

STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

SOAY SOLAR FARM AND GREENER GRID PARK

STATKRAFT UK LTD

NOVEMBER 2021



Prepared By:

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1 INTRODUCTION

Arcus Consultancy Services Limited (Arcus) has been instructed by Statkraft UK LTD (the Applicant) to produce a Statement of Community Engagement (SCE) to support a planning application on land at Thornton, near York, East Riding of Yorkshire (the Site), approximately centred on National Grid Reference SE 76204 46514.

The planning application is for a proposed Solar Farm and Greener Grid Park (the Development) which includes associated soft and hard landscaping. Full details of the application are provided in the Planning, Design and Access Statement (PDAS) and the suite of planning drawings.

The Applicant recognises the benefits of public involvement in development projects and has a dedicated Communications Team to facilitate public participation in the development process. The Applicant has taken an open and inclusive approach to engagement and carried out pre-application consultation with the local community and elected representatives.

This SCE sets out the details of the consultation carried out by the Applicant in the preparation of the planning application, the points raised by consultees during consultation and steps taken by the Applicant to address these points.

Where possible, suggestions made during the consultation have been incorporated into the design of the Development as it has evolved.

Early pre-application consultation was undertaken in line with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2021¹ which states in Paragraph 39:

"Early engagement has significant potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties. Good quality preapplication discussion enables better coordination between public and private resources and improved outcomes for the community."

This SCE is accompanied by the following appendices:

- Appendix 1 Consultation Area Map;
- Appendix 2 Example Letter to residents; and
- Appendix 3 Consultation Brochure.

¹ Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (2021) NPPF [Online] Available at: <u>https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1005759/NPPF_July_2021.</u> pdf (Accessed 26/07/2021)



2 CONSULTATION PROCESS

2.1 Consultation Scope

The main consultation period was between 20th March and 12th April 2021 inclusive, with further correspondence continuing throughout Spring 2021.

In order to comply with Covid-19 social distancing requirements, the consultation was conducted remotely using a variety of communication methods to reach the widest possible audience.

The consultation exercise incorporated the following elements:

- Letters and information leaflet to local residents;
- Letters and email exchanges with Thornton and Allerthorpe Parish Councils;
- Letters and email exchanges with East Riding of Yorkshire Council (ERYC) Ward Councillors;
- Consultation website with information on the Development and an online feedback form;
- Freephone line, freepost address and email address provided for enquiries and consultation responses;
- Virtual meeting with members of Thornton, Bamby Moor and Allerthorpe Parish Councils and a ward councillor;
- Correspondence with community groups including Wolds Gliding Club and Pocklington Canal Trust; and
- Follow up correspondence with various members of the local community and elected representatives.

The scope of this consultation was discussed and agreed with the ERYC Case Officer during the pre-application planning enquiry in December 2020.

Each of these elements is explained in further detail in the sections below.

2.2 Communications Consultant

The Applicant appointed a third-party community engagement consultant to undertake ongoing public consultation for the Development. The Communications Consultant is based in the region and has been responsible for assisting with local engagement and creating a website appropriate for the local audience.

2.3 Consultation Letters

Letters including an information leaflet and freepost reply card were posted to 65 households and 6 businesses in the vicinity of the Site on 18th March 2021, as shown on the consultation area map in Appendix 1. The consultation area was agreed with the Planning Officer and included properties within 1 km of the Site.

In addition, a letter including a printed copy of the project brochure were sent to residents of Warren Farm Cottages as the closest neighbours to the Site.

Consultation letters and notices were also posted and emailed to the following recipients:

- Allerthorpe Parish Council;
- Thornton Parish Council;
- Community Groups including;
 - Wolds Gliding Club
 - The Conservation Volunteers
 - Pocklington Canal Society
 - Allerthorpe Lakeland Park
 - The Plough Inn



- o JJs Bar & Kitchen
- St Michael's Church, Thornton
- $\circ \quad \text{St Boltoph's Church, Allerthope} \\$
- Barmby Moor Parish Church
- Councillors for the Wolds Weighton Ward; and

The letters contained a general overview of the type, purpose, location, and scale of the Development, as well as the consultation website address, contact phone number and email address for the project team.

Enclosed with the letter and notice was an illustration of the proposal, feedback/comments form and freepost envelope to make it as easy as possible for recipients to reply. An email address and freephone number was provided with details on how people could contact the project team for more information.

Examples of the consultation letters and enclosed documents are included in Appendix 2.

2.4 Meeting with Parish Council Representatives

In order to engage with local representatives, the Applicant organised an online meeting on 12th May 2021 to provide an introduction to the Development and the team and to help address any comments or questions. The meeting was attended by representatives of Thornton, Allerthorpe Parish Councils and Barmby Moor Parish Council. The meeting was scheduled for 7pm – 9pm to ensure attendees were available to join and the date was largely dictated by attendees.

The Project Team included the Applicant's Project Managers for both the solar and the Greener Grid Park and the appointed environmental consultant, Arcus.

Questions related to the following topics:

- Biodiversity net gain;
- Requirement for Greener Grid Park;
- Employment and apprenticeship opportunities;
- Total size of the Development;
- Access point and anticipated traffic generation;
- Landscape proposals and impact on trees;
- Noise emissions; and
- Safety and security.

The Project Team responded to each of these queries directly in the meeting and/or in follow up correspondence.

Further detail on how the Applicant took comments on board in the design of the site is given in Section 3.2 of this report.

2.5 Ongoing Consultation

Several community groups have expressed an interest in the project, and have discussed specific elements with the Project Manager directly, such as the Pocklington Canal Society, and the Wolds Gliding Club.

The project has gone through several iterations since the initial consultation. The applicant wrote to local residents, the parish council and elected representatives to update them of changes made to the project, and inform them of the intended date to submit the application.



Prior to submission of the Application, the Applicant extended an invitation to discuss the proposed scheme with the Parish Council, Ward Councillors and the local MP.

A meeting was held with a Ward Councillor to outline the final proposal and provide an opportunity to answer any questions before submission.

The Applicant and the project ecology team also met with a representative of the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust to explain the changes made to the project which reflect their feedback.

2.6 Consultation Website

A consultation website was prepared and made available throughout the pre-application period at the following address: www.statkraft.co.uk/soay. The website address was provided in the consultation letters to residents and Parish Councils.

The website provides the following information:

- Background on the Applicant;
- Project Overview and Timeline including details on:
 - Application Timescales;
 - What is a Greener Grid Park and why it is needed in this location;
 - The benefits of a Greener Grid Park;
 - Why the Site is suitable for solar development;
 - Size of the Site;
 - Security measures that will be in place;
 - Finishes of buildings on-site (e.g., colour and materials);
- Environmental Considerations including:
 - Trees;
 - Flooding;
 - Biodiversity;
 - Ornithology;
 - Noise;
 - Pollution;
- Construction information including:
 - Length of construction;
 - Construction access route;
 - How long the Development will be in place;
- Consultation Process including:
 - How to keep updated on project news;
 - Impact of Covid-19 on the project; and
 - Opportunities to engage in the future.

The brochure that presents this information is included in Appendix 3 and is still available to view on the website.

The website was viewed 261 times during the consultation period. The website remains available for members of the public to be informed with project news and communicate



with the Project Team, and over the total pre-application period there have been over 750 total visits, with 82 downloads of the project brochure. The project website will remain updated with project news throughout the development. If the project is consented it would also be used to keep residents informed throughout the construction period.

3 CONSULTATION RESPONSES

3.1 Overview

14 responses were received to the public consultation in total, with 4 responses received by email, 9 freepost response cards and one phone call.

The majority of the responses were received from local residents requesting further information about the Development. The Applicant sent responses to each comment or query received.

The queries and comments raised during the consultation and the planning application document which provides information in relation to these queries are summarised in Table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1: Consultation Comments and Relevant Planning Application Documents

Query/Comment	Relevant Planning Application Documents
Scale and appearance of infrastructure	Elevations Plans (Planning Drawings 5-19)
Distance of infrastructure from residential properties	Site Layout Plans (Planning Drawings 2-3)
Potential glint and glare towards residential properties	Glint & Glare Study
Traffic volumes and access route	Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP)
	Transport Statement
Impact on wildlife including newts, owls, deer	Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA)
and birds	Ornithology Impact Assessment (OIA)
	Shadow Habitat Regulations Appraisal (HRA)
	Biodiversity Enhancement and Management Plan (BEMP)
	Biodiversity Metric Assessment (BMA)
	Landscape and Ecology Mitigation and Enhancement Plan
Measures to protect Allerthorpe Common	EcIA
	BEMP
Details of proposed habitat enhancements	Landscape and Ecology Mitigation and
	Enhancement Plan
	BEMP
	ВМА
Noise levels	Noise Report
Flood risk	Flood Risk Assessment (FRA)
	Drainage Impact Assessment (DIA)
Landscape impacts and new planting proposed	Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) including photomontages
	Landscape and Ecology Mitigation and Enhancement Plan



Query/Comment	Relevant Planning Application Documents
Impact on Public Right of Way (PRoW) users (e.g., preservation of access, prevention of use by unauthorised vehicles)	LVA Planning, Design and Access Statement (PDAS)
Community benefits associated with scheme	Community Benefits Statement

3.2 Responses to Feedback Through Design

Throughout the pre-application consultation activities carried out for the Development, every effort has been made to consider comments and queries raised and to respond accordingly.

The feedback received from consultation, and an emerging understanding of the Site through the consultation process have informed further discussions with consultees including:

- ERYC PRoW Officer As detailed in Table 3.1, the impact on PRoW users (e.g., preservation of access, prevention of use by unauthorised vehicles) regarding the increased traffic was raised. As a direct response to these queries, further consultation was undertaken with the ERYC PRoW Officer who visited the site. Whilst this did not result in changes to the design of the Development, it was intended to provide comfort to the member of public who raised the question. A map was prepared as part of the planning application to show the access route and use of the PROW during construction and operation.
- Bumblebee Conservation Trust (BBCT) As detailed in Table 3.1, questions regarding the proposed habitat enhancements and concerns on biodiversity were raised during the Consultation Meeting. As a direct response to these queries, the Applicant made contact with the BBCT to ensure the habitat enhancements were as wide reaching and applicable to local circumstances as possible. A meeting was held with the BBCT who then undertook a site visit and reviewed the Landscape and Ecology Mitigation and Enhancement Plan. BBCT agreed the principles of the Landscape and Ecology Mitigation and Enhancement Plan and were very positive in terms of enhancements proposed (i.e., creation of native hedgerows and tussocky grass). The Applicant is a member of the BBCT.

In addition to further consultation, the feedback also resulted in the provision of additional information which is submitted as part of the Application. Most notably, the inclusion of three photomontages to accompany the LVA was a direct result of queries raised regarding the visual impact of the Development particularly on the PRoW within the Site. The intention of the photomontages is to demonstrate the benefit of the planting / screening proposed as part of the Landscape and Ecology Mitigation and Enhancement Plan at Years 1, 5 and 10 of the Development.

In addition to the provision of further information, the design of the Development evolved following comments on the impact of the Development on the on-site PRoW. The separation distance of the solar panels to the PRoW was increased from 5 metres (m) to 20 m as a direct result of queries raised. This increased separation distance aims to minimise the visual impact of the solar panels on PRoW users and to allow for increased planting within this buffer zone.

Considerable local information was gathered during consultation which was useful to inform sensitivities relating to the Site and opportunities as a result of the Development.



4 CONCLUSION

A thorough pre-application consultation with local communities and elected members was undertaken prior to the submission of the planning application. The consultation was designed to be as accessible as possible by presenting information in a variety of formats and inviting feedback by freepost, email and phone.

The Applicant responded to any queries or comments received during the consultation period and the responses were taken into account in the preparation of the application.



APPENDIX 1 – CONSULTATION AREA MAP



P:\Projects\Environment\3404 Thornton Battery Storage\3404 Thornton Battery Storage.aprx\3404-PUB-006 Potential Consultation Area



APPENDIX 2 – EXAMPLE LETTER TO RESIDENTS



18 March 2021

Statkraft UK Ltd. 22 Bishopsgate London EC2N 4BQ

www.statkraft.co.uk

Notice of Planning Applications: Helping GB Go Carbon Free

We are writing to introduce ourselves and our proposal for a new Solar and Greener Grid Park project located approximately 800m northeast of Thornton and approximately 1.3 km southwest of Allerthorpe.

Statkraft is Europe's largest generator of renewable energy and has 4,400 employees in more than 17 countries. In the UK, we own and develop wind power, hydropower, solar and greener grid projects. We are proposing two new projects in the area of Thornton which will sit side by side, however, will have separate planning applications.

Soay Solar

With a proposed capacity of 49.99MW the project is predicted to provide electricity equivalent to the needs of approximately 18,500 homes per year.

Greener Grid Park

A collection of small buildings adjacent to the substation, containing technology to increase the amount of renewable energy transmitted through the Grid. It also allows the daytime peak of electricity generation from the Solar project to be stored onsite and released when the demand for electricity is highest.

Both projects are set to support National Grid with their ambition to manage a carbon-free grid by 2025 and ties into the UK's commitments to achieve a NetZero status by 2050.

We are consulting the community on these proposals prior to submitting a planning application to East Riding of Yorkshire Council. Your views are important to us and we want our projects to bring meaningful benefits to the local community.

Please visit the project website: **www.statkraft.co.uk/soay** to find out more, ask questions and complete the online survey. This consultation will run from 20 March to 12 April 2021 and we welcome any comments or queries during this period.

We hope this letter and enclosed information is a helpful introduction to our plans, but if you have further questions, please feel free to contact us using the details below or via the project website.

Post:return the feedback form to us at "Freepost Statkraft" (no stamp required)Email:ukprojects@statkraft.comPhone:0800 772 0668

Yours sincerely,

Lucy Kent, Project Manager Thornton Greener Grid Park

Charlotte Healey Project Director for Soay Solar Farm

Introducing Soay Solar & Greener Grid Park

Although these projects could be installed and operate separately, they are presented together for the purposes of this consultation. The projects would be submitted as separate planning applications:

Solar:

Up to 49.99 Megawatts (MW) of renewable energy.

Greener Grid Park:

A collection of buildings, containing zero carbon technology which stabilise the grid, allowing more renewable energy to be transmitted through the network.

Soay Solar

- Located on moderate quality agricultural land, suitable for solar development.
- Proposed installed capacity of up to 49.99MW, estimated to power approximately 18,500 homes every year.¹
- Access to the site will be from the northeast via the A1079/York Road and Back Lane/Melbourne Road.
- Delivering business rates of approximately £134,000 per year and a community benefit fund and opportunities for local supply contracts.

 Calculated by dividing the annual power output (66.58 GWh) by average UK annual household consumption of 3,578 kWh (BEIS, Dec 2020).

Greener Grid Park

A pioneering project to help achieve zero carbon emissions:

- Keeping the power network stable has become more challenging as more renewable energy is generated.
- That has meant National Grid has at times been forced to shut down renewable technologies and run gas power stations even when there is enough renewable energy to meet demand.
- These large machines with built-in flywheels can provide grid stability without emitting any carbon dioxide - decarbonising the grid and saving consumers money.



APPENDIX 3 – CONSULTATION BROCHURE



Soay Solar & Greener Grid Park

MARCH 2021



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About Us

SOAY SOLAR & GREENER GRID PARK



About Statkraft

- Europe's largest renewable energy producer
- A state owned utility, with origins in Norwegian hydro power 125 years ago
- 4,500 employees in 17 countries
- Operating in the UK since 2006
- Recently acquired British solar developer, Solarcentury





Statkraft in the UK

- Generation portfolio includes four wind farms and one hydro plant
- Onshore wind development in Scotland and Wales
- 100% own Solarcentury, one of the world's most respected and longstanding solar companies
- Recent expansion into vehicle charging infrastructure in the UK
- Delivering grid stability services for National Grid with Greener Grid Parks

5



The Development Team



Charlotte Healey Project Manager - Solar



Lucy Kent Project Manager - Greener Grid Park

Project Support:

- Solar and Grid planning colleagues based in Glasgow and London office
- Arcus (York), a leading environmental, planning and engineering consultancy



Project Overview

SOAY SOLAR & GREENER GRID PARK





A copy of this plan can be downloaded from the project website.

Introducing Soay Solar & Greener Grid Park

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- Delivering business rates of approximately £134,000 per year as well as opportunities for community funding and local supply contracts.

[1] Calculated by dividing the annual power output (66.58 GWh) by average UK annual household consumption of 3,578 kWh (BEIS, Dec 2020).



Greener Grid Park

A pioneering project to help achieve zero carbon emissions:

- Keeping the power network stable has become more challenging as more renewable energy is generated.
- That has meant National Grid has at times been forced to shut down renewable technologies and run gas power stations - even when there is enough renewable energy to meet demand.
- These large machines with built-in flywheels can provide grid stability without emitting any carbon dioxide - decarbonising the grid and saving consumers money.





Why this site?

This site has the required elements for:

Solar:

- Relatively flat landscape
- Moderate quality of agricultural land
- Low risk of flooding
- Good Solar irradiation
- Next to electricity transmission network
- Site does not lie within any statutory or non-statutory designated sites for nature conservation

Greener Grid Park:

- Proximity to the current substation at Thornton
- 400kV grid connection which enhances the effectiveness of the technology
- Low risk of flooding
- Identified as an area requiring a stability service by National Grid Electricity System Operator (NGESO)
- Existing trees provide visual screening
- Existing roads infrastructure for access



Planning & Development Management

SOAY SOLAR & GREENER GRID PARK

Planning

We are consulting on these proposals before submitting planning applications to East Riding of Yorkshire Council.





This will consist of two separate planning applications: a Solar Farm, and a Greener Grid Park.



Project Timeline





Environmental Considerations

SOAY SOLAR & GREENER GRID PARK



Indicative site layout plan





A copy of this plan can be downloaded from the project website.

Landscape and visual assessment

Ongoing site studies will assess any potential impacts.

- Following a landscape and visual site survey and assessment, a planting plan will be produced. This will include new native hedgerow and tree planting to reinforce the existing green network and provide visual screening.
- We will look to maintain existing vegetation around the site such as trees and hedgerows.
- Our landscape plan will outline this in more detail, as part of the planning application. The design will be in keeping with the local landscape character.
- We welcome feedback on the landscape proposal.



Biodiversity & Habitat

An Ecological Survey and Habitat Report will form part of each planning application. It will set out our plans to improve biodiversity and safeguard existing ecological habitats.

- We are developing the projects with the aim of delivering a significant 'net gain' in biodiversity and to improve soil quality in the long term.
- We will create species rich grassland/wildflower meadows to provide long term biodiversity benefits.
- Bird and bat boxes will be added around the site to encourage nesting.
- It is possible for small livestock grazing to continue around the solar panels.





Other issues taken into account

Cultural Heritage & Archaeology

Surveys are being undertaken and will be included in the planning application.

Soay





Hydrology

The area is within flood zone 1 and has a low probability of flooding. The Greener Grid Park will likely include a sustainable drainage feature.



Other issues taken into account

Access & Transport

A transport statement will be prepared prior to submission of a planning application with a focus on highways and local access points.

Soay





The public rights of way (PROW) will be retained and views screened by planting, where possible.



Design considerations

- We will design the development around existing features such as woodlands, ponds, footpaths and field boundaries.
- Once the project reaches the end of its operational life, it can easily be removed with the land returned to farmland.
- Images would be provided alongside any planning application, showing final visualisations of what the project would look like.
- An indicative draft site layout has been produced for comment.



Solar panels are mounted on racks of metal poles, typically up to 3 metres above the ground and tilted between 10 to 30 degrees. The distance between the panels will be approx 6-10 metres.

Community & Wider Benefits

SOAY SOLAR & GREENER GRID PARK



Community & Wider Benefits

- Solar is helping to secure the UK's green energy future by reducing our reliance on imported fossil fuels.
- Local businesses are encouraged to register as a supplier to the project - use the link "Local Supplier" at the top of our project website.
- If consented, the solar project would contribute business rates of approximately £134,000 to the Local Authority each year.
- We will be offering community funding and welcome feedback on what we can do to support local community and environmental projects.
- Biodiversity enhancements are incorporated into the project design.



Local investment

- As a company committed to supporting local communities, we have already invested around £350,000 in the pre-planning stages of the project with companies in East Yorkshire.
- However, our commitment to the area does not end there. The development will generate around £175,000 per year in business rates and we will provide a community fund of over £65,000, which can be used to support community-led investments and projects.
- There will be opportunities for local businesses to tender for work during the construction phase of the development and some local job creation. As the construction phase is likely to last in the region of 18 months, local accommodation and amenities providers are likely to realise significant benefits as well.



Visual and environmental impact

- Solar Farms are among the least visually intrusive renewable energy developments and as they are underpinned by passive technologies, do not create any noise disturbance.
- However, to ensure the visual impact is minimised, we propose to plant new native hedgerow and trees to provide visual screening.
- We are also committed to improving the biodiversity with a projected net gain of 116%.





- Through this project we are supporting the Rare Breeds Survival Trust, who fight for a healthier and more diverse natural environment by ensuring that native and rare breeds of farmed animals such as sheep, cattle and pigs survive and thrive.
- Perfectly adapted to our landscapes, they can help restore degraded habitats and improve our soils.
- Our support recognises the importance of farming traditions, demonstrating how new and old can work together.

This project is named after the Soay breed, classified as "At Risk" on the sheep watchlist.



Next Steps

SOAY SOLAR & GREENER GRID PARK



Under normal circumstances we would host a resident information day about the project in the local community. Because of COVID 19 restrictions we have made information available online so you can read and download it at home.

We welcome your comments and feedback. In order for us to take your view into account before we submit an application, please comment by 12 April 2021.

Formal representations can be made to East Riding of Yorkshire Council after applications have been submitted.

The project website will be kept updated throughout the development.





Have your Say...

Online

www.statkraft.co.uk/soay

Phone

0800 772 0668

Email

ukprojects@statkraft.com

Post

Freepost Statkraft (no stamp required)

