

Heckington Fen Solar Park

EN010123

Appendix 25 – Ongoing Engagement Prior to DCO Submission

Applicant: Ecotricity (Heck Fen Solar) Limited

Document Reference: 5.1.25

Pursuant to: APFP Regulation 5(2)(q)

February 2023



CONSULTATION REPORT – APPENDIX 25 – ONGOING ENGAGEMENT PRIOR TO DCO SUBMISSION

Document Properties		
Regulation Reference	Regulation 5(2)(q)	
Planning Inspectorate Scheme Reference	EN010123	
Application Document Reference	5.1.25	
Title	Consultation Report Appendix 25 – Ongoing engagement prior to DCO submission	
Prepared By	Heckington Fen Energy Park Project Team (Copper Consultancy)	
Version History		
Version	Date	Version Status
Rev 1	February 2023	Application Version

Appendix 25 Ongoing Engagement Prior to DCO Submission

Table of Contents

25.1 Newsletter sent prior to DCO submission	3
25.2 Update in Heckington Living magazine.....	5

25.1 Newsletter sent prior to DCO submission



Hello,

I'm writing to you to provide an update on our plans for Heckington Fen Solar Park.

Between 30 June to 1 September 2022, we formally consulted on plans for a new solar park located near Heckington.

I'd like to say a big thank you to everyone that came to our virtual or in-person events, as well as those who gave us their views.

Since our formal consultation closed, we made several small localised changes to the project, mainly for engineering reasons. We've:

- Reduced the southernmost land take and removed some of the areas previously set aside for biodiversity net gain – predominately in the southern and western parts of the site – allowing this land to remain in arable agricultural use.
- Reduced the height of the panels from 4.5 to 3.5 metres and finalised that they will be fixed, rather than rotating.
- Ruled out having overhead lines across the solar park site.
- Opted for a single, central substation located further away from properties.
- Relocated the substation and energy storage (further away from properties).
- Reduced the physical size of the equipment, including containers, inverters and transformers, but have increased the overall numbers.
- Incorporated water tanks and associated infrastructure into our plans.
- Reduced the area required for the grid connection between the solar park and Bicker Fen Substation by refining the cable route and points of access, further from properties and the Farm Shop.

We recently completed a further (targeted) consultation where we have increased the order limits, predominantly around the site entrance and the grid connection route, this consultation closed December 2022.



Next steps

We're now expecting to submit our application to the Planning Inspectorate in February 2023.

Get in touch

Email: heckingtonfensolar@ecotricity.co.uk
Freephone: 0800 151 0784
Freepost: Freepost ECOTRICITY SOLAR PARK

How to get involved

- **Pre-examination** – If our application is accepted for examination, you'll then be able to register with the Planning Inspectorate as an 'Interested Party' (to receive updates and get involved in the examination).
- **Examination** – If you register as an Interested Party, you'll be invited to provide more details about your views. Comprised mainly of public hearings (some of which may be virtual), this stage takes up to six months.

Where to find out more

- You can find further information and details of the site's progress at:
www.ecotricity.co.uk/our-green-energy/heckington-fen-solar-park
- The Planning Inspectorate's advice notes can be accessed free of charge electronically at the National Infrastructure Planning Portal (under Heckington Fen Solar Park, s51 advice): **<https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/east-midlands/heckington-fen-solar-park/>**

25.2 Update in Heckington Living magazine



by Laura White

British green electricity company submitted proposals for a new solar park - also known as sun parks - at Heckington Fen in February 2023. If built, it could power more than 100,000 homes with renewable energy and save over 75,000 tonnes of harmful emissions each year.

Since unveiling its plans in 2021, the project team has carried out three rounds of consultation, delivering a range of in-person public exhibitions at Heckington, Bicker and at last year's Heckington Show, as well as a number of online events.

At the end of each of these consultation rounds, all the responses and requests were considered and adjustments to the scheme were made where appropriate and feasible.

Ecotricity commissioned an independent report which found that over half of the site is low quality agricultural land but if built, the land around the solar panels will be grazed as pasture by a shepherd, allowing it to remain in agricultural use.

The report outlining the practical elements of farming the site (which is contained in the Environmental Statement accompanying the application) provides details on the constraints of heavy soils, blackgrass infestation, and a general susceptibility to wetness, which constrain current farming activities. The document is available on our website: <https://www.ecotricity.co.uk/our-green-energy/heckington-fen-solar-park-consultation>

The proposed development has an operational life of four decades, at the end of which the site would be able to return to arable production.

Overall the solar park will deliver a significant amount of biodiversity net gain as it incorporates a community orchard, offsets to watercourses, new hedgerows and additional grassland planting.

In response to the consultation and as a result of the project's design evolution, Ecotricity has also reduced the overall height of the solar panels by a metre and determined that they will be fixed, rather than tracking the sun. These changes factor in a 1 in 1,000-year extreme weather event, as well as climate change's impact on flooding.

Ecotricity has also opted for underground, rather than overhead, cables and a single, central substation, located approximately 1.3 km away from the nearest residential properties.

Furthermore, the company has refined the grid connection cable corridor to Bicker Fen Substation, which exits the solar park to the east (rather than the south near the Farm Shop), crossing the A17, the South Forty Foot Drain and railway, before continuing almost due south to Bicker. Triton Knoll's access track has been included in the 'Order Limits' (whereby development is allowed) to ensure this can be accessed by construction vehicles for the offsite cable works.

Next steps

Now Ecotricity has considered all the feedback received during the rounds of consultation, the plans have been submitted to the Planning Inspectorate, which will review them on behalf of the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS). This will ensure they meet the requirements to be accepted for 'Examination'.

The submitted application can be viewed on the Planning Inspectorate's website at: <https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/east-midlands/heckington-fen-solar-park/>.

It sits alongside other key documents, including the Consultation Report and Environmental Statement, which show how due regard of comments made during the consultation and detail studies completed to date have been taken into account.

The project has now entered the 'Pre-Examination stage' where anyone can register as an 'Interested Party' to make a relevant representation, which is a written summary of their views on an application.

All Interested parties will then be invited to attend a Preliminary Meeting, which will be run and chaired by the Planning Inspectorate. There is no formal timescale for this stage but it usually takes around three months. The local planning authorities will then submit a Local Impact Report, providing their views on the proposed development.

Following this submission, the Planning Inspectorate will have up to six months to carry out the Examination, where they will invite interested parties to provide views and comments in writing.

After the Examination closes, the Planning Inspectorate will have three months to prepare a report on the application for the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), including a recommendation. That Secretary of State then has a further three months to make the decision on whether to grant or refuse development consent.

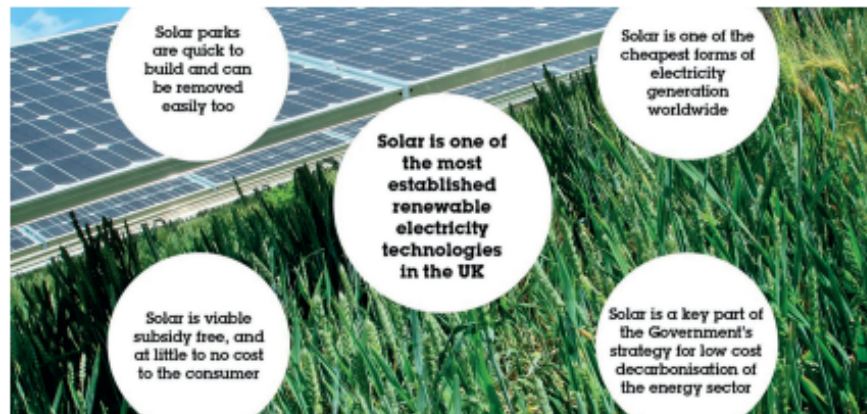
Ecotricity was founded in 1995 by Dale Vince as the world's first green energy company. Our mission is to end the use of fossil fuels. The best way to do this is to give people an alternative – green energy. We're committed to minimising climate change through the development of renewable energy generation, like Heckington Fen. These projects help reduce the UK's reliance on fossil fuels and support the UK's ambitions to become a net energy exporter.

Dale Vince, founder of Ecotricity, says: "We can power the whole of Britain and become energy independent just by harnessing our abundant sources of renewable energy. We need to public money for this, no subsidies to burden our energy bills with. Our proposed sun park at Heckington Fen is an excellent example of what can be done.

"Ecotricity is committed to building projects like this - that contribute to Britain's journey towards net zero emissions and which can be good neighbours for their entire operating lives.

"We create projects that deliver benefits for people and the planet. The feedback we received is vital in helping us shape and improve our planning application. Thank you to everyone who has taken part in our consultations on this sun park."

Statement of Community Consultation document.



Website: ecotricity.co.uk/our-green-energy/heckington-fen-solar-park
 Email: heckingtonfensolar@ecotricity.co.uk Phone: 0800 151 0784
 Post: Freeport ECOTRICITY SOLAR PARK