



Meeting note

Project name	Dean Moor Solar Farm
File reference	EN010155
Status	Final
Author	The Planning Inspectorate
Date	20 June 2023
Meeting with	Dean Moor Solar Farm Limited
Venue	Microsoft Teams
Meeting objectives	Project Update Meeting
Circulation	All attendees

Summary of key points discussed, and advice given

The Planning Inspectorate (the Inspectorate) advised that a note of the meeting would be taken and published on its website in accordance with section 51 of the Planning Act 2008 (the PA2008). Any advice given under section 51 would not constitute legal advice upon which applicants (or others) could rely.

Introduction

The Applicant introduced themselves as a joint venture between Ib Vogt UK Limited and Firma Energy Limited. The project team involves Stantec responsible for planning, Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), heritage, socioeconomics, landscape, noise, transport, biodiversity & ecology, flood risk and ground conditions; BDB Pitmans responsible for legal matters; Alpaca Communications responsible for stakeholder engagement and consultation; and Ardent Management responsible for Book of Reference.

Project Overview

The Applicant stated that the project is proposing an export capacity of approximately 150MW, and intending to include a 100MW Battery Energy Storage System within the project. The development will connect to the electricity network via a new substation, establishing a new point of connection (POC) on site. The duration of the project is proposed to be 40 years.

The project site is located in west Cumbria, between the settlements of Branthwaite Edge and Gilgarran, in the former Allerdale District which is now merged into Cumberland Council. The Applicant stated that the site is a sparsely populated area, several kilometres away from the Lake District. In terms of the use of the site, it is almost entirely in agricultural use and predominantly used for grazing and farming.

Since the initial Section 51 meeting, the draft Order Limits have expanded to include additional land to the north, which would also be used for solar development, and in addition highways land which may be needed to enable construction access improvements.

The Applicant have taken various surveys, particularly landscape, ecology and heritage. The Applicant advised that there is a 132KV overhead line runs through the site which the new POC could be at some point along the line.

Environmental Constraints

The Applicant stated that the site is sparsely populated with 16 Properties within 250m. Topography surrounding the site mean it is relatively self-enclosed from a landscape perspective.

The Applicant advised that there is an existing post 1988 Agricultural Land Classification survey of the site, which indicates it is primarily Grade 4, with a smaller area of Grade 3b to the north, and Grade 5 to the south. One statutory heritage designation, a Stone Circle, which is a Scheduled Monument is located partially within the south west corner of the

Site. A County Wildlife Site is located in southern part of the Site. An existing wind farm with 3 turbines located within the site.

The Applicant stated that no Listed Buildings are within the immediate vicinity of the current Site. The Applicant advised that there are some European Sites within the 10 km boundary of the project site.

Indicative Programme

The Applicant outlined the timescale of the proposed development at below:

- Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Scoping Request – July 2023
- Non-Statutory Consultation – August into September 2023
- Statement of Community Consultation – September/ October 2023
- Statutory Consultation (including Preliminary Environmental Impact Report) – January 2024
- Draft Development Consent Order (DCO) – Spring 2024
- Submission – Summer 2024
- Examination – Autumn 2024
- Decision – Autumn 2025

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Scoping

The Applicant is preparing the EIA scoping report. The Applicant has been undertaking baseline surveys of the site in respect of the various technical disciplines (e.g. ecology) over the recent months. The Applicant will keep the Inspectorate informed of the work in progress. The topics that the Applicant proposing to scope into the EIA report are biodiversity, climate change, cultural heritage, landscape and views, socioeconomics.

On the other hand, the Applicant is proposing to scope out the following topics: agricultural land, air quality, glint and glare (scoped into landscape where relevant), ground conditions, traffic and access (the applicant is engaging with Cumberland Council and National Highways regarding this topic), noise and vibration (limited noise sensitive receptors in the vicinity of the site), water resources and flood risk (site is in flood zone 1).

For the scoped out topics, the Applicant will still consider them, and will provide reason and evidence of scoping out. The Inspectorate appreciates the Applicant indicating it will provide sufficient evidence gathered and data and figures to back up the request to scoping out certain topics.

The Inspectorate reminded the Applicant to ensure that the scoping request follows the requirements of Advice Note 7, including providing the GIS Shapefile 10 days in advance of the scoping request and ensuring the shapefile meets the technical requirements. The Inspectorate also advised that the Scoping Report should avoid the release of sensitive information including personal data under GDPR and information which could cause harm to sensitive or vulnerable ecological features. Should the Scoping Report exceed the recommended file size, the Inspectorate suggested that the Applicant consider splitting the document appropriately.

Land Referencing

The Applicant has carried out Desktop Referencing for the Site and two main landowners have been identified. The Applicant will have an arrangement for use of the land with them. The Applicant also included Highways land in the draft Order Limits. This has been included to enable potential access improvements, junction widening or laybys, with the possibility to obtain right to temporary use of those land. Therefore the Book of Reference is likely to be prepared.

Stakeholder Engagement

The Applicant has been engaging with Cumberland Council and limited engagement with the Lake District National Park Authority. The project site is not within Lake District National Park, but there are likely to be long distance views of the proposed development from the National Park and World Heritage Site.

For the engagement with Cumberland Council, the Applicant has taken telecons and conducted site visits with the Council's planning officers. The Applicant has discussed project benefits, and new Council's strategic priorities (including water quality). The Applicant also has specialist engagement on transport, noise, heritage and landscape for EIA scoping and surveys. The Applicant is seeking to arrange a Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) with the Local Planning Authority (LPA) and also to arrange Development Consent Order (DCO) Continual Professional Development (CPD) with members and officers of the Council.

For the engagement with Lake District National Park Authority (LDNPA), the Applicant has had a Telecon in June with the Authority's planning officers, including discussing the viewpoints that the applicant has proposed to assess in the landscape and visual impact assessment. The Applicant is also considering arranging a PPA with the LDNPA as well as DCO CPD with their members and officers.

The Inspectorate advised that if the Applicant wish to scope out any viewpoints or narrow the landscape assessment, the Applicant will need to provide evidence of agreement with the relevant stakeholders.

Public Consultation

The Applicant advised that the informal consultation with LPA and LDNPA regarding EIA Scoping is ongoing. The Applicant proposed the project launch and letter drop to nearby residents around 30th June. The Applicant's project website is planned to go live on 30th June, and expecting the Inspectorate's National Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) webpage to go live following the scoping request.

The Applicant is planning initial contact with parish councils and community. The Applicant proposed to start the non-statutory consultation and Consultation on Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC) in Autumn 2023, following by statutory consultation on PEIR (which comprise draft Environmental Statement (ES)) in January 2024. The Applicant is going to undertake public exhibitions during the 6-week statutory consultation.

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Another meeting may be arranged after scoping if the Applicant wishes to clarify the outcome of scoping request with the Inspectorate.