENING OPINION OF THE SCOTTISH MINISTERS

IN RESPECT OF THE PROPOSED APPLICATION FOR CONSENT UNDER SECTION 36 OF THE ELECTRICITY ACT 1989 TO CONSTRUCT AND OPERATE THE PROPOSED 500-MEGAWATT (MW) BATTERY ENERGY STORAGE SYSTEM AND ASSOCIATED INFRASTRUCTURE LOCATED ON LAND NORTHEAST OF ROTHIENORMAN, AT LAND AT MIDDLETON OF BLACKHILLS, AB51 8YN.

Thank you for your request dated 7th March 2025 requesting a screening opinion in respect of a proposed application under section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989 ("the Electricity Act") to construct and operate a battery energy storage system with a generating capacity of approximately 500 megawatts (MW), comprising of battery-based electricity storage containers and ancillary development including generators, welfare unit and control / switchgear units, accesses, landscaping and biodiversity enhancement

Background

The proposed development as described briefly above is entirely within the planning authority area of Aberdeenshire Council ("the Planning Authority").

The proposal requires to be screened by the Scottish Ministers in accordance with regulation 7 of the Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 ("the Regulations"). Following a request for a screening opinion made under regulation 8(1), Scottish Ministers are required to adopt an opinion as to whether the proposed development is or is not

1

EIA development.

The Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017

The Regulations set out at 8(2) the information that must accompany a request to the Scottish Ministers to adopt a screening opinion. Scottish Ministers consider that the information included in the screening request and documents supporting the request is sufficient to meet the requirements set out in regulation 8(2), and that the submitted information has been compiled taking into account the selection criteria in schedule 3 of the Regulations.

Statutory Consultation

Under regulation 8(5) of the Regulations, Scottish Ministers are required to consult the Planning Authority within whose land the proposed development is situated. The Planning Authority was consulted on 7th March 2025 and responded on 27th March 2025 advising that, in their view, the proposed development does constitute EIA development and therefore any application for construction and operation of the development described in the screening request does need to be accompanied by an EIA report. A copy of the Planning Authority's response is annexed to this screening opinion (**Annex A**).

Scottish Ministers' Considerations

EIA development is defined in the Regulations, in respect of an application, as a proposed development, which is either Schedule 1 development, or Schedule 2 development likely to have significant effects on the environment by virtue of factors such as its nature, size or location. The proposed development constitutes Schedule 2 development in terms of the Regulations.

In adopting a screening opinion as to whether Schedule 2 development is EIA development, the Scottish Ministers must in all cases take into account such of the selection criteria in Schedule 3 of the Regulations as are relevant to the proposed development, and the available results of any relevant assessment.

Scottish Ministers have taken the selection criteria in Schedule 3 and all the information submitted in respect of the screening request in account and taken account of the views of the Planning Authority. Scottish Ministers adopt the opinion that **the proposal does not constitute EIA development and that the application submitted for this development does not require to be accompanied by an EIA report.**

In accordance with regulation 7(2), this opinion is accompanied by the following written statement with reference to the relevant selection criteria within Schedule 3 of the Regulations. In accordance with the Regulations, a copy of the screening opinion has been sent to the Planning Authority.

Written Statement

Characteristics of Development

The Proposed Development covers an area of 17.38 hectares and its design is consistent with many similar battery energy storage system proposals. There are several other energy infrastructure developments in the surrounding area, most notably Rothienorman Substation located adjacent to the Site.

2

Given the nature of the site the anticipated use of natural resources is minimal. There will be a measure of construction waste consistent with development of this type. All solid waste produced during construction is expected to be taken off-site and disposed of by certified contractors. No operational waste is anticipated.

There is potential for noise, air and light pollution during the construction phase which is expected to last 18 months. The Applicant has committed to conducting a Noise Impact Assessment (NIA) which will guide mitigation measures as well as a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP). No significant pollution or nuisance anticipated during the operation phase, and there is no anticipated risk of accidents or disasters or to human health. There is no risk of major accidents or disasters, and negligible risks to human health.

Location of Development

The entire area of interest comprises one parcel of agricultural land which has been used for arable farming. The proposal is not situated on environmentally sensitive land and is unlikely to affect areas adjacent given the nature of the proposal and proximity to any sensitive environmental receptors. Existing woodland and hedgerows on and adjacent to the Site will be retained and the Applicant has proposed areas of new planting.

Characteristics of the Potential Impact

The impact of the development is not likely to give rise to significant effects in terms of population and human health taking into account the scale of the proposal relative to its environment and the consideration that a limited number of residential properties are in proximity to the site. Visibility of the development is not predicted to extend widely, and mitigation proposed to screen the development will in time further limit the duration of any visibility. There are no likely significant effects on biodiversity, landscape, cultural heritage, or material assets, taking into account the scale of the development and its location. For the same reasons there are no significant effects considered to be likely on land, soil, water, air, or climate.

Features of the proposed development and measures proposed to avoid or prevent significant effects:

Any future application will be accompanied by a suite of documents to include a Planning Supporting Statement, including an NPF 4 compliance assessment, a Design and Safety Report, a Pre-Application Consultation Report, Transport Statement, Ecology Report, Landscape Assessment and Visual Impact including a Landscape Strategy, Archaeology Report, Preliminary Ecology Assessment and Surveys, Drainage Impact Assessment and Strategy, including a Flood Risk Assessment, CTMP and Noise Impact Assessment.

This screening opinion does not constitute pre-application advice and is provided without prejudice to the assessment of any future application under section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989.

Yours sincerely

Alice Creasy

A member of staff of the Scottish Government

(Cc: Aberdeenshire Council)

Aberdeenshire COUNCIL

Our Ref: ENQ/2025/0428
Your Ref: ECU00006121
Ask for: Victoria Moore
Tel: 01467 533406
Email: victoria.moore@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

Energy Consents Unit
Onshore Electricity
Strategy And Consents
Directorate For Energy And Climate Change
Scottish Government
5 Atlantic Quay
150 Broomielaw
Glasgow
G2 8LU

27 March 2025

Dear Sir/Madam

EIA Screening consultation for the proposed 500 megawatt (MW) battery energy storage system and associated infrastructure located on Land Northeast of Rothienorman, at Land at Middleton of Blackhills, AB51 8YN

I write with regard to your request under section 8 of the Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 ("the Regulations") on which you have consulted Aberdeenshire Council as Local Planning Authority in relation to the above screening request.

After review of the submitted material, it is the view of the Planning Service that the development has the potential to give rise to effects (in cumulation with other development proposals in the area) which may be significant in nature both in relation to noise and landscape impact. The combination of scale and volume of development in concentrated locations around the Rothienorman substation is leading to localised cumulative impacts that require the appropriate cumulative assessment. There are several consented developments in the immediate area of the proposed development which are discussed in the accompanying schedule 3 assessment. This area of Aberdeenshire is subject to significant pressure from energy development.

It is recommended that; due to the potential significant effects and scale of this development an Environmental Impact Assessment would be required for this proposal.

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Aberdeenshire COUNCIL

Whilst the decision as to whether an EIA is required will ultimately lie with the determining authority (who will also be responsible for outlining the reasoning for such a decision), I have nonetheless attached the Schedule 3 assessment undertaken by the Planning Service for your information.

Should you have any queries, please contact the officer named at the head of this letter.
Yours faithfully

[redacted]

Paul Macari
Head of Planning and Economy

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Appendix 5- Consultation Event Adverts

Buchan Observer

Ellon Times

Fraserburgh Herald

Huntly Express

Tuesday, February 25, 2025 · www.grampianonline.co.uk · Published by Highland News & Media 21

general notices

public notices

servicesnorth

Section 36 Application, The Electricity Act 1989
(Consent required for construction etc. of generating stations.)

Electricity Act 1989

Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997

PRE-APPLICATION CONSULTATION: Prospective Major Application on Land at Middleton of Blackford, Rothienorman, Aberdeenshire AB51 8YN (E:369465 N:835479)

Major development of Battery Energy Storage System (500 MW) including associated infrastructure, access road, storage units, fencing and landscaping on land within Aberdeenshire Council Area.

An in-person public meeting will take place on **Thursday 6th March at the Side Hall of the Rothienorman Village Hall, AB51 8UD between 4pm to 7pm**, when there will be an opportunity to find out further information and to ask the project team representing the Applicant, Blackford Renewables Ltd, questions about the prospective development. Further information will be available also at the project-specific website Blackfordenergypark.com from 26th February 2025 or you can contact Info@blackfordenergypark.com or on +44 1242500254.

If you wish to make comments on the proposal, you may do so at the above event by submitting a feedback form. Alternatively, you can email your comments (with the subject 'Rothienorman') to info@blackfordenergypark.com or post comments to Blackford Renewables Ltd, 272 Bath Street, Glasgow, Scotland, G2 4JR by 20th March 2025.

Please note that all the comments must be sent to the above and are NOT representations to the Energy Consents Unit. There will be an opportunity to make formal representation, when an application is made.

The Banffshire

42 CLASSIFIED · THE PRESS AND JOURNAL · Thursday, February 27, 2025

The Press and Journal Classified

Notice Board · **Retail Shop**

Public Notices

SECTION 36 APPLICATION, THE ELECTRICITY ACT 1989 (CONSENT REQUIRED FOR CONSTRUCTION ETC. OF GENERATING STATIONS.)

ELECTRICITY ACT 1989

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (SCOTLAND) ACT 1997

PRE-APPLICATION CONSULTATION: Prospective Major Application on Land at Middleton of Blackford, Rothienorman, Aberdeenshire AB51 8YN (E:369465 N:835479)

Major development of Battery Energy Storage System (500 MW) including associated infrastructure, access road, storage units, fencing and landscaping on land within Aberdeenshire Council Area.

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If you wish to make comments on the proposal, you may do so at the above event by submitting a feedback form. Alternatively, you can email your comments (with the subject 'Rothienorman') to info@blackfordenergypark.com or post comments to Blackford Renewables Ltd, 272 Bath Street, Glasgow, Scotland, G2 4JR by 20th March 2025.

Please note that all the comments must be sent to the above and are NOT representations to the Energy Consents Unit. There will be an opportunity to make formal representation, when an application is made.

The Press and Journal

Appendix 6- Public Consultation Event 2 Adverts

The Buchan Observer

Ellon Times

Fraserburgh Herald

Huntly Express

Tuesday, March 25, 2025 www.grampianonline.co.uk Published by Highland News & Media 17

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publicnotices

ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT PROCEDURE) (SCOTLAND) REGULATIONS 2013, Regulation 20(1) or PLANNING (LISTED BUILDINGS AND CONSERVATION AREAS) (SCOTLAND) ACT 1997, Regulation 4N(2)(a) or 4S(3)(a) or PLANNING (LISTED BUILDING CONSENT AND CONSERVATION AREA CONSENT PROCEDURE) (SCOTLAND) REGULATIONS 2015, Regulation 8

The applications listed below together with the plans and other documents submitted may be viewed using the online Planning Register at https://upa.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/online-applications/.

Comments may be made quoting the reference number and stating clearly the grounds for making comment. Comments can be submitted using the Planning Register when viewing the application. Alternatively, comments can be addressed to Aberdeenshire Council, Planning and Economy Service, Viewmount, Arduthie Road, Stonehaven, AB39 2DQ. Please note that any comment, where considered valid, will be published on the Planning Register.

Please note that even if you have made comments to the applicant prior to this application being submitted, or to the Council regarding a similar application that has been made on this site before, you will still need to make your comments to the Council on the current application.

Comments must be received by 14 April 2025

Address: Deshaid, Banff, AB45 3AL **Proposal:** Formation of 25MW Solar Farm, Siting of Substation, CCTV, Erection of Security Fencing, Formation of Access and Associated Infrastructure Without Compliance with Condition 1 (Start Time) of Planning Permission Reference APP/2023/2040 - APP/2025/0348

Address: Brownside Farm, Mountblairy, Banff, AB45 3YD **Proposal:** Formation of 35MW Solar Farm, Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) with an Installed Capacity of up to 14.9MW, Substation and Associated Infrastructure - APP/2025/0205

Address: Fetterletter, Fyvie, AB53 8PN **Proposal:** Dormer Extensions to Dwellinghouse - APP/2025/0318

Address: The Raquets Court, Fyvie Castle, Fyvie, AB53 8JS **Proposal:** Alterations to Racquets Court (Changes to Roof System from Previously Approved Reference APP/2024/1044) - APP/2025/0188

Section 36 Application, The Electricity Act 1989 (Consent required for construction etc. of generating stations.)

Electricity Act 1989

Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997

PRE-APPLICATION CONSULTATION: Prospective Major Application on Land at Middleton of Blackford, Rothienorman, Aberdeenshire AB51 8YN (E:369465 N:835479)

Major development of Battery Energy Storage System (500 MW) including associated infrastructure, access road, storage units, fencing and landscaping on land within Aberdeenshire Council Area.

A second in-person public meeting will take place on**Thursday 3rd April 2025 at the Side Hall of the Rothienorman Village Hall, AB51 8UD between 4pm to 7pm,** when there will be an opportunity to find out further information and to ask the project team representing the Applicant, Blackford Renewables Ltd, questions about the prospective development. Further information will be available also at the project-specific website Blackfordenergypark.com or you can contact Info@blackfordenergypark.com or on +44 1242500254.

If you wish to make comments on the proposal, you may do so at the above event by submitting a feedback form. Alternatively, you can email your comments (with the subject 'Rothienorman') to info@blackfordenergypark.com or post comments to Blackford Renewables Ltd, 272 Bath Street, Glasgow, Scotland, G2 4JR by 17th April 2025.

Please note that all the comments must be sent to the above and are NOT representations to the Energy Consents Unit. There will be an opportunity to make formal representation, when an application is made.

TOWN & COUNTRY PLANNING (SCOTLAND) ACT 1997 (as amended) PLANNING (LISTED BUILDINGS AND CONSERVATION AREAS (SCOTLAND) ACT 1997

The application(s) for planning permission and other related consents may be examined online at http://publicaccess.moray.gov.uk/eplanning or https://www.tellmescotland.gov.uk Access to these is available at the Access Point, High Street, Elgin, Item to 5pm, Mon to Fri and public libraries.

Written comments may be made to Manager (Development Management and Building Standards Manager), Economic Growth and Development, Moray Council, P.O. Box 6760, Elgin, IV30 9BX Telephone 0300 1234561 Fax (01343) 692169 or comments.planning@moray.gov.uk by 14.04.2025

Information on the application including representations will be published online. Representations must be made as described here, even if you have commented to the applicant prior to the application being made.

Reference Number	Proposed Development, Address, Reason(s) for Advertisement
25/00269/APP	Revise house design and relocate passing place on planning consent ref: 23/00032/AMC to erect dwellinghouse on site 120m north-east of Wester Herricks Keith **Reason(s):** 1(a)
25/00271/APP	Revise house design on planning consent ref: 23/00030/AMC to erect dwellinghouse on site adjacent to Herrockside Keith **Reason(s):** 1(a)
25/00270/APP	Revise house design and relocate passing place on planning consent ref: 23/00031/AMC to erect dwellinghouse on site 130m southeast of Wester Herricks Keith **Reason(s):** 1(a)

Reasons for advertisement:

1(a) Where it is not possible to notify neighbours

The Banffshire

Notice Board

Public Notices

SALAMANDER WIND PROJECT COMPANY LTD

ELECTRICITY ACT 1989

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (SCOTLAND) ACT 1997

THE ELECTRICITY WORKS (ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT) (SCOTLAND) REGULATIONS 2017

Notice is hereby given that Salamander Wind Project Company Ltd, ("the Company") with company registration number SC602940, having its registered office at (2nd Floor, 2 Lochrin Square, 96 Fountainbridge, Edinburgh, EH3 9QA) has applied to the Scottish Ministers for consent under section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989 to construct and operate a generating station (Battery Energy Storage System) at Lunderton, North of Peterhead (Central Grid Reference Longitude 001° 48' 30.59" W, Latitude 57° 32' 20.33" N). The installed capacity of the proposed generating station would be approximately 180 MW. The proposed development is subject to Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and an EIA Report has been produced.

The Salamander Wind Project Company Ltd has also requested a direction under section 57(2) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 that planning permission for the development be deemed to be granted.

A copy of the application, with a plan showing the land to which it relates, together with a copy of the EIA Report discussing the Company's proposals in more detail and presenting an analysis of the environmental implications, are available for public inspection in person, free of charge, during normal office hours at:

Location	Opening Hours	Address
Buchan House, Peterhead	Monday to Friday, 08.45am to 12.30pm and 1.30pm to 5pm	St Peter Street, Peterhead, AB42 1QF

The EIA report can also be viewed on the project website at https://salamanderfloatingwind.com/document-library/ or at www.energyconsents.scot under application reference ECU00005201.

Copies of the EIA Report may be obtained from Salamander Wind Project Company Limited email: info@salamanderwind.com at a charge of £400 hard copy and £20 on CD / USB stick. Copies of a short Non-Technical Summary are available free of charge.

Any representations on the application may be submitted by email to the Scottish Government via representations@gov.scot or by post to the Scottish Government, Energy Consents Unit, 4th Floor, 5 Atlantic Quay, 150 Broomielaw, Glasgow, G2 8LU, identifying the proposal and specifying the grounds for representation.

Written or emailed representations should be dated, clearly stating the name (in block capitals) and full return email and postal address of those making representations. Only representations sent by email to representations@gov.scot will receive acknowledgement.

All representations should be received not later than 6 May 2025, although Ministers may consider representations received after this date.

Any subsequent additional information which is submitted by the developer will be subject to further public notice in this manner, and representations to such information will be accepted as per this notice.

Where Scottish Ministers are required to, or decide to exercise their discretion to do so, they can cause a public inquiry to be held.

Following examination of the environmental information, Scottish Ministers will determine the application for consent in one of two ways:

- Consent the proposal, with or without conditions attached; or
- Reject the proposal.

General Data Protection Regulations

The Scottish Government processes representations under the Electricity Act 1989. To support transparency in decision making, the Scottish Government publishes online at www.energyconsents.scot

A privacy notice is published on the Help page at www.energyconsents.scot This explains how the Scottish Government processes your personal information. If you have any concerns about the processing of your personal information by the Scottish Government, please email EconsentsAdmin@gov.scot or write to Scottish Government, Energy Consents Unit, 4th Floor, 5 Atlantic Quay, 150 Broomielaw, Glasgow, G2 8LU.

SECTION 36 APPLICATION, THE ELECTRICITY ACT 1989 (CONSENT REQUIRED FOR CONSTRUCTION ETC. OF GENERATING STATIONS.) ELECTRICITY ACT 1989 TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (SCOTLAND) ACT 1997

PRE-APPLICATION CONSULTATION: Prospective Major Application on Land at Middleton of Blackford, Rothienorman, Aberdeenshire AB51 8YN (E:369465 N:835479)

Major development of Battery Energy Storage System (500 MW) including associated infrastructure, access road, storage units, fencing and landscaping on land within Aberdeenshire Council Area.

A second in-person public meeting will take place on **Thursday 3rd April 2025 at the Side Hall of the Rothienorman Village Hall, AB51 8UD between 4pm to 7pm,** when there will be an opportunity to find out further information and to ask the project team representing the Applicant, Blackford Renewables Ltd, questions about the prospective development. Further information will be available also at the project-specific website Blackfordenergypark.com or you can contact Info@blackfordenergypark.com or on +44 1242500254.

If you wish to make comments on the proposal, you may do so at the above event by submitting a feedback form. Alternatively, you can email your comments (with the subject 'Rothienorman') to info@blackfordenergypark.com or post comments to Blackford Renewables Ltd, 272 Bath Street, Glasgow, Scotland, G2 4JR by 17th April 2025.

Please note that all the comments must be sent to the above and are NOT representations to the Energy Consents Unit. There will be an opportunity to make formal representation, when an application is made.

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Email: grayser1974@yahoo.co.uk

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Aberdeenshire

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While every effort will be made to insert an advertisement at the time specified, no guarantee can or will be given for such insertion. The Publishers shall not be liable for any error, omission or inaccuracy in a published advertisement, nor do they accept any liability for any loss which the Advertiser may allege to have been caused by any such error, omission, or inaccuracy. No responsibility is taken for any mishap in handling box number replies.

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The Advertiser's personal data will be processed in accordance with our privacy policy which can be found at https://www.dcthomson.co.uk/privacy-policy/

The placing of an order shall be considered as an acceptance of these conditions.

Aberdeen Journals Ltd, YourAds, P.O. Box 43, 1 Marischal Square, Broad Street, Aberdeen AB10 1BL

The Press and Journal Classified

The Press and Journal

Appendix 7- Notification Letters

Dear Sir/Madam,

Invitation to Consultation Event for a Prospective Major Application Land at Middleton of Blackford, Rothienorman, Aberdeenshire AB51 8YN (E:369465 N:835479).

Please find enclosed with this letter a notice for the first consultation event in respect of the above development, along with a location plan served to you on behalf of the applicant Blackford Renewables Ltd.

The public consultation event relates to a prospective major application for the proposed Erection of a Battery Storage System 'BESS' (500 MW) including associated infrastructure, access road, storage units, fencing and landscaping on land within the Aberdeenshire Council area.

The consultation event will take place on Thursday 6th March between 4pm and 7pm at Side Hall of the Rothienorman Village Hall, AB51 8UD. Representatives of Blackford Renewables Ltd. will be in attendance at this event where they will be able to answer any questions you may have about the event.

Further information will be available also at the project-specific website Blackfordenergypark.com from 28th February 2025 or you can contact Info@blackfordenergypark.com or on +44 1242500254.

Yours faithfully,

Niamh Toner
Planner
Scott Hobbs Planning

Registered in Scotland No. SC338885
Page 1 of 1

Event No.1 Notification Letter

Dear Sir/Madam,

Invitation to the second Consultation Event for a Prospective Major Application Land at Middleton of Blackford, Rothienorman, Aberdeenshire AB51 8YN (E:369465 N:835479).

Please find enclosed with this letter a notice for the second consultation event in respect of the above development, along with a location plan served to you on behalf of the applicant Blackford Renewables Ltd.

The public consultation event relates to a prospective major application for the proposed Erection of a Battery Storage System 'BESS' (500 MW) including associated infrastructure, access road, storage units, fencing and landscaping on land within the Aberdeenshire Council area.

The consultation event will take place on Thursday 3rd April between 4pm and 7pm at Side Hall of the Rothienorman Village Hall, AB51 8UD. Representatives of Blackford Renewables Ltd. will be in attendance at this event where they will be able to answer any questions you may have about the event.

Further information is available also at the project-specific website Blackfordenergypark.com or you can contact Info@blackfordenergypark.com or on +44 1242500254.
Yours faithfully,

Niamh Toner
Planner
Scott Hobbs Planning

Event No.2 Notification Letter

Appendix 8- Email Notification

Good Morning,

I write to inform you of an upcoming public consultation event. It relates to:

Major development of Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) (500 MW) at and Northeast of Rothienorman, at Land at Middleton of Blackhills, AB51 8YN (GR: NJ696358)

It will be held at: **Side Hall of the Rothienorman Village Hall, AB51 8UD between 4pm to 7pm on Thursday 6th March 2025.**

Public notices (wording attached) are being published in the local press, including Press and Journal, Huntly Express, Buchan Observer, Ellon Times and Banffshire Observer this week. Letters have been issued to residents in proximity to the site. I attach the location plan of the proposed application.

The parties notified of this event as part of this notification can be found below:

- Councillor Alastair Forsyth
- Councillor Gordon Lang
- Councillor Anne Sterling
- Councillor Iain Taylor
- MSP Gillian Martin
- MP Harriet Cross
- MP Andrew Bowie
- Fyvie, Rothienorman and Monquhitter Community Council
- Auchterless and Inverkeithny and Fisherford Community Council
- Bennachie Community Council

Yours faithfully,

Hugh Shepherd MRTPI
Associate Director

shp

Email Notification Event No. 1

Good Morning,

I write to inform you of an upcoming second public consultation event. It relates to:

Major development of Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) (500 MW) at and Northeast of Rothienorman, at Land at Middleton of Blackford, AB51 8YN (GR: NJ696358)

It will be held at: **Side Hall of the Rothienorman Village Hall, AB51 8UD between 4pm to 7pm on Thursday 3rd April 2025.**

Public notices (wording attached) are being published in the local press, including Press and Journal, Huntly Express, Buchan Observer, Ellon Times and Banffshire Observer this week. Letters have been issued to residents in proximity to the site. I attach the location plan of the proposed application.

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- Bennachie Community Council

Yours faithfully,

Hugh Shepherd MRTPI
Associate Director

shp

Scott Hobbs Planning

Email Notification Event No. 2

Appendix 9- Feedback Form

FEEDBACK FORM

PROPOSALS EXHIBITION

We are proposing Batter Energy Storage System (BESS). The proposals are still being finalised but will include 500MW BESS, associated infrastructure and extensive landscaping.

We are interested in your views and some questions are posed below which you may find useful prompts. Please feel free to provide additional comments below.

1. Comment(s) Please use space overleaf if required:

2. Suggested:
   - Do you agree with the proposed layout and design?
   - Do you support BESS / renewable energy and Scotland's role – why?
   - Do you support the co-location of renewable energy infrastructure to avoid sprawl of different sites throughout the countryside? If not, where should new BESS be sited?
   - Do you consider the proposed landscaping to be sufficient to mitigate the visual impact of the proposed development?

3. Should there be opportunity for Blackford Renewables Ltd. to invest in the local community, what projects, organisations or developments do you feel should benefit?

When you have completed this form, please either:

- hand it to one of our advisors; or
- take it home and email us at info@blackfordenergypark.com or visit our website: www.blackfordenergypark.com; or
- post to Scott Hobbs Planning, 24a Stafford, Edinburgh, EH3 7BD by Thursday 20th March 202.

FEEDBACK FORM

PROPOSALS EXHIBITION

We are proposing Battery Energy Storage System (BESS). The proposals are still being finalised but will include 500MW BESS, associated infrastructure and extensive landscaping.

We are interested in your views and some questions are posed below which you may find useful prompts. Please feel free to provide additional comments below.

1. Comment(s) Please use space overleaf if required:

2. Do you agree with the proposal to line battery terraces and water channels into catchment ponds to minimise potential for contamination in the unlikely event of fire?

3. Do you agree with the provision of semi mature trees and mixture of landscaping species to facilitate faster growing times and earlier visual screening?

4. Other Suggested:
   - Do you agree with the proposed layout and design?
   - Do you support BESS / renewable energy and Scotland's role – why?
   - Do you support the co-location of renewable energy infrastructure to avoid sprawl of different sites throughout the countryside? If not, where should new BESS be sited?
   - Do you consider the proposed landscaping to be sufficient to mitigate the visual impact of the proposed development?

5. Should there be opportunity for Blackford Renewables Ltd. to invest in the local community, what projects, organisations or developments do you feel should benefit?

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- hand it to one of our advisors; or
- take it home and email us at **info@blackfordenergypark.com** or visit our website: **www.blackfordenergypark.com**; or
- post to Scott Hobbs Planning, 24a Stafford, Edinburgh, EH3 7BD by 25th April 2025.

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BLACKFORD ENERGY PARK 500 MW BESS

Developed by Blackford Renewables Ltd, Blackford Energy Park BESS will be a 500 Megawatt project: part of the critical infrastructure upgrades designed to meet the government's CP30 plans.

The project has been developed in accordance with local and national guidelines by engineers with over 10 years of industry experience. The site will play a key role in the transition to Net Zero.

The energy park includes 4,500 solar panels, reducing energy consumption on site. Specialist landscaping measures with connected habitats minimise the disruption to the local wildlife and provide visual screening.

Project: Blackford Energy Park

The purpose of this consultation event is to inform you about the emerging proposal by Blackford Renewables Ltd for a renewable energy development comprising the installation of a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) with associated infrastructure and access, at Middleton of Blackford, Rothienorman, AB51 8YL. We will listen to your feedback and concerns and where possible, update our proposal accordingly.

Site Overview

The site is designed to provide up to **500 MW of power** and store over **1 GWh of energy** in tier 1 (UL 9540A) certified battery containers. The site's power consumption is offset by **2.3 acres of solar panels**, generating over 2 MWp of power.

Why Blackford?

Scotland

The increased number of wind farms requires more energy storage close to the turbines.

Rothienorman

The new substation, 2.5 km west of the town, provides a high voltage connection to the national grid network that transmits the wind energy.

Blackford

This land is a suitable size for a large BESS, improving energy storage in Scotland.

Timeline

Please see the provisional timeline of events prior to our connection, working towards connecting to the National Grid in Q3 2029:

3rd April 2025
2nd Public Consultation Event

April 2025
Submission of Planning to Aberdeenshire Council

Q3 2026
Expected outcome of planning application

Q1 2028
Construction of the site begins

Q3 2029
Site to be energised

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Site Layout

The proposed layout has already undergone several design iterations, each improving upon the last. These range from reducing visual and noise impact to reducing land usage, all of which mitigate the affect on local residents and the environment.

The list below outlines some examples of the design criteria we have applied to each revision of the layout to create a more efficient, optimised site, and to mitigate the affects on the surrounding area.

- **Reducing visual impact**
- **Reducing noise pollution**
- **Reducing environmental impact**
- **Improved fire safety systems**
- **Minimising land usage**
- **Optimising construction to reduce public disruption**

Current layout

Our current site layout carefully considers all of these criteria and more, balancing them together to create a refined solution that not only meets all requirements, but allows for further improvements to be made.

We have outlined the key features of our site below:

Over 2 MWp of solar generation is installed on site to reduce site energy usage, helping to offset the impact of the site.

Native trees and shrubs will be planted to create a dense tree line to provide visual screening for the site.

A landscaped berm will provide visual and noise protection, reducing the impact on local residents. Solar panels will also be mounted on the southern faces.

We have considered the cumulative impact of the 50 MW BESS site and substation in its development, ensuring there isn't any unexpected public disruption.

All equipment is located on terraces which follow the contours of the land. This reduces invasive ground works, shortening the site's construction time and reducing construction traffic, and therefore public disruption.

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Landscaping & Visual Impact

Landscaping

Our proposed landscaping plan includes a variety of native plant species to obscure each of the site's five individual terrace levels from the public view.

A report produced by a specialist landscape architect uses 4 distinct planting types throughout the site. These are trees and shrubs, hedgerow, species rich grassland, and amenity grass.

Each planting type serves a specific role in screening the site from the surrounding viewpoints.

- **Trees & Shrubs:** Used for visual screening of the site.
- **Hedgerow:** Further integrates the site to the natural landscape.
- **Species Rich grassland:** Encourage native wildlife with wildflowers.
- **Amenity Grass:** Maintained grass within the site increasing natural drainage.

Visual Impact

The primary tool used to hide the site will be **natural landscaping**, using both **native planting** and **landscaped and planted berms**.

A planted berm, over 7m high, will provide significant screening for the lower terrace levels with a further planted berm, roughly 5m high, located inside the site to screen the upper terrace levels.

The landscaping plan includes native trees and shrubs, planted at differing heights to maintain a natural look, in front of both the outer and inner earth berm, as well as the site boundary, to blend the site into the natural surroundings. This continuity creates connected habitats for wildlife and further screening.

Where possible, site equipment will be finished in a colour specifically matched to the surroundings.

Viewpoints

As there is little existing screening, the northern and eastern viewpoints have been prioritised for further landscaping. In contrast, the western and southern directions have minimal landscaping due to the pre-existing natural screening and the existing 400kV substation, which helps to shield our site.

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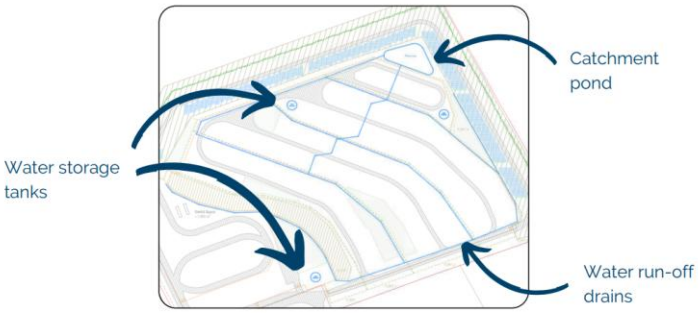
Site Drainage & Water Supply

Drainage

A flood risk report is being created to demonstrate our equipment's ability to survive severe weather conditions, specifically remaining both safe and operational during a once-in-every-200-years weather event whilst accounting for climate change.

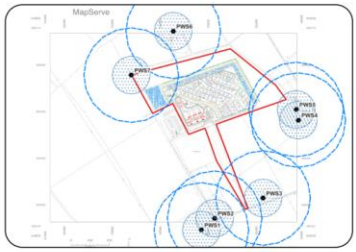
To ensure the site remains safe to operate, any surface water run-off must be collected and redistributed into the local environment in a controlled manner.



There is a network of run-off drains installed to collect the surface water and channel it into the catchment pond in the north east corner of the site, the lowest point of the hill. Once collected, the **water is discharged at a controlled rate into the eastern brook**, next to the outer berm. This ensures the drain is not overloaded with water and mitigates the risk of flooding downstream.

Water supply

Public records show there are **7 private water supplies** identified within 250 m of the site boundary. So we have therefore **commissioned a private water supply assessment** to identify any risk to the respective water supplies caused by the groundwork activities completed during construction and the operation of the site.



If any of the supplies are impacted by the development, the assessment will outline steps to protect the supply.

Survey letters have been sent to the owners of each respective water supply to collect further information, including the below:

- **Exact location**
- **Type of water supply**
- **Source of water supply**

If any information is outstanding afterwards, we aim to visit the water supplies in person to help establish the remaining details.

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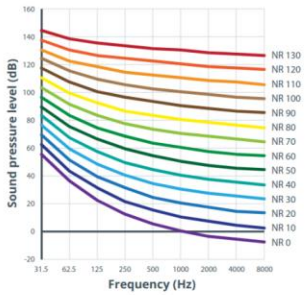
Acoustics

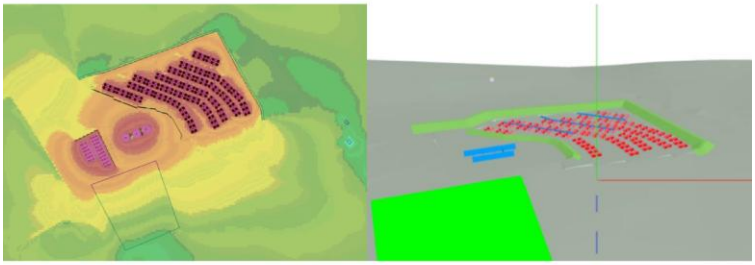
Our site is designed to meet **NR20 noise restrictions,** as recommended by Aberdeenshire Council. This limits the noise levels across a range of frequencies, or pitches. This is more conclusive than regular dB ratings, as this considers the **human perception of pitches**, with higher pitches being more strictly controlled as we are more sensitive to these than lower pitches.

Figure 2. Simplified Noise Rating curves graph



To meet these restrictions, we undertake initial noise assessments in-house, allowing us to make continual modifications and improvements to our site.

We have commissioned a noise survey to verify our models are correct and that the site meets the NR20 noise restrictions.



Above: Images taken from the noise modelling software

As part of these simulations and studies, the cumulative impact of any local projects, built or planned, is **included and modelled in our analysis**, including the 50 MW BESS adjacent to the proposed site.

Protection Methods

Once completed, these simulations inform us where best to use a variety of sound reduction measures to reduce the dB rating at identified noise receptors close to the site. We have utilised four noise reduction methods in our proposed site.

- **Groundworks**
- **Acoustic fencing**
- **Equipment attenuation**
- **Equipment positioning**

Groundworks: The planted berms provide significant noise reduction, directing the noise away from local residents.

Acoustic fencing: Fencing will help to absorb the noise whilst also scattering the sound waves, reducing the noise intensity.

Equipment attenuation: On-site equipment will be fitted with baffles to reduce the noise intensity at the source.

Equipment positioning: By placing the equipment towards the south western corner, the noise sources are further away from local dwellings and therefore quieter for the residents.

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Environmental Impact

We have commissioned a **Habitat and Protected Species Survey** for the project that assesses the impact of the proposal on the wildlife, and suggests suitable mitigation or compensation.

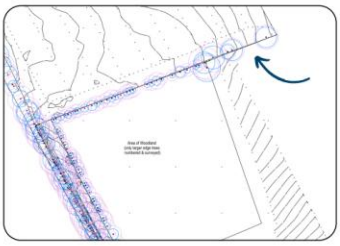
From this, any habitats and species potentially impacted will be noted and assessed, alongside the frequency of wildlife; such as badgers, bats, and pine martens using the site to better inform the suggested conservation measures.

Similar to the habitat survey, a **Tree and Arboreal Protected Species Survey** will be created that will cover the same criteria, but instead apply to trees, bushes, and any other woody plants. The impact of the proposal is then judged and relevant mitigation or compensation is suggested.

Similar surveys often recommend actions to further protect the habitat / species in the area, from conducting further **surveys** to **altering construction plans**. The activities listed below will likely apply to the proposed project, and can inform decisions from an earlier date, further protecting the surrounding environment.

- **Timing of construction works**
- **Phased vegetation clearing**
- **Environmental Management Plan**
- **Amenity grassland creation**
- **Survey for nesting birds prior to work**
- **Escape paths for amphibians in trench**

A survey for the field north of Wood of Middleton completed in November 2021 that identified that "**no European Protected Species (EPS) were recorded on the land**", which indicates there will be minimal impact to any EPS in the surrounding area.



From this survey, subsequent changes were made to the project, including adjusting the access path to lay outside of the protected root zone for established trees on the southern boundary of the field. This change both protects these trees and preserves the surroundings whilst further contributing to the screening of the projects.

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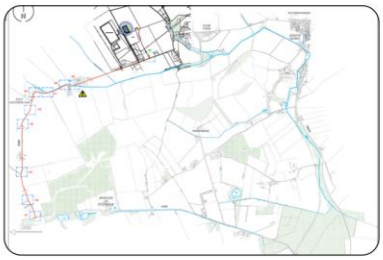
Construction Traffic

Our **Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP)** covers the routing and coordination of the equipment deliveries that will be made to the site. The key goals of the plan are to:

- **Reduce impact on the public**
- **Reduce carbon emissions**
- **Make deliveries more efficient**
- **Eliminate unnecessary journeys**

Our delivery route follows the A920 east bound, then turns onto the B992 which leads to our site entrance to the south of the site. The lorries will then follow this same route when returning, ensuring the **traffic is directed away from Rothienorman.**

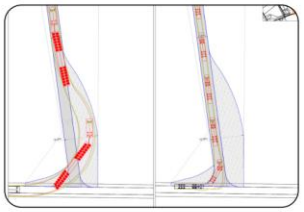


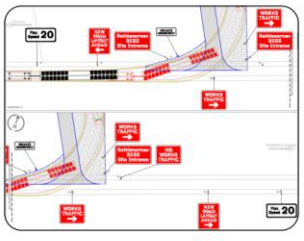
During the busiest periods of construction, our aim is to keep the number of HGV deliveries per day to a minimum to avoid causing excessive disturbance from the construction of the site. These lorries should follow **an advisory speed limit of 20 mph** as recommended by Aberdeenshire Council. These deliveries will only occur during construction hours and only on Saturday if required.

- **Monday - Friday:** 08:00 - 18:00
- **Saturday**: 09:00 - 13:00
- **Sunday**: No deliveries

Vehicle Path Analysis

There are three oversized deliveries to the site which require detailed analysis and planning, for which the CTMP is responsible for analysing. From this, we have identified any potential issues, including areas where these vehicles will overlap into third party land, so **we can gain permission in advance.**





Our site entrance has been designed so that delivery vehicles can complete the turn without driving on kerbs, damaging grass verges, or bringing mud onto the road.

Once the delivery is complete, the **vehicle wheels will be cleaned** so as to not bring mud from site onto the public roads.

Upon leaving the site, there will be **ample signage** to inform the drivers to follow the agreed traffic route and prevent unintended traffic flow through Rothienorman village.

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Appendix 11- Consultation Boards Event 2

Fire Safety

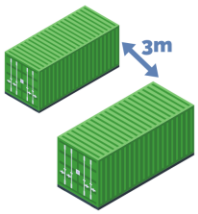
What are BESS fires?

Battery fires happen when a cell overheats and releases flammable gases, causing a self-sustaining fire that spreads quickly. This is called thermal runaway. These fires are difficult to extinguish, making proper design and safety measures essential.

How do we prevent BESS fires?

Although these fires are extremely rare, they are serious, and significant investment has gone into developing strategies to prevent them. These strategies are divided into 3 stages:
Design, Detection, and Containment and Control.

Design



- **Battery quality:** We use tier 1 UL 9540A certified batteries from trusted, high-quality providers.
- **Batteries not housed in buildings:** Batteries are contained in sealed, purpose-built containers.
- **Proper spacing:** A 3m gap prevents fire from spreading between containers.
- **Design for safety:** We design batteries so they are never overloaded, preventing overheating and thermal runaway.
- **Cooling:** Active cooling systems prevent batteries from overheating.

Early Detection

- **Voltage sensors:** Battery monitors will be alerted to unhealthy cells before a problem occurs.
- **Gas detection:** When cells overheat, they release gases, setting off alarms and triggering a safe shutdown before a fire starts.
- **Smoke detection:** Sensitive smoke detectors will raise an alarm when activated and batteries will be shut down.
- **Heat detection:** Overheating in any individual cell triggers a release of non-toxic cooling agent directly into the cell, stopping thermal runaway.
- **Immediate shutdown:** On any severe alarm condition the batteries are automatically shut down, and operators are alerted.

Containment and Control

Cooling

The most effective way to contain and control a fire fueled by hot gases is through cooling. Cooling systems include:

- **Immediate system shut down.**
- **Coolant is automatically injected into any cell nearing combustion temperature to prevent thermal runaway.**
- **Water is used by fire responders to prevent any possibility of the fire spreading, and to keep the fire contained.**

Containment and Control measures

- **Spacing:** 3m spacing prevents the fires spreading between containers.
- **Containerisation:** Batteries are built into insulated, metal containers which prevent the spread of fire through the site, and are factory built to high standards of weatherproofing.
- **Local fire departments:** During planning and construction phases, local fire departments are consulted to ensure good design, and inform response plans.
- **Pressure panels:** Designed to open under pressure to prevent BESS fire explosions by releasing the gasses in a controlled way.

All sites are designed in accordance with the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Grid Scale BESS planning guidance.

We also only use batteries that adhere to the **UL 9540A testing standard** for fire safety and thermal runaway prevention.

BESS FAQs

We've created these FAQ banners to share important information about our BESS sites. If you have any questions or concerns, we'd be happy to chat with you.

Why do we use lithium batteries ?

Lithium batteries are the best choice for large-scale energy storage because they are more efficient, faster to charge, and take up less space than other options. They also have a longer lifespan and can respond almost instantly when the grid needs support.

How will the batteries be cooled and ventilated to prevent overheating?

Each battery container has its own climate control system, including fans and air conditioning. The system constantly monitors battery temperatures and adjusts to keep everything running safely and efficiently.

How will the facility impact local residents?

We design our sites to minimise any impact on the local community, including noise and visual concerns.

Noise Reduction Measures:

- Accoustic consultants assess and advise on noise control
- Attenuation on equipment to reduce sound
- Acoustic barriers, shielding, and land banks
- Noise assessments for all homes within council-defined impact zones, with analysis at each storey
- Careful site design will place loudest equipment furthest away from noise-sensitive areas

Visual Impact Measures:

- Planting trees, bushes, and shrubs to naturally shield the site
- Using green-coloured batteries to better integrate with the surroundings
- Installing green walls or fences for screening
- Specialist consultants create photomontages to show how the site will look from different angles (see images below)
- Assessments for every property with a potential view of the site using geological software (see images below)

Visual Impact Assessments

We use models like these that show the Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) around a site. From here we can use photo montages to assess and compare different visual mitigation measures, such as planting trees or building extra fences.

What fire supression systems are put in place?

Our fire prevention strategy is built around **Design**, **Detection**, and **Containment & Control** to ensure maximum safety.

- **Early detection:** Voltage sensors detect unhealthy cells before any problem occurs. Gas and smoke sensors automatically trigger alarms at the earliest signs of a problem.
- **Immediate shutdown:** Batteries are instantly disconnected to stop electricity flow.
- **Rapid cooling:** Heat sensors trigger the release of cooling agent directly into the battery cell, preventing thermal runaway.
- **Containment & control:** The systems are designed with multiple safety layers prevent overloading, overheating, and thermal runaway, such as fire-resistant steel containers, 3-meter spacing between batteries, and pressure panels.
- **Collaboration with fire services:** We work with local fire departments through the planning and construction phases to ensure good design, and inform response plans.

What site security measures have been taken?

Our facilities designed with robust security measures to prevent unauthorised access, including:

- High-security perimeter fencing
- 24/7 CCTV with infrared capability
- Two-way communication systems
- Alarm systems for immediate alerts

BESS FAQs

How will the facility impact local wildlife and ecosystems?

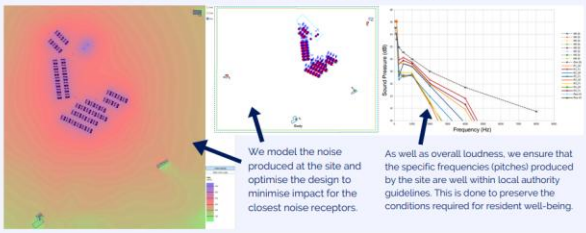
For each project, we bring in specialist ecological consultants to assess and advise us on how to protect local wildlife, including badgers, bats, and birds. They help us develop targeted habitat plans to minimise environmental impact and avoid disrupting wildlife. Measures can include: **construction exclusion zones; avoiding work during nesting seasons; managing light pollution; planting and landscaping plans; dust control; tyre washers to prevent soil contamination; and regular water quality testing.**
We take steps to reduce disruption, but where it's unavoidable, we offset it by developing additional ecosystems or creating new habitat spaces nearby.

How will flood water and contaminated water be managed?

We collaborate with water and flood specialists to minimise construction impact and follow recommended water quality testing procedures. Protection measures can include:

- **Floodwater ponds with sluice gates to prevent discharge in cases of contamination**
- **Water reservoir tanks to manage flow of water**
- **Flood engineering so that water can drain safely into the ground**

Noise Impact Assessments



We model the noise produced at the site and optimise the design to minimise impact for the closest noise receptors.

As well as overall loudness, we ensure that the specific frequencies (pitches) produced by the site are well within local authority guidelines. This is done to preserve the conditions required for resident well-being.

What is your commitment to environmental and safety standards?

We follow best practices in battery safety, fire prevention, and ecological protection to ensure a safe and sustainable operation.

- **Fire Safety:** UL 9540A is the highest quality safety standard for BESS batteries. We only use high-quality batteries that are tested to this standard.
- **Habitat Management:** The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 (as amended); The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended); The Protection of Badger Act 1992 (as amended); National Planning Framework 4 ('NPF4')
- **Water Management:** Designing for urban drainage (CIRIA C635), prevention of polluted water / firewater runoff entering the natural site (COMAH Regulations 2015; Control of Major Accident Hazards), Sustainable Drainage Standards (CIRIA C753 SuDS Manual)

Our construction process is guided by recommended safety standards and local authority guidance, ensuring a strong focus on safety.

What emergency response plans are in place?

- **Emergency Response Plan:** A full risk assessment and response plan will be developed during the design phase in collaboration with emergency services.
- **Incident Notification:** In the event of an emergency, our monitoring and operations teams will notify emergency services immediately. We use a combination of automated and manual response systems.
- **Accident Prevention:** Safety is built into our design with robust risk assessments from the start, informed by our experience in the sector.

What happens at the site's end of life?

Most facilities are expected to operate for around 25 years, with the potential to extend up to around 40 years. As part of our lease agreement, we are committed to restoring the site to its original state once the project ends.

Where can I find out more?

We're happy to discuss the specific measures in place for each site and are keen to involve the local community in the design process. We hope you find these events helpful.
If you have more questions after today, feel free to email us — we're here to help.

Why batteries are needed

Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) help stabilise the electricity grid by quickly responding when supply and demand get out of balance. They also help maintain the right electrical frequency in the grid, preventing power cuts and ensuring electricity flows smoothly to homes and businesses.

Batteries can also provide a service by absorbing excess energy when supply is high and delivering it back when demand increases, helping to keep the grid balanced and reliable.

To offer these services, batteries need to be strategically located near substations, ensuring they are positioned where they can best support the distribution or transmission networks as needed.

What will the batteries be doing?

~10%*
Frequency services

The grid operates at a specific frequency (50Hz in the UK), and if it goes too high or low, it can cause power disruptions. Our batteries provide an instantaneous service by quickly absorbing or releasing energy to help maintain the grid's frequency. This works similarly to a flywheel, which mechanically absorbs fluctuations in load. Supplying these frequency services ensures the grid stays balanced and stable in real-time.

~40%*
Balancing support

The balancing mechanisms provide a support service to help manage local constraints when demand and supply do not match. Through the balancing mechanism, our batteries inform the National Grid of their planned operations in advance, allowing them to prepare and better control the local supply and demand. This helps create a more regulated system for managing real-time grid stability.

~20%*
Capacity stand-by

In the capacity market, power plants and storage systems are paid to be available to provide electricity when needed most. Our batteries provide standby power, meaning they're ready to release energy if there's a sudden demand spike or if other energy sources fail.

~30%*
Energy market trading

Our batteries can participate in wholesale energy trading by buying energy when prices are low and selling it back to the grid when prices are high. This can be especially profitable when there are unexpected market conditions.

Ancillary services

There are a number of other services the batteries can provide which may also become central to UK energy management in the future. These include black start capability, quick reserve, and different types of frequency services.

***Percentages estimated as share of profits**

How do the batteries make money?

The National Grid pays for the services provided by batteries. These services are essential to the UK's energy infrastructure, and this means batteries can profit from providing them.

It's difficult to predict in advance which services will be used due to fluctuating prices set by the National Grid. For the sites we currently optimise, around 70% of earnings come from the Grid, and 30% from energy trading during periods of supply and demand imbalance.

Your Feedback

We appreciate your input on the project so far. Some of your concerns are already being addressed, including additional studies on water, drainage, and other environmental assessments. Other aspects, such as more detailed construction management plans and planting strategies, will be considered at the appropriate stage of project development.

Main Updates

In response to discussions at our last consultation and the feedback that we have received since, we have already made some positive changes:

- To **mitigate the risk of water contamination,** our proposal now includes an impermeable membrane to stop any contaminated fire water leaking into the environment.
- **We have updated the drainage plan** with additional catchment ponds to contain any fire-water run off.
- We have significantly **increased the size of the main catchment pond** to enhance flood control, assuming the site is covered with an impermeable membrane. The pond now accommodates a 1-in-200 year weather event, adjusted for climate change.
- **Planting more mature trees** of varying ages in response to concerns about the high rates of saplings not surviving. This will reduce time to maturation and increase visual screening sooner in the project lifetime.
- We will be establishing: **Blackford BESS community drop ins –** coffee mornings where you will be able to speak directly to the site manager to relay concerns or requests regarding the project during the construction phase.

Water Quality

We appreciate that there is a lot of concern about:

- Water drainage from the site and whether this would cause flooding
- Whether new drainage channels would cause local private sources to run dry
- Will regular rainwater be contaminated and leak into local water sources?
- What would happen to water seepage in the event of a battery fire, could it contaminate local private water sources?

We are taking these concerns seriously and will make design amendments accordingly to mitigate these risks. At the moment the following studies are being conducted by specialised consultants: **Private water supply assessment**, **Drainage assessment** & **Flood risk assessment**.

Based on concerns raised in the first consultation we have sought advice from our independent environmental and drainage consultants and updated our proposed design so that it now incorporates catchment ponds, sluice gates, and an impermeable membrane to channel any firewater into the isolated catchment ponds.

"This is a rural agricultural area. Industrialisation is changing its character. It affects the people and animals who live here."

We recognise the changes these projects bring, and do what we can to mitigate adverse affects through sensitive design. The land will be fully reinstated at the end of the project's lifecycle, as required by the Planning Authorities and the Landlord.

As a responsible developer, our landscaping plan, tree planting, introduction of nature corridors and creation of habitats will be incorporated to enhance the area's wildlife whilst protecting existing habitats. By planting trees native to the area, ensuring invasive species of plants are not introduced, and not importing soil from outside the area, we want the project to blend into the surroundings and not impact people's day-to-day lives once operational.

The BESS project is a requirement for the transition to a fully renewable electrical supply and will provide grid stability and frequency services to the national grid transmission network. The local planning authority and ECU will take the overall amount of industrialisation into account and balance the national need for these services with the steps we have taken to create a sensitive design.

"The stress and worry about new projects and the impacts on our environment is adversely affecting our mental and physical health"

As a responsible employer, we take the mental and physical health of our employees and those affected by our projects seriously. We do not underestimate the cumulative effect that the ongoing construction works around Rothienorman have had on those affected.

Our proposed project would not start construction until 2028. We will continue to modify and update our plans to minimise the impact on the daily lives of residents during the construction and operation of the site.

Any discharge into watercourses will be done in a way that ensures that the project does not impact private water supplies, increase the flood risk, or contaminate watercourses. We carry out extensive modelling and employ consultants to ensure that issues do not arise. Our consultants' reports are independently verified and will be made public when planning is submitted to the Scottish Energy Consents Unit.

We are contacting everyone in the area with a private water supply to enable our consultants to understand any measures that need to be taken to protect the supply of water. Please respond to the survey so we can help you protect it.

"Why here? Can't you build this on brownfield sites?"

We carry out a rigorous site selection process for projects of this type. We have to balance a combination of local and national planning regulations, the type of land, access, topographical and geographical features, population density, proximity to substation and many other factors that determine its location.

The grid connection given by NESO for this project is the Rothienorman electrical substation which was expanded to increase the capacity and transmission of renewable electricity connected to the grid. Transmission-connected battery storage provides grid stabilisation and frequency services as well as arbitrage services and is a technical requirement for the transition to renewable energy generation.

This grid connection was offered by NESO to provide services to the national transmission network from the Rothienorman electrical substation where these services are needed.

Battery Energy Storage Systems are being constructed in industrial and brownfield sites, even previously heavily contaminated land that has been reinstated, but it is also required to locate them close to areas of generation.

Our BESS project is connected directly to the Rothienorman electrical substation via a short underground cable at 400kV. Locating a battery project further from its point of connection could potentially mean the use of overhead powerlines, the sterilisation of land and the disruption of laying cables in or across the road network if the cables are buried to connect it to the substation.

"Is noise considered cumulatively? How does it compare to pre-substation levels?"

Based on guidance from Aberdeenshire council, a noise report will be submitted with the full planning application and shall assess the noise emitted from this project. The noise report will consider the cumulative effects of nearby developments, including the substation, Grid Stability Facility, and directly adjacent BESS project. The cumulative aspect follows the order of consenting, meaning a new application must consider all previously approved developments.

The cumulative noise levels at local dwellings must fall within the NR20 criteria. An NR20 environment is characterised by very low background noise, comparable to a quiet bedroom or library, making it suitable for spaces requiring minimal disturbance. The criteria of an NR20 environment involve defining maximum noise levels, in decibels, for each octave band (i.e. groups of noise organised by pitch).

A baseline assessment of this project has already been completed by specialist noise consultants, which takes into account the nearby developments and existing background noise as part of assessing against Council requirements.

In addition, we understand that there is another BESS project nearby to local dwellings south of Blackford Energy Park. In both cases however, the cumulative noise levels are predicted to be far below the NR20 criteria at these dwellings.

This full report will be required to demonstrate that the site is compliant with the NR20 limits imposed by the Council. To ensure compliance, and to make sure there is no noise nuisance for local residents, the battery chillers/air-conditioners will be fitted with attenuation silencers. As well as this, there will be acoustic barrier fencing around the equipment which is used to absorb and deflect noise away. This report will be made public at submission, and is reviewed by the council, the ECU, and their own independent technical consultants.

"What is the fire containment plan for this site?" "What is the plan between all sites?" "What is the battery composition?"

An emergency response plan will be written for the site. The emergency services will be consulted and informed throughout, any impacted residents will be updated accordingly. The site has been designed to minimise risk and impacts so that in the exceptional event of one battery catching fire, it will not spread to other battery units.

Fire cannot spread between individual sites as each site is significantly isolated from the others.

The composition of the batteries is still under consideration but is likely to be:
Chemistry: Lithium Nickel Cobalt Aluminium Oxide (NCA)
Type: ISO Container

"How can we trust your consultants and reports?"

We use independent and reputable consultants who are paid by us to assess our project in the specific area they specialise in. They write a report with recommendations which we submit to the council as part of our planning application.

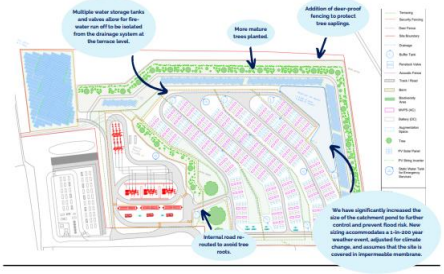
These consultants rely on their reputation for future business, and their reports are always made public as part of the application process.

The reports are reviewed by the council and the ECU, and their own independent consultants, who verify and comment on the analysis. This ensures the reports generated for this project are accurate and adhere to local and national standards of practice.

In this respect, the planning process is rigorous, and by following these procedures, the quality of planning applications and the conditions attached to their consent are improved, ensuring that mitigations are both proposed and enforced.

A suite of more detailed information will be required by way of condition. This will include any amendments to design deemed necessary through the planning process along with construction and environmental management reporting, and ongoing site monitoring to ensure compliance.

Site design changes since last consultation



"How will water for the site be sourced?"

There will be large water tanks spaced around the site that could be used for fire containment if required. They will be sized according to the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) guidance and store approximately one million litres in total on site. Once filled, they will not need to be replenished unless used. The initial filling will not impact other water supplies in the area. It is likely there will be a private water supply installed for maintenance workers.

"If water is contaminated, what is the plan to prevent it going back into the local eco-system?"

Highlighted by recent events in the UK and comments from the first public consultation, we understand this has become a primary concern for those who could be impacted.

To mitigate the risk of water contamination, our proposal now includes an impermeable membrane to stop any contaminated fire water leaking into the environment. We have updated the drainage plan with additional catchment ponds to contain any fire-water run off. We also have significantly increased the size of the main catchment pond to enhance flood control in line with the new drainage strategy.

We work closely with the authorities and the fire service, both locally and nationally, to meet or exceed current recommendations and future-proof our development to comply with any future recommendations and/or legislation.

"How will construction traffic disruptions, noise and construction light pollution be managed?"

We have been made aware of the volume of construction traffic and personnel that have been using the lanes around Rothienorman in recent years. We are also aware that some sites have been illuminated throughout the night, leading to significant temporary light pollution during their construction periods, and understand the impact this has on the community.

Therefore, we are instigating a robust plan for the movement of construction traffic and personnel. Construction lights will not be left on over night or past construction hours. Vehicles reported to the site manager to have been in breach of the approved routes can be enforced against directly.

When operational, the site will be unmanned and not illuminated. There will be security lighting but this will only be used if required. There will be occasional visits to the site during its operation however this will be prioritised for daylight hours.

We appreciate that there will be some inconvenience to the general public during the construction period. Deliveries to the site will only be between the hours of 8 a.m. - 6 p.m. Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. - 1 p.m. on Saturday and no deliveries on Sundays.

As a professional BESS developer who delivered the UK's first ever BESS project, we take our responsibilities seriously. We will provide a point of contact on site during the construction period to report any infringements.

"Where are guarantees that the project will be restored after 25 years? Is there a fund for these works?"

After the site reaches the end of its life, all equipment will be removed and repurposed, reused, or recycled where possible. All construction materials and cables at a depth of up to 1m are also removed and are recycled where appropriate.

The berms around the site are to be formed from the removal of the topsoil during construction and this will be reinstated at the end of the project's life. By storing the topsoil in the same field from which it was removed, this reduces the amount of traffic during both construction and reinstatement, as new topsoil does not need to be reintroduced.

Photographic evidence of the land will be documented prior to any construction work to ensure it is reinstated to the required state as mandated by the planning authorities and the Landlord.

A reinstatement bond and the agreed mechanism will be a planning condition. The planning authorities (Local Planning Authority and the Energy Consents Unit) are generally a named party to the agreement. The bond value is reviewed by an independent consultant every 5 years to ensure sufficient funding in place for reinstatement as required by the planning authorities and the planning conditions. This is required to be set aside prior to construction starting.

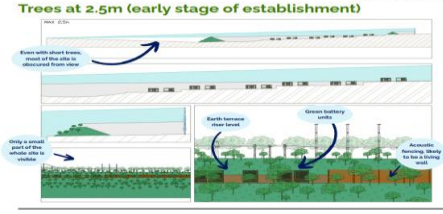
Visual Impact: Line of sight studies

We have carefully designed the landscaping to minimize the visual impact of these signs from surrounding areas. To better illustrate this, we have created sketches showing two scenarios: one with trees at 2.5m and another with trees at 4.5m.

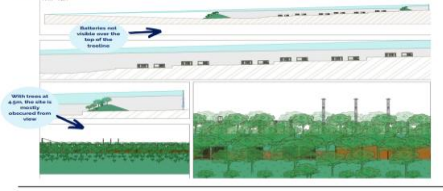
While the details of the planning strategy will be formally agreed upon later, our landscaping specialists currently recommend: *"Tree sizes will vary, with most planted at 2m–3m and some larger ones at 4.5m. Vegetation requires time to establish (typically a 15-year period) and even longer to mature. Larger trees may experience slower growth due to transplant shock, so it is often better to plant smaller stock and allow them to establish naturally."*

The line of sight is taken from the point of highest visual impact, as shown in the image below. The following posters present line-of-sight studies for the early stages of the project with trees at 2.5m and 4.5m.

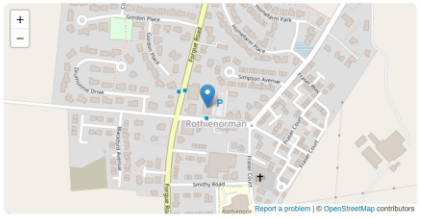
Trees at 2.5m (early stage of establishment)



Trees at 4.5m (early stage of establishment)



Appendix 12 – Consultation and Information Website



Responses to Public Consultation Feedback

The noise from the air conditioning units for the battery containers, as well as the additional transformer needs to be considered against the baseline of pre-Rothienorman substation levels, and additionally modelled for all six of the proposed BESS sites operating at the same time, along with the existing noise from the substation and the Grid Stability Facility

It is not possible to extinguish a lithium-ion battery fire - what is the plan for containment, both within the site, and cumulatively across all of the BESS sites? Particularly bearing in mind the fire at the local Overhill site, and at Tilbury Essex site just recently. An emergency response plan is required for the site and for the area as a whole - including evacuation of residential properties and livestock

There is not a mains water connection in Blackford. As water will need to be stored, what volume is required, and how will this water be sourced (if a borehole is used, this affects the private water supplies of local residents).

What is the plan to prevent water used going back into the local eco-system after it has been contaminated? If the water used to treat the fire gets into the local water table, that is not acceptable - residents all have private water supplies, and there is a burn that runs directly into Rothienorman village.

During construction, there will be major disruption on single track roads from both the 100+ construction workers arriving and leaving each day, along with the heavy goods vehicle deliveries for all of the concrete and the equipment. There will also be construction noise and light pollution.

Where are the guarantees that the land will be restored at the end of the 25-years of the project - for example, how is the concrete going to be removed from the ground, and is there a secured fund for the money required to carry out this work?

This is a rural, agricultural area. The creeping industrialisation of this area is changing its character, changing the landscape and greatly impacting on the nature of the land. This impacts the people who live here, people who visit here and, most importantly, the animals who make this area their home.

Ongoing planning induces stress in local residents each time a new application appears. The stress and worry about impacts on our landscape, our environment and inherent risks with BESS facilities is adversely affecting our mental health. Stress also impacts on our physical health due to sleep deprivation, blood pressure etc.

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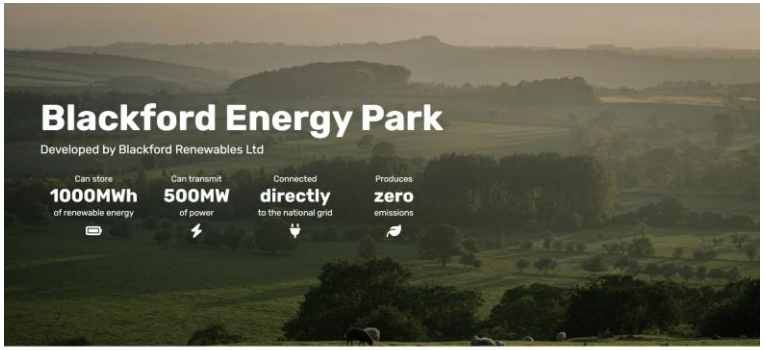
How can we trust your consultants and reports?



Site Status

Early planning	Complete
Public engagement	In progress
Planning application submitted	Not started
Construction	Q1 2028
Operations	Q4 2029

About

Developed by Blackford Renewables Ltd, Blackford Energy Park BESS will be a 500-megawatt project. The grid connection has been accelerated by NESO (National Energy System Operator) to 2029, and this will help enable more renewable energy generation to be connected to the Grid for CP30 (Clean Power 2030).

The project has been developed in accordance with local and national

Why do we need a BESS?

Renewable energy sources such as wind and solar power are becoming increasingly important, but they can be intermittent. This means that they do not always produce electricity when it is needed. Energy storage systems like BESS can help to balance supply and demand, ensuring that there is always enough

transmission around the UK.

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Public Consultation

We will be hosting a second public consultation event at Rothienorman Village Hall on 3 April between 4 p.m. and 7 p.m. We look forward to meeting you and hearing your feedback.

The feedback will be used to inform our full planning application. If you would like to provide feedback online, please fill out our feedback form linked below.

Feedback Form

Site Selection

Proximity to the substation
The site is adjacent to the electricity substation which is an ideal location for electrical infrastructure which supports the grid.

Noise
A noise study has been undertaken which shows that the combination of equipment selected and site location will have negligible impact on local residents. The assessment checked for any cumulative impact from other nearby energy developments and infrastructure.

Visual impact
The site has been designed and landscaped to provide negligible impact to those who live around or are travelling through the area. The site will only be visible from a few view points and mostly obscured by trees and planting.

Private Water Supplies
A Private Water Supply assessment is currently being undertaken. If you have received a survey in the post, please respond so we can take appropriate action.

Fire Safety
Fire risk has been considered from the earliest stages of development and will continue to be a key focus for risk mitigation. The site will comply with the National Fire Chiefs Council guidance and the local fire service will be consulted for their comments throughout the design, construction and operational phases.

Heritage and Archaeology
A baseline assessment has been undertaken, and further trenching works will be required to assess the entire site area. Previous trenching works in the field have found no evidence of archaeological discovery.

Get In Touch

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Give us a call on +44 1242 500254

Documents

- **Introduction** — View document →
- **Project Overview** — View document →
- **Acoustics** — View document →
- **Construction Traffic** — View document →
- **Environmental Impact** — View document →
- **Fire Safety & FAQs** — View document →
- **Landscaping & Visual Impact** — View document →
- **Site Drainage & Water Supply** — View document →
- **Site Layout** — View document →

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