



COMMUNITY COUNCIL POSITION REGARDING THE DEVELOPMENT OF BATTERY ENERGY STORAGE SYSTEMS (BESS) IN THE VICINITY OF ECCLES SUBSTATION

11th August, 2023

At a recent meeting our Community Council's agreed our position on Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) developments in the vicinity of Eccles Substation and the actions we intend to take.

Our Position:

We recognised the part to be played by BESS as part of government strategy to achieve environmental targets and the need for these to be based close to key substations including Eccles. As a Community Council we are supportive of some development of BESS in our area, however, this support is tempered with real concerns in relation to the welfare and economic impact on people living in the vicinity of any such development; the impact on our rural environment; the impact on our diverse ecosystems and the unstructured approach apparently being taken by The Scottish Government in the planning processes for such developments.

Welfare and Economic Impact on People:

The Scottish Government's approach would appear to be that as rural areas have a low population, that the impact of development is of little or no consequence to decisions. The reality is that people living in the vicinity of potential BESS developments at Eccles substation are suffering a high level of mental anguish and worry regarding how such a development will affect their wellbeing. Much of this anguish has been compounded by a total lack of consultation on the part of either developers or government.

Impact on Rural Environment:

We live in a beautiful rural environment which is prime agricultural land playing an essential role in food production for our country. Food production is a major priority for our government, particularly given recent world events. Any development of this land will detract from our farmer's ability to deliver on this major priority. We are particularly concerned about the cumulative impact of BESS developments.

Diverse Ecosystems:

Our area enjoys a wide range of plants and animals. Any development will have a negative impact on their environment. We are concerned that overdevelopment of the area in the vicinity of the substation will reduce habitat for some species and inhibit the free passage from one area to another of others.

Unstructured Approach by Scottish Government:

The response to climate change and rush towards Net Zero by the Scottish Government lacks any clear strategy or understanding of the impact of their decisions on the environment and local communities. We are very concerned that this approach which leaves the amount of development in the hands of commercial companies buying/renting farmland in an ad hoc manner will lead to overdevelopment of our area with no regard for the quality of the agricultural land concerned, the environment or the people living in the area. We feel that our government have a duty to form a strategy for the delivery of clean

energy to the extent of knowing what is needed where, then consulting communities and managing the project at a strategic level. The approach currently being taken has seen the guiding principles of planning applications requiring consultation with those most closely affected being disregarded, supposedly for the greater good, by a Scottish Government who appears to have little knowledge or understanding of rural life. There is no sign that other alternatives to the creation of large battery storage facilities have been considered. For example: the batteries housed in the large containers involved are not dissimilar to those used for domestic purposes for the capture and storage of solar energy. An alternative could have been to insist on battery storage being a key component in new homes and an affordable option for existing homes.

Further Concern:

As a small community council serving three distinct communities, we are concerned about our ability to properly represent our communities in relation to battery storage and at the same time deliver our core role of communicating with our people and delivering our plan for place.

Currently:

There are four BESS developments at various stages of the planning approval process:

- **Amp Clean Energy:** has permission to develop a small area to the east of the substation. This is unlikely to proceed prior to 2028.
- **Zenobe:** is at an advanced stage of the planning process and is likely to receive approval to develop a 15 acre site south of the A697.
- **Weaver Power:** has an application pending with the Scottish Government to develop a site of approximately 15 acres to the west of the substation. This application is still pending awaiting a report from the Scottish Borders Council, however, it is likely to be approved.
- **Will Ramsay,** Pittlesheugh Farm is in the early stages of seeking planning permission to develop a further 25 acre site on his farm.

SP Energy Networks: has a duty to connect any developer to the grid. At this time they have planning permission to expand the substation and may, dependent upon demand look to expand it further in future.

What we intend to do:

1. Accept that Amp Clean Energy and Zenobe applications will go ahead.
2. Measure future applications, including Weaver Power, against our concerns and object accordingly. Where appropriate, we will make suggestions regarding the need for additional work to be undertaken. For example: Weaver Power need to do more regarding screening of the site.
3. Review and as appropriate 'fight' to prevent an over-abundance of BESS sites within the area.
4. Establish through asking specific questions of SP Energy Networks what is realistic in relation to future developments. If appropriate, seek a meeting with a representative of SP Energy Networks.

5. Where planning permission is granted, we will look to work in partnership with the developer to mitigate the impact on our community and environment in line with our stated concerns. As part of this partnership we will seek financial and/or inkind support for our communities as part of the process.
6. We will devolve the oversight of BESS development to a small committee led by Bob Hope. to allow us to also focus on Plan for Place.
7. We will include our approach to BESS developments in our Plan for Place thereby giving it prominence in our work.
8. We will contact our elected members including our MP, MSP and list MSPs to seek their support and to meet with us as appropriate.
9. We will use our noticeboards, Facebook and Website (soon to be made live) to keep our communities informed. We will consider, where appropriate, seeking support from the press/media.
10. Where we receive notifications of planning applications, we will work to ensure that people living in the vicinity of proposed developments are aware and involved.