

Introduction to Heckington Fen Solar Park

We have identified an area in Heckington Fen, North Kesteven as a potential site for a new solar park. Our proposal is still at an early stage of development and we want to engage with local residents as we begin to develop our plans. The project could generate enough electricity to power over 100,000 homes and save an estimated 77,500 tonnes of carbon dioxide per annum.

This newsletter contains information about our proposals at Heckington Fen, who we are and what happens next, as well as several FAQs. We will continue to keep you updated as we progress our plans, and all the information on how we will engage and consult with you is detailed below.

About the site

Ecotricity are looking at the potential for a solar park on farm land near Heckington, north of the A17 and to the south east of South Kyme. We are currently conducting environmental assessments, so the exact layout is still to be determined. Early results suggest that the 1,450 acre site could accommodate a solar park of up to 500 megawatts (MW) if approved, as well as a corresponding energy storage facility.

The solar park would be built on land already approved for the use of renewable energy, following the approval by the Secretary of State in February 2013 for 22 wind turbines. Since then, we have been unable to reach agreement with the Ministry of Defence regarding their radar concerns, which means we have not been able to start building the wind park.



About our proposed solar park

Proposed solar park capacity

Up to 500MW direct current (DC) installed with an export capacity of 400MW alternating current (AC)

Maximum height of panels

Up to 4.5m

Estimated green electricity generated (per year)

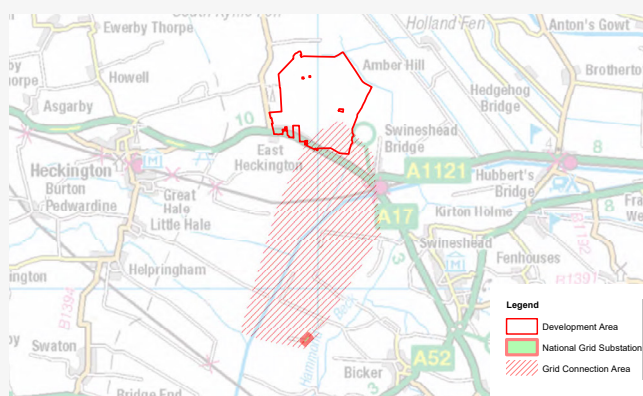
385 million units (kWh)

Estimated equivalent homes powered (per year)

UK homes: 102,250

Estimated tonnes of CO2 saved (per year)

77,500



Map indicating outline boundary of site and proposed area for a grid connection to Bicker Fen Substation



What happens next?

As the proposed generation capacity exceeds 50 megawatts (MW), the solar park will be classified as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP).

The consenting regime for NSIPs comes under the Planning Act 2008 and requires us to apply for a Development Consent Order (DCO). The DCO application will be examined by the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) – the independent body responsible for examining NSIPs – who will make a recommendation on the application to the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS). The Secretary of State will make the final decision on the DCO application.

We expect to submit the full application to PINS in January 2023, with the site ‘scoped’ for environmental purposes with the Secretary of State in early 2022. This process will formally consult the local planning authority as well as other statutory bodies to decide what environmental studies to include in the application.

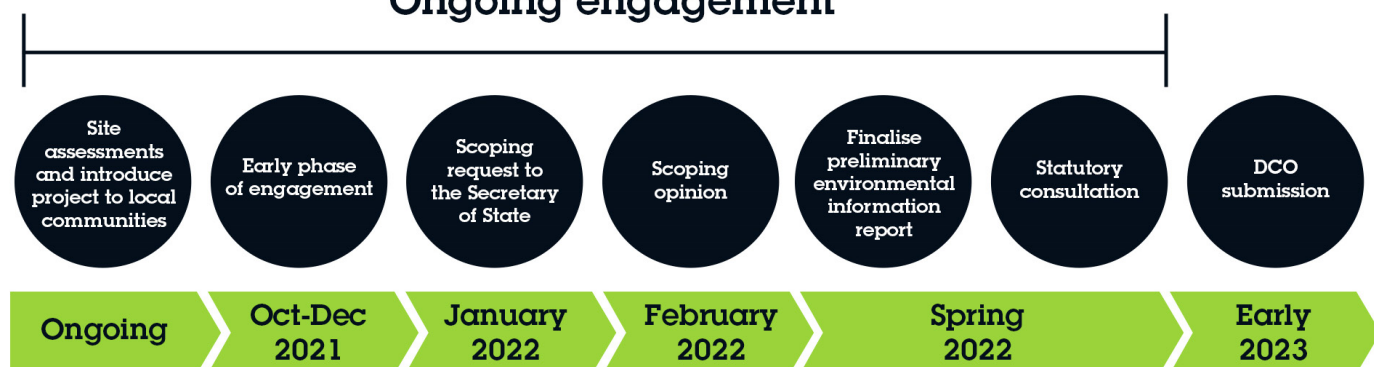
This newsletter marks the start of our commitment to keep the local community informed about this exciting project. You can ask us questions and give us your views at any time and we will be holding two stages of consultation.

The first, which will take place between now and Christmas 2021 will allow us to introduce our early plans for the solar park to local residents and stakeholders to get your input as we progress our designs. During this time we will be holding a series of online engagement events in November where you will be able to hear from members of the project team, ask questions and provide your views.

In early 2022 we will continue to develop our plans, using the feedback from the first stage of consultation to help evolve our designs. We will then carry out statutory consultation in early summer 2022 where we will seek views on the evolved designs, along with the results of our preliminary environmental assessments. Timings for this stage of consultation will be announced at a later date.

Following submission, a decision by the Government could be made by mid-2024.

Ongoing engagement



Frequently asked questions

What are the benefits to solar?



Solar parks are quick to build and can be removed easily too



Solar is viable subsidy free, and at little to no cost to the consumer



Solar is one of the cheapest forms of electricity generation worldwide



Solar is one of the most established renewable electricity technologies in the UK



Solar is a key part of the Government's strategy for low cost decarbonisation of the energy sector



About Ecotricity

Since our inception 25 years ago, Ecotricity has been involved in pioneering energy projects across the UK. We operate a unique model, using our customers' bills to fund new sources of green energy, including wind, solar, battery storage and green gas in the form of anaerobic digestion.

We supply homes and businesses with green electricity and green gas. But we work differently from other energy companies because we're 'not-for-dividend' and have no outside shareholders. It's all part of our mission to change the way energy is made in Britain, and we're the only energy company partnered with RSPB among many other good causes.



Who are you consulting?

We want to introduce our proposals at an early stage in the design and planning process which is why we are engaging with residents and stakeholders at this stage. We are also engaging with planning officers at North Kesteven, Boston Borough and South Holland councils as well as briefing parish councils, local district and county councillors and MPs.

We will also be engaging with Lincolnshire County Council as a joint planning body and the Local Highway Authority. As part of our ongoing engagement we will also be speaking with local and regional community and environmental groups and organisations.



Have your say

Our first stage of engagement with local residents and stakeholders is running from now until 17 December 2021.

In light of potential Covid restrictions, we are intending to carry out online events during this stage, with the potential for physical events during the statutory consultation, or before if possible.

We are planning to hold a series of online events between now and 17 December and encourage you to join us to find out more about our proposals, including:

- An introduction to the proposed solar park at Heckington Fen
- An opportunity to meet the project team
- An opportunity to provide your views and feed into our early proposal

The dates and times for the online presentations are:

Thursday 4th November	10:00-11:30
Saturday 13th November	11:00-12:30
Monday 15th November	18:00-19:30

To register for one of our online presentations please email heckingtonfensolar@ecotricity.co.uk and we will send you a link. Alternatively you can register via the project website.



How will wildlife benefit?

The plans will create additional wildlife habitat with new hedges planted throughout the site, and the land beneath and around the panels being managed as grassland, a vital habitat for numerous species and wildlife. Wildlife benefits is one of the areas we're keen to get your views on.



What are we proposing?

The Heckington Fen Solar Park would comprise solar panels, either fixed or ones that track the sun across the sky. Other equipment, some under and some above ground, would be needed. Full details of our proposals will be shared over the coming months as the design evolves, and we will be giving residents and stakeholders the opportunity to have your say.



What about the wind turbines?

The climate crisis needs fighting now, so we're keen to use Heckington Fen as soon as possible to create clean, renewable energy which contributes towards the UK's net zero targets. We want to make clear that if the solar park is approved and constructed, we will not build the wind turbines.



What environmental work will be done?

Before submitting an application, we will continue our comprehensive Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) which considers topics such as landscape, flood risk/hydrology, archaeology, wildlife and bird studies, cultural heritage, noise and transport/construction, glint/glare and agricultural land amongst other things. We already have a wealth of information on the site from the previous wind park application, but we are doing more assessments to make sure we go forward with the best scheme.

Every effort has been made to ensure that the information here is accurate at the time of going to print. If you do not wish to be contacted in relation to Heckington Fen Solar Park, please email our team on heckingtonfensolar@ecotricity.co.uk



How will local residents benefit?

The construction of a solar park at Heckington Fen will support jobs via the supply chain as well as more local jobs opportunities during the construction period. There are currently a small team who farm the site throughout the year in rotation with other farms in the wider ownership, so these jobs will not be lost. Other benefits could include training opportunities during construction.



Why make energy from the sun?

Solar power with energy storage is the perfect complement to Britain's huge wind power resource. On average, we get more light in the summer and more wind in the winter, so it balances out across the seasons. The energy storage means excess solar energy not exported to the grid can be captured and exported later when the demand is higher. This solar park will be an important step forward in moving the UK away from fossil fuels and help to fight the climate crisis, as well as providing long-term energy security for Britain. The UK has ambitious climate change targets to achieve net zero by 2050, going further than the previous target of 80% reduction from the 1990 baseline as set out in the Climate Change Act 2008. In his party conference speech in early October, the prime minister confirmed plans to eliminate fossil fuels from UK electricity generation by 2035.

Getting in touch



Further information and details of the site's progress are available at: www.ecotricity.co.uk/our-green-energy/heckington-fen-solar-park

We want to make it as easy as possible for you to provide feedback on our proposals. There is an online feedback form on our project website and we would appreciate you taking the time to provide your comments there. If you would like a hard copy please let us know using the details below:

If you have any questions please email us at:
heckingtonfensolar@ecotricity.co.uk

Or call us on our dedicated phone line:
0800 151 0784

Or write to us at:
Freepost ECOTRICITY SOLAR PARK