

Cottam Solar Project

Consultation Report Appendix C5.5: Phase One Consultation Summary Report

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Cottam Solar Project and West Burton Solar Project

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April 2022



Introduction

Cottam Solar Project Limited and West Burton Solar Project Limited are developing proposals for new solar and energy storage projects that would cross the county border between Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire.

Proposals for the solar projects are still at an early stage. We recently held our first phase of community consultation which ran for **6 weeks** from **Wednesday 03 November** until **Wednesday 15 December 2021**.

We would like to say a big thank you to the hundreds of local residents who took the time to provide us with feedback.

Why are the Cottam and West Burton Solar Projects needed?

From October 2024, Great Britain will no longer use coal to generate electricity. As part of this, the coal powered Cottam Power Station stopped generating in 2019 and West Burton is set to be decommissioned.

At the same time, we know demand for electricity is continuing to increase and that the UK faces some of the highest electricity costs in Europe. There is a clear need for renewable, affordable and reliable energy. The decommissioning of Cottam and West Burton Power Stations presents the opportunity to repower the region with clean, green energy.

During our consultation we received:



525 Feedback Forms



369 attendees to our information events



1189 Visitors to our digital engagement platform



Island Green Power solar project in Trethosa, Cornwall.

The Cottam and West Burton Solar Projects could:



Improve energy resilience by diversifying energy production and **storing energy** for when it is needed most



Generate enough clean energy to power **324,000** homes



Replace around **30%** of the generation capacity of the coal powered Cottam Power Station and replace around **24%** of the capacity of West Burton



Support regional and national targets for reducing carbon emissions to net zero by **2050**



Contribute towards strategic improvements to local **ecology and biodiversity**



Deliver **affordable energy**, as the electricity generated from solar is already cheaper than electricity generated from fossil fuels and the project would be subsidy free without taxpayer funding

Our Consultation

We have identified **7 sites** that would host solar panels for the projects, **4 sites** for the West Burton Project and **3 sites** for the Cottam Project, and we asked for your views on both projects as part of our phase one consultation.

All feedback we received in our phase one consultation is being considered as we develop our proposals further, as we undertake our environmental and technical assessments and as we make our decisions about site layout and configuration. In this report we summarise the feedback we have received from our first phase of consultation and how we are taking this on board as we develop our proposals, further before presenting you with more detailed proposals in our phase two consultation later this year.

We undertook our Consultation by:



Engaging with parish, district and county councillors across the area



Distributing community consultation leaflets and feedback forms to over **9000 addresses**



Advertising our consultation



Launching our **digital engagement** platform to invite comments online



Holding two **community webinar** events



Holding **five community information events** at venues that span the 7 sites

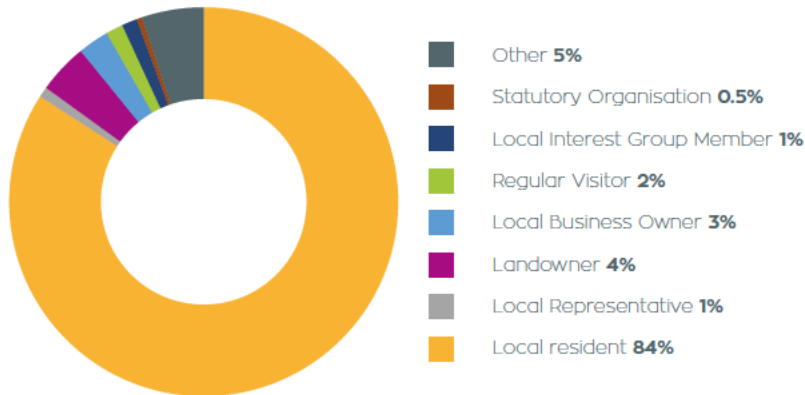
What you told us:

Our stage one consultation provided an opportunity for people to view and comment on our early-stage proposals.

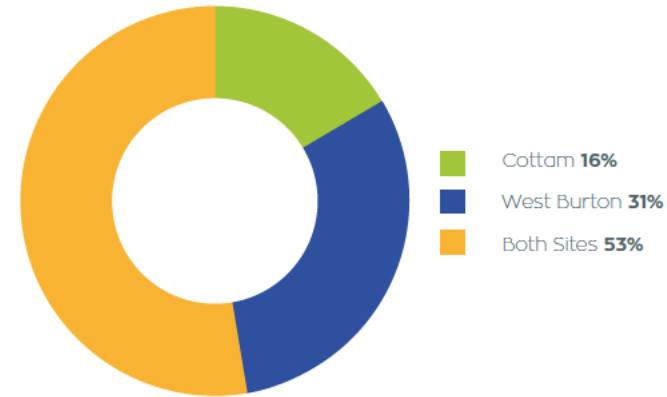
We are pleased to have received a significant volume of feedback and would like to thank everyone that engaged with our phase one consultation. Your comments have helped us to further understand the local area.

We asked for feedback from communities across the 7 sites, we asked for feedback on the site and what issues are most important to the people in those communities. The questions, answers and the areas where we received most comments are summarised below.

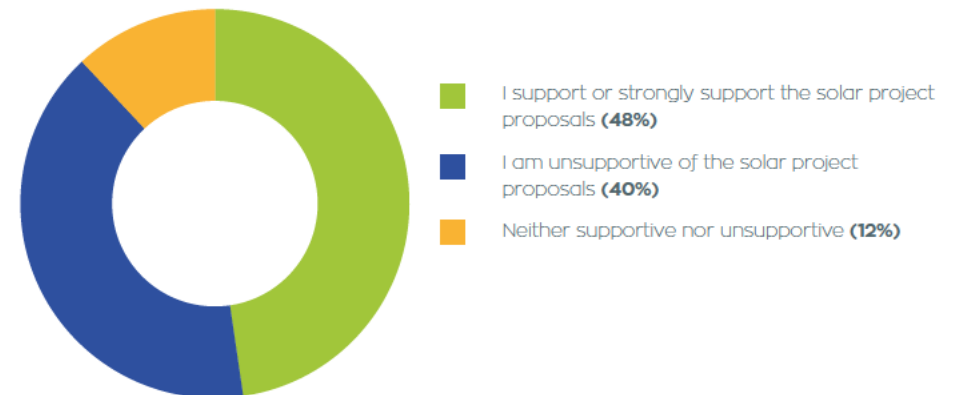
Who Responded?



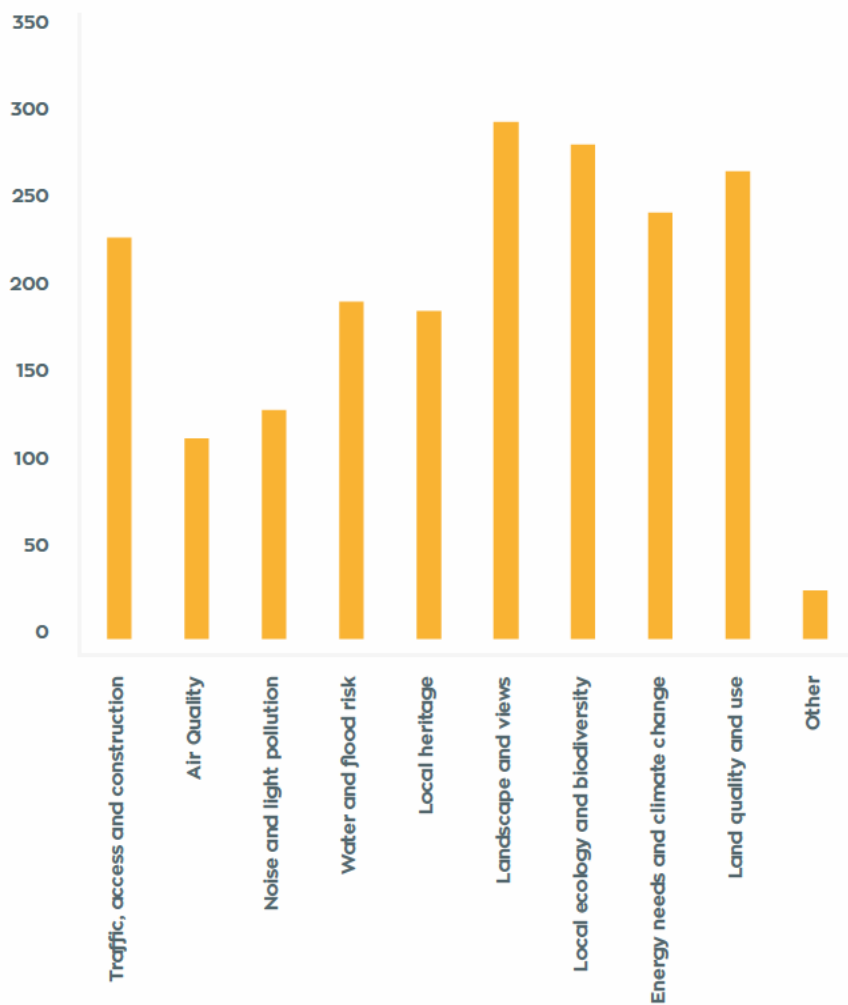
Are you providing your feedback on only one of the solar projects, or both?



Based on the information presented as part of our phase one consultation, how supportive are you of our emerging solar project proposals, which would generate clean, affordable energy for the national grid, with energy storage for when it is needed most?



Which concerns are most important to you?



What you told us was important about this topic to you	How we're listening and what happens next
Site selection	
<p>Your comments identified concern about the size of the sites, comments suggested that they would be more open to accepting the proposals if the sites were scaled down.</p>	<p>We understand there are concerns about the size of the site, the sites are large to maximise the benefits of clean energy supply and reduce energy prices. The total capacity of the sites brings economies of scale to the project which in turn improves efficiency, whilst we believe dispersing the development over several smaller sites reduces the impacts in comparison to 2 large sites. Not all of the site areas will be used for solar panels. There will also be space for environmental mitigation and enhancement measures such as tree planting, new habitats for wildlife or areas for recreation.</p> <p>Large scale solar is needed in addition to rooftop solar, rooftop solar produces solar energy for occupants but is not of a sufficient capacity to connect to the national grid.</p>
Land quality	
<p>People suggested that solar panels should be sited on brownfield, lower grade sites, some comments suggested that solar panels should be placed on the roofs of houses/factories rather than on agricultural land.</p> <p>Other comments questioned why the projects are not being sited on the decommissioned Power Station sites or on the disused airfield.</p> <p>Your feedback raised concerns about the loss of fertile agricultural land to the projects. Comments questioned the appropriateness of siting panels on land that could be used for food production.</p>	<p>When selecting the sites, we started at the existing grid connection and worked outwards discounting unsuitable sites and identifying suitable sites close enough to the connection point. EDF want to keep ownership of the Power Station sites themselves for future use and land surrounding the Power Station was excluded due to flood risk. The MOD also want to retain ownership of RAF Scampton so they can decide how they want to develop the land. We have chosen these sites due to their proximity to the grid connection points at Cottam and West Burton Power Stations. Our surveys identify the majority of the land as being of a lower grade. Lower grade agricultural land is preferred for large scale solar as this type of land is less suited for other types of development such as housing. Some of the sites we have selected are currently to grow crops for biomass energy.</p>

What you told us was important about this topic to you	How we're listening and what happens next
Ecology and wildlife	
<p>Your comments showed us you are concerned about how the sites and site construction could impact local wildlife. This included how security fencing could impact the movement of large mammals such as deer. People noted that the villages of Blyton and Corringham have large deer populations. It also included concerns about the potential impact that panels could cause to birds.</p> <p>It also included concern for how the sites will impact the local animal habitats. Comments also noted that they were concerned about how close the sites are to Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) such as the Idle Valley Nature Reserve. Comments were also concerned about the impact that site construction could have on animal and insect habitat.</p>	<p>We will consider the sites and species you have told us about alongside the environmental surveys we are doing as part of our environmental impact assessments. A full EIA will be undertaken including comprehensive environmental surveys and detailed ecology assessments. The assessment will specifically consider the potential impacts of the projects on SSSIs, deer, birds and other local wildlife. The findings of which will be consulted on with local authorities statutory environmental and nature conservation bodies such as the Environment Agency and Natural England. These assessments will also inform any mitigation and enhancement measures and will be made publicly available for you to comment on as part of our phase two consultation later this year.</p> <p>Whilst it is not yet formally within the legislation, we are working to meet the upcoming Biodiversity Net Gain requirements. It is anticipated the project will significantly exceed the new standards.</p>
Climate Change	
<p>People recognise the need to develop renewable energy projects as an essential part of meeting net zero.</p> <p>However, we also know from the feedback we have received that members of the local community may understandably be apprehensive about the size and scale of the solar projects needed to help meet this historic change.</p>	<p>The decommissioning of the Cottam and West Burton Power Stations presents an opportunity to repower the region with clean, green energy. Energy generated from solar is one of the cheapest forms of energy. It is cheaper than energy generated from fossil fuels and the project is free of Taxpayer funding. Solar projects also complement other types of renewable energy, such as wind, particularly during the summer when winds are lighter and daylight hours are longer. Diversifying our energy production makes us more resilient. Solar is also one of the lowest impact on carbon emissions considering the full life cycle of the project from construction, through operations and including decommissioning.</p>

What you told us was important about this topic to you	How we're listening and what happens next
Flooding	
<p>Your feedback showed us that you are particularly concerned about flooding in the surrounding villages – particularly Clayworth.</p> <p>People noted the clay soil in the village of Clayworth as a cause for concern in regard to an increase in flooding.</p> <p>Feedback also noted concern that the panels could cause water run-off which could in turn cause an increase in flooding.</p>	<p>As a company we have a responsibility to not worsen existing flood problems as part of our proposals. We also have an obligation to assess the potential impact of the sites on flooding as part of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). We also plan mitigation to ensure there is no increase in flood risk outside the site boundaries.</p> <p>Feedback we received from local communities about flooding in Phase One has already been very helpful and we will investigate the feasibility of measures that go beyond mitigation.</p>
Land and visual impacts	
<p>Your feedback showed us that you are concerned about potential glare from the panels. People were concerned about the panels having the potential to 'dazzle' the nearby villages.</p> <p>People raised concerns about how the sites will impact the views and the overall character of the local landscape – especially in relation to the conservation status of the villages of Clayworth and Gringley-on-the-Hill. Comments were concerned with how the sites will change their local area.</p>	<p>We are undertaking a full Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) which will include a Land and Visual Impact Assessment, informed by our engagement with the nearest neighbours to the sites and feedback from the wider community during the consultation process. The EIA will specifically assess the impacts on any designated or protected sites including the conservation status of the villages of Clayworth and Gringley-on-the-Hill. The viewpoints from which the landscape and visual impacts will be assessed will be agreed in consultation with the local planning authority landscape officers. We will also be undertaking a glint and glare assessment as a part of the EIA. Which will assess the potential for impact on people, including residents and travellers on foot, by car and by train, and from the air as well.</p> <p>Community feedback will help shape our mitigation proposals. Although some visual impact from any new development is unavoidable, we will seek to mitigate impacts on the local landscape in our design processes following your feedback.</p>

What you told us was important about this topic to you	How we're listening and what happens next
Historical considerations	
<p>Your feedback helped us to understand better the sources of local heritage in the community, such as historical villages and monuments.</p> <p>This included the Deserted Medieval village of Ingleby and its protected monument and the concern about potential archaeological finds in the fields surrounding this area.</p>	<p>Archaeological assessments are also being undertaken by specialist archaeology and heritage consultants as part of the development process.</p> <p>The solar sites will be designed so that detrimental impacts to archaeology will be avoided, either by not putting panels upon areas of high potential for archaeology, or by avoiding the use of piling in those areas.</p>
Traffic access and construction	
<p>Your feedback showed us that you were concerned about suitability of local roads for additional traffic and in particular heavy goods vehicles during construction.</p>	<p>We are committed to developing the projects in a way which minimises impact on local roads and communities as much as possible.</p> <p>We are aware of several other solar development proposals in this area and we are working with other developers to minimise disruption during construction as much as possible.</p> <p>We will be assessing traffic impacts further as part of our detailed Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Transport Assessment. More detailed information will be available in our Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR) in our phase two consultation this year. We will continue to consult with National Highways and the local highways authorities to create a robust construction Traffic Management Plan. A draft of this plan will also be consulted on with the community as part of our consultation process.</p>

What you said	How we responded to it
Community Benefits	
<p>We received a wide range of suggestions about benefits we could deliver for the local community as part of the projects.</p> <p>These included making improvements and extensions to the local footpath and bridleway networks, such as the walking routes between Sturton by Stow and Stow and extending the route between Scotton and Northorpe. Comments also suggested footpaths could be created on certain roads as part of the projects.</p> <p>People also wanted to see wildlife and biodiversity improvements as a result of the projects, including creating wildflower meadows and other habitats, new ponds, additional tree planting and rewilding around the site areas and neighbouring villages.</p> <p>Your feedback suggested solar panels should be provided for church and village hall roofs as another long-term local benefit of the projects for the communities.</p> <p>Your comments suggested that improvements to local roads could be part of the community benefit side of the projects.</p>	<p>We will consider all suggestions that are made to us about potential community benefits. We have already been working with a number of local groups in order to explore further the collaborative opportunities to deliver these benefits to the surrounding communities as part of the projects.</p> <p>We will continue to meet with local groups and organisations to discuss community benefit proposals as we develop the detail of the plans for the projects. These will also form part of our phase two consultation later this year, where you will have the opportunity to leave your feedback and give further suggestions.</p>



Phase one public information event

Frequently Asked Questions



Why are you not using the land at the Cottam and West Burton Power Stations?

Our team has undertaken an extensive process of site selection to identify areas of land in proximity to the grid connection point at the existing Power Station sites. The use of several separate land parcels reduces the impact on the local area in comparison to fewer larger sites. Some land at West Burton Power Station itself will continue to be used for gas powered electricity generation whereas EDF have their own plans for redeveloping the Cottam Power Station site. West Burton Power Station has been earmarked as a site that could potentially host the UK's first commercially operating fusion power plant. Some land close to West Burton Power Station has been considered and discounted due to environmental factors such as flood risk.



What guarantees are there against further expansion of the sites at a later date?

The Development Consent Order (DCO) would only grant consent for Island Green Power (IGP) to construct and operate within a specified area and generate up to the agreed capacities respectively for each project with National Grid.

The sites themselves will not accommodate all the grid capacity at their respective grid connections. The West Burton Project has the potential to replace around 24% of the generation capacity of West Burton Power Station and the Cottam project could replace around 30% of the generation capacity of Cottam Power Station.

Any future development would be subject to its own separate planning application and consultation process.



How reliable is solar as a renewable energy source?

Solar energy is generated from sunlight, the strength of which in the UK varies throughout the year. However, we can plan for those days when there is less sun and use other sources of energy when solar is not available i.e. at night. Other renewable sources combined with energy storage systems means that we can rely on solar power to make a meaningful contribution to the UK's energy mix.

Solar power generated around 4% of the UK's total energy supply in 2020¹. Solar energy has a key role to play in reducing our carbon emissions. Solar is the cheapest and most accessible form of renewable energy and is free from any form of Government subsidies which is ultimately less expensive for the consumer.



Will the solar projects mean a loss of land for food production?

Solar panels are generally installed on lower grade agricultural land. For the land across the proposed West Burton and Cottam Solar Projects sites we are trying to avoid using Best and Most Versatile agricultural land as much as possible. Our initial investigations are indicating that less than 15% of the land is Best and Most Versatile land. Not all of the sites we have selected are currently used for food production and some of the land is used to grow crops for biomass energy.

There is also potential for dual use of land for electricity development and agriculture, this will be explored during the development of the projects and through dialogue with landowners. Across some solar farms in the UK, land below the panels is used to keep bees for example. Livestock grazing may also form part of a land management plan.

¹ (Solar Energy UK 'everything under the sun, facts about solar energy' Solar Trade Association 2022)



Where do you plan on sourcing the panels and the other materials required for construction of the sites?

As we are still in the early stages of our proposals many of our decisions about suppliers are yet to be made. We are currently working to create a robust supply chain plan that will be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate and independently assessed and examined as part of our planning application. Island Green Power have signed up to Solar Energy UK's commitments to 'condemn and oppose any abuse of human rights including forced labour anywhere in the global solar supply chain.' You can view the Solar Energy UK commitments and the list of signatories

<https://solarenergyuk.org/uk-industry-supply-chain-statement/?cn-reloaded=1>



Will the panels be recycled after decommissioning?

Due to the long panel life, the need for recycling of panels has been very limited so far. Recycling companies currently remove the aluminium frames and copper wiring for recycling and then shred the remainder of the panel with the resultant product being considered to be impure crushed glass as the other materials makes up a low proportion of the panel's weight. Recent improvements in recycling mean that over 95% of the individual materials in the crushed glass can then be separated out for reuse.



Will installing solar panels increase the risk of the sites flooding?

We are aware that there is a lot of concern about flooding in the local area, please be assured that this is something that is important for us as we develop our proposals. We've already received a lot of feedback from the local community on the topic of flooding, this has been very helpful and we will use this information to inform the flood risk assessment that will be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate. We have taken this on board, and we will look to see if improvements to the land can be made that will help with the existing flooding issues, in addition to ensuring that our proposals would not make things any worse. More detail on this will be available as part of our phase two consultation later this year.



Will the panels be mounted on steel or concrete?

Panels are normally mounted on steel piles which are either driven or screwed into the ground depending on the type of frame used. In some locations the mounting structures need to take account of underground archaeology. As part of the site selection process and design development we will try the site to avoid putting panels on any areas of archaeological importance. In some cases (for example completely, or where the archaeology is less sensitive), the frames are mounted on concrete bases (sometimes called feet or shoes). The concrete bases sit on top of the ground so as not to disturb archaeology below ground.



Island Green Power development in Salhouse, Norfolk.

What happens next?

The feedback we have received has been really valuable for our early site design and development processes.

We would like to thank everyone that took part in our phase one consultation, whether that was by attending events, webinars or filling out a feedback forms. All the feedback we have received is valuable to us, we are now carefully considering this feedback and are using it to develop our proposals further. We will then be presenting more detailed proposals as part of our phase two consultation later this year. This will include sharing more detail on our design for how the solar projects would look and operate, environmental information and the mitigation and enhancement measures we propose, as well as how we have considered the phase one consultation feedback. This phase of consultation will be our statutory consultation, where communities and other stakeholders will have further opportunity to engage with us and provide their feedback.

Because the projects are a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIP), in order to gain the relevant permissions required for the projects to go ahead, we must submit a Development Consent Order (DCO) application for each project to the Planning Inspectorate (PINS). We plan to submit our applications at the end of this year. As well as technical and environmental information, our applications will also include a Consultation Report. PINS will then appoint an independent Examining Authority to publicly scrutinise our applications and the final proposals for the projects. At that time, anyone will be able to register themselves as an interested party with PINS, send their comments in writing to the Examining authority, and request to speak at a public hearing as part of the six-month public examination of our final proposals. After the public examinations, the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy will decide whether the applications should be granted. You can read more about this process here: <https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/application-process/>

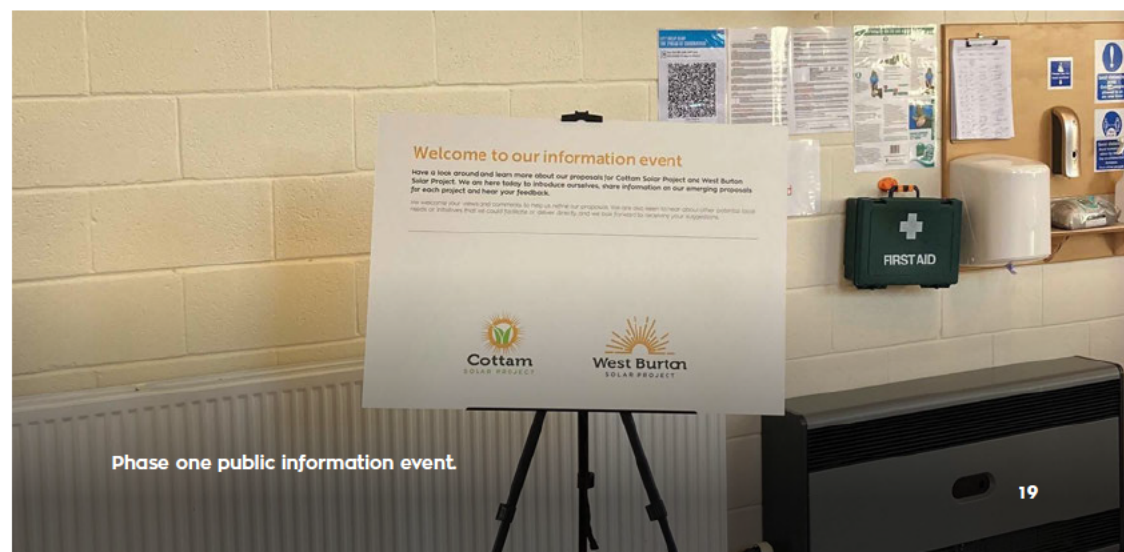
Over the coming months, we will be developing our proposals for the Cottam and West Burton Solar Projects based on the feedback we received, alongside environmental studies and technical assessments.

In January 2022, we submitted our Scoping Reports for each project to the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) for consideration. PINS have now consulted with all the relevant stakeholders on each report and have published the Scoping Opinion for both Cottam and West Burton Solar Projects which you can view online via each project's dedicated page on the Planning Inspectorate website.

West Burton: <https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/east-midlands/west-burton-solar-project/>

Cottam: <https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/east-midlands/cottam-solar-project/>

We plan to hold our phase two consultation in summer 2022, along with the publication of our Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC), outlining how we will engage with and seek feedback from the community and publicise opportunities for you to get involved during our statutory consultation.



Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)

The Cottam Solar Project and West Burton Solar Project are classed as Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) developments and will require the assessment of the likely significant effects on the environment under the Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017.

The EIA is used as a tool to identify the likely significant effects our projects might have, and how we can reduce and mitigate such impacts on the environment and local community.

What is a Scoping Report?

Each of our Scoping Reports describes the proposals and the process we will undertake to assess the likely significant effects of each project on the existing environment. PINS sought feedback from local planning authorities and statutory consultees to produce a Scoping Opinion on each project. This Scoping Opinion relates to how the likely significant environmental effects of the project should be assessed.

The Scoping Reports describe our early-stage proposals which were included in our phase one consultation, although there have been some further refinements made following feedback and technical assessment.

The EIA process for major infrastructure projects is broken down as follows:

1. EIA Scoping
2. Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR)
3. Environmental Statement (ES)

EIA Scoping

An EIA Scoping Report provides an overview of the development proposed and the environmental baseline surveys that we intend to undertake, describe how we will assess the likely significant environmental effects, and set out the proposed scope and content of the EIA and ES

The scope of the EIA will be informed by technical expertise and engagement with stakeholders to ensure environmental assessments are sufficient and accurate

Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR)

As part of the statutory consultation process, we will prepare a PEIR as required by the Planning Act 2008. The PEIR will build upon the Scoping Report and environmental assessments, as well as feedback we have received throughout consultation. The PEIR will set out the initial findings of the EIA and identify preliminary mitigation measures to reduce any residual impacts on the environment.

The PEIR will be available as part of our Stage Two consultation process

Environmental Statement (ES)

Following statutory consultation, the ES will be prepared based on the Scoping Opinion. The ES will advance the content of the PEIR by incorporating feedback from stakeholders and the community and the outcomes of our assessments. The ES will describe any changes to the project and any mitigation measures proposed to be implemented. The ES, along with a Non-Technical Summary will form part of the DCO application to be submitted to PINS.

Project Timeline



All dates are indicative and remain subject change



Get in Touch

Please don't hesitate to get in touch if you would like to find out more information about the Cottam and West Burton Solar Projects.

You can get in touch with members of our communications team using any of our communications channels listed below.

Cottam Solar Project



Visit our website: [REDACTED]



Email: info@cottamsolar.co.uk



Call: 0808 1691848



Write to: FREEPOST: CAWB Solar Projects



West Burton Solar Project



Visit our website: [REDACTED]



Email: info@westburtonsolar.co.uk



Call: 0808 1691858



Write to: FREEPOST: CAWB Solar Projects



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