



Bowshiel Solar Farm & BESS project Pre-Application Consultation Report

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

- 1.1.1.1 This Pre-application Consultation (PAC) Report has been prepared by Environmental Resources Management Ltd (ERM), on behalf of Votalia UK Limited ('the Applicant'). It accompanies a Section 36 consent application to the Scottish Ministers, which seeks consent under the Electricity Act 1989¹ and deemed planning permission to construct and operate the Bowshiel Solar Farm and Battery Energy Storage System (BESS), ('the Proposed Development').

1.2 Purpose of this Report

- 1.2.1.1 This report describes the public consultation undertaken by the Applicant. It describes the approach and activities undertaken during pre-application to facilitate an inclusive programme of engagement and consultation. It outlines how the Applicant communicated information on the emerging proposal to key stakeholders and the local community. It also outlines how the Applicant collected feedback, how feedback informed the proposal, and how changes to the proposal from feedback were communicated back to stakeholders and the local community.

1.3 The Applicant

- 1.3.1.1 Founded in 2005, Votalia is an experienced global renewable energy developer and Independent Power Producer (IPP) developing, constructing, and operating solar, wind, hydro, biomass, and storage projects. Votalia has assets with 2.37GW of installed capacity, with a 16.6GW pipeline of projects globally and has a long-term commitment and experienced to development in the UK.
- 1.3.1.2 Votalia UK Ltd is focused on providing renewable energy schemes to help decarbonise the UK's electricity generation and combat the climate crisis by supplying an affordable and renewable source of clean electricity.
- 1.3.1.3 The Proposed Development is one in a series of renewable energy projects which Votalia are proposing to construct and operate in Scotland. If consented, international experience and expertise will allow Votalia to develop their ~600MW of onshore renewables in Scotland to help achieve the current net zero targets and fight the climate crisis.
- 1.3.1.4 With a mission to improve the global environment and foster local development, the Proposed Development aims to address national and local electricity needs by generating an affordable and renewable source of clean energy and contributing to Britain's homegrown energy capacity.

¹ The Electricity Act 1989

- 1.3.1.5 If consented, the Proposed Development will contribute to Scotland's goal of achieving netzero emissions by 2045². It will also contribute to Scottish Government ambitions for large scale solar as described in **Chapter 5 (Policy and Legislative Context)** of the accompanying EIAR.

1.4 The Site

- 1.4.1.1 The Proposed Development will occupy an area of around 190 hectares (ha), approximately 2.4 kilometres (km) south of Cockburnspath and 13 km southeast of Dunbar. The site occupies 14 agricultural fields, primarily utilised for livestock and arable farming in rotation. It lies within the Scottish Borders Council administrative areas and spans both Cockburnspath and Cove Council and Grantshouse Community Council areas.
- 1.4.1.2 The village of Cockburnspath is the closest settlement, approximately 2.4 km south of the nearest point to the Proposed Development boundary. Various properties, farmsteads, and small settlements surround the site, including (but not limited to):
- Cockburnspath, 2.4 km north of the Site;
 - Grantshouse, 2.2 km southeast of the Site;
 - Oldhamstocks, 4 km northwest of the Site;
 - Innerwick, 7.5 km northwest of the Site; and
 - Dunbar, 13 km northwest of the Site.
- 1.4.1.3 Economic activity is largely associated with the traditional farming and fishing sectors, with some tourism owing to the rural natural landscape and coastline, with pockets of caravan parks, camping sites and holiday homes. Winding minor roads provide local access, whilst the A1 Trunk Road and East Coast Main Line (ECML) railway route facilitate major transport connections and pass approximately 3.5 km, directly east of the site boundary.
- 1.4.1.4 The location and selection process for the Proposed Development site and alternative sites considered is included in **Chapter 2 (Site Design and Evolution)** in the accompanying EIAR. The site location is shown in **Appendix A1**.

1.5 The Proposed Development

- 1.5.1.1 **Chapter 3 (Development Description)** of the EIAR provides a detailed description of the Proposed Development. It consists of a solar photovoltaic (solar PV) energy generating station and co-located Battery Energy Storage System (BESS), which together are known as Bowshiel Solar Farm and BESS ('the Proposed Development').
- 1.5.1.2 The Proposed Development will have a generating capacity of up to 165MW (AC) from the solar PV modules (solar panels) while the BESS will have a generating capacity of up to 80MW.

² HM Government (2019) *The Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2024* [Online] Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2024/15/contents>. (Accessed 18/02/2025).

- 1.5.1.3 The Proposed Development will be connected to the consented Branxton Substation, which is to be constructed approximately 6.4 km to the north. The Transmission Network Operator (TSO) will be responsible for assessing, designing, and obtaining consent for the connection. It is anticipated that it will take the form of a combination of overground and underground cable following the public roads where possible.
- 1.5.1.4 The application for consent for the substation will be covered under a separate planning application, although a proposed substation location has been included in plans to date and consultation activities.
- 1.5.1.5 The Proposed Development will be operational for 40 years, after which it would be decommissioned, and the land returned to agricultural use.
- 1.5.1.6 Evolution of the design for the Proposed Development has been refined following an iterative and constraint-led process, which has included feedback from stakeholders. Where possible, potential negative impacts have been avoided or mitigated.
- 1.5.1.7 **Section 5** of this report provides a summary of how feedback from stakeholders informed changes to the Proposed Development.

1.6 Other Local Energy Development

- 1.6.1.1 There are a number of energy generation and associated infrastructure projects at different stages of development in the area. This includes the recently developed and operational onshore Crystal Rig windfarm and Aikengall 2 BESS, within 6 km west of the site. There are some smaller operational wind farms such as Quixwood Moor windfarm 2.5 km south of the site and Drone Hill windfarm located 3 km of the site.
- 1.6.1.2 The large Berwick Bank Offshore Windfarm is in advanced stages of planning and the operational Torness Nuclear Power Station is approximately 7.3 km northwest of the site.
- 1.6.1.3 As a result of these energy projects, the local community has become familiar with requests from developers to participate in consultation activities and attend drop-in events. The community has become organised around sharing information and facilitating engagement with developers, largely driven at a community council level.
- 1.6.1.4 Coordination amongst the community has included undertaking local resident surveys to inform consultation feedback in response to other projects. This existing local co-ordination was used to inform the Applicant's approach to community consultation and is described further in **Section 2** of this report.

2. METHODOLOGY

- 2.1.1.1 This section considers the pre-application consultation requirements and the Applicant's approach to meeting them.

2.2 Approach

- 2.2.1.1 The public consultation approach followed relevant guidance (**Section 2.3** below) whilst being tailored to the anticipated effects of the Proposed Development on local communities. The Applicant recognised the number of existing energy projects in the region and aimed to facilitate meaningful consultation and engagement without contributing to 'consultation fatigue'.
- 2.2.1.2 The Applicant was also aware of other consultations being undertaken within the local community during the pre-application stage. Two public drop-in events were held in line with the Scottish Government Energy Consents Unit (ECU) guidance, explained in **Section 2.3** below.
- 2.2.1.3 The Applicant ensured that the consultation zone and timeframes for public consultation on the Proposed Development was aligned with the consultation on the Applicant's nearby Springfield Solar Farm & BESS project. This was intended to reduce confusion and encourage participation in both consultations.

2.3 Guidance and Legislation

- 2.3.1.1 The pre-application consultation is non-statutory however the Applicant has followed the Scottish Government ECU Good Practice Guide (Applications under Section 36 and 37 of the Electricity Act 1989). This guidance explains that pre-application consultation with the public is 'considered good practice and applicants are encouraged to have meaningful engagement at the earliest possible stage'³. It also explains what the Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) report (this document) should contain, which is summarised in **Table 2.1** below.
- 2.3.1.2 Consideration was given to Planning Advice Note (PAN) 3/2010: Community Engagement. The note advises that everyone who is interested in future development of the community, village, town, or city they live in, should understand the planning process, to ensure successful community engagement. Developers are advised to involve residents at the earliest opportunity so that they can feel confident that engagement in the process has been meaningful⁴.
- 2.3.1.3 National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) (2023) also highlights the important role of effective engagement, and that engagement should be early, collaborative, meaningful and proportionate⁵.

³ Energy Consents Unit: Good Practice Guidance for Applications under Section 36 and 37 of the Electricity Act 1989 - February 2022

⁴ Planning Advice Note 3/2010: community engagement - gov.scot

⁵ Part 1 – A National Spatial Strategy for Scotland 2045 - National Planning Framework 4 - gov.scot

2.3.1.4 The Applicant has also had regard to Annex C from Planning Circular 3/2022: development management procedures⁶.

2.4 Environmental Impact Assessment

2.4.1.1 As the Proposed Development falls under Schedule 2 of the Electricity Work (Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)) (Scotland) Regulations 2017, its application is supported by an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR).

2.4.1.2 The EIA process identifies and assesses the potential environmental effects of the Proposed Development. It provides insights into the Proposed Development's design from an environmental standpoint and outlines actions to reduce and control the effects on the nearby environment. In accordance with this regulatory framework, stakeholder engagement and consultation must also adhere to legislative and policy requirements embedded within the EIA process.

2.5 Consultation Measures

2.5.1.1 **Table 2.1** provides an overview of the stages of consultation undertaken for the Proposed Development.

TABLE 2.1 SUMMARY OF PRE-APPLICATION CONSULTATION MEASURES

| CONSULTATION ACTIVITY | DETAILS | STEPS TAKEN BY THE APPLICANT |
|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| Pre-application consultation events | <ul style="list-style-type: none">The applicant is expected to hold at least two public consultation events prior to submitting the application. The final public event should be held at least 14 days after the first public event;The public events are to give members of the public the opportunity to make comments to the applicant as regards the proposed development; andAt the final public event, the applicant should provide feedback to members of the public in respect of comments received by the applicant as regards the Proposed Development. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Two rounds of public information events were held in August/September 2024 and March 2025, adhering to the minimum 14-day gap between events.During the second round of consultation, the public were shown how feedback during the first round of consultation was received and any modifications to the Proposed Development as a result of the process undertaken.Invitations to attend each consultation event was posted to 778 residential and business addresses. Invitations included a description of the Proposed Development, details of the consultation events, directions to |

⁶ 2. Pre-Application Phase - Planning circular 3/2022: development management procedures - gov.scot

| CONSULTATION ACTIVITY | DETAILS | STEPS TAKEN BY THE APPLICANT |
|---|---|---|
| | | access information online and a reminder of opportunities to make future representations. |
| Notice of the pre-application consultation events | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least seven days before holding a public event, the applicant should publish on the applicant's website and in a local newspaper circulating in the locality in which the proposed development is situated a notice containing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A description of, and the location of, the proposed development; Details as to where further information may be obtained concerning the proposed development; The date and place of the public event; A statement explaining how, and by when, persons wishing to make comments to the applicant relating to the proposal may do so; and A statement that comments made to the applicant are not representations to the Scottish Ministers and if the applicant submits an application there will be an opportunity to make representations on that application to the Scottish Ministers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In accordance with the guidance and taking account of local precedents for advertising energy developments, advertisements were published in three separate local and regional press outlets ahead of public drop-in events at each stage. These advertisement notices were made at least seven days before holding public events, and contained the information outlined in the guidance. An invitation to all local residential and commercial properties was also sent out ahead of the public drop-in events at each stage. |
| Details of the pre-application consultation events | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The applicant should provide the following details at the public event and publish these details on the applicant's website: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A description of the development to be carried out; A plan showing the outline of the site at which the development is to be carried out and sufficient to identify that site; and Details as to how the applicant may be contacted and corresponded with. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In accordance with the consultation guidance, Proposed Development details and contact information were provided at the events and on the Applicant's website. The sections below in this report provide examples of the advertising and where it was placed. |
| Content of public event and pre-application consultation report | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The applicant is expected to prepare a pre-application consultation report ("PAC Report") setting out what has been done to accord with the guidance set out above. The PAC Report should be submitted with the application. The PAC Report should contain the following information: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In accordance with the PAC report guidance, this report provides information on the consultation process and feedback comments received, and any resultant modifications to the |

| CONSULTATION ACTIVITY | DETAILS | STEPS TAKEN BY THE APPLICANT |
|-----------------------|---|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The dates on which and places where public events were held; – A description of any additional steps taken by the applicant to consult with members of the public regarding the development; – A list of bodies, groups and organisations who were consulted by the applicant and a description of how they were consulted; – A description of any materials sent to consultees and materials provided to those attending public events; – Copies of any visual presentation shown or displayed at a public event, and photographs of any display boards or models at public events; – Confirmation as to whether consultees and attendees at public events were informed that pre-application consultation does not remove the right or the potential need to comment on the final application once it is made to the Scottish Ministers; – A summary of the written responses to consultations and views raised at public events, including an indication of the number of written responses received and the number of persons who attended the public events; – An explanation of how the applicant took account of views raised during the pre-application consultation process; and – An explanation of how members of the public were given feedback on the applicant's consideration of the views raised during the pre-application consultation process. | <p>Proposed Development as part of the pre-application process undertaken.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It outlines the efforts undertaken by the Applicant to ensure that an inclusive programme of engagement and consultation activities has been undertaken to inform the local community and key stakeholders of the emerging proposals, and that this engagement complies with relevant requirements. |

Source: The Scottish Government, Energy Consents Unit, Good Practice Guidance for Applications under Section 36 and 37 of the Electricity Act 1989⁷. Updated July 2022.

⁷ Energy Consents Unit: Good Practice Guidance for Applications under Section 36 and 37 of the Electricity Act 1989 - February 2022

3. SUMMARY OF PRE-APPLICATION CONSULTATION

- 3.1.1.1 This section describes the activities undertaken and information made available to support and facilitate a meaningful and transparent pre-application consultation.

3.2 Stakeholder Identification

- 3.2.1.1 A list of stakeholders was compiled to be included in pre-application consultation and engagement. This included community representatives and specialist technical organisations and locally elected officials. A list of stakeholders consulted is included in **Appendix B1** and how this list was used is explained throughout this section.

3.3 Scoping

- 3.3.1.1 A request for a Scoping Opinion was made to the Scottish Government Energy Consents Unit (ECU) in September 2024, validated on November 7 2024 and a response was received on January 29, 2025. The response included feedback collated by the ECU from various stakeholders. The Scoping Report response was analysed and taken forward to inform the assessment and refinement of the design.

3.4 Meetings and Stakeholder Correspondence

- 3.4.1.1 The Applicant held meetings and exchanged information with stakeholders throughout pre-application. This included the following correspondence and meetings:
- A pre-application meeting was held with the ECU on July 4, 2024. The purpose was to introduce the Proposed Development and agree on the approach to scoping, including agreeing on contacting consultees as part of the scoping exercise.
 - Two meetings were held with representatives of Scottish Power Transmission (SPT) and representatives of the National Energy System Operator (NESO) on 9 July and 18 July 2024 to discuss grid connection agreements.
 - A public consultation event was held on August 27, 2024 at Cockburnspath Village Hall.
 - A letter was posted on 17 January 2025 to 778 residents and businesses within the consultation zone to provide a progress update, signpost stakeholders to FAQs and share plans for further consultation and the second public drop in event.
 - A public consultation event was held on March 12, 2025 at Cockburnspath Village Hall.
 - Ongoing meetings were held with SPT and NESO to provide project updates.
 - An in-person meeting was held with a local property/land owner on March 12, 2025 to discuss land boundaries and activities associated with nearby Bowshiel Wood.
- 3.4.1.2 Throughout the pre-application consultation phase, email and telephone enquiries received from stakeholders were recorded and responded to where appropriate. Examples of enquiries received included requests for the Applicant to provide copies of consultation materials or provide consultation information as email attachments or via post, which the Applicant arranged.

- 3.4.1.3 Some enquiries included specific questions and requests for further information on certain aspects of the project such as responding to questions about the scope of the assessment.
- 3.4.1.4 All correspondence was logged and considered by the Applicant and their team.

3.5 Consultation Zone

- 3.5.1.1 A consultation zone was defined, based on a 1 km buffer to the site and then extrapolated to the coast. This zone was used to send invitations and postal communications about the Proposed Development as well as explain ways to participate in consultations and provide feedback.
- 3.5.1.2 This zone sought to include the residential properties and businesses closest to the site and most likely impacted and interested in plans for the Proposed Development. The area also included areas between the site and the coast, which were understood to host activities associated with local tourism such as caravan parks. This area incorporated the nearest residential areas of Oldhamstocks and Cockburnspath.
- 3.5.1.3 This consultation zone was used for both the Proposed Development and the Applicant's nearby Springfield Solar Farm & BESS project to ensure that the community were receiving access to information about both projects equally, with clear explanation that the two Proposed Developments were being brought forward separately. A map showing the consultation zone can be found in **Appendix B2**.

3.6 Proposed Development Website

- 3.6.1.1 The Bowshiel Solar Farm project website⁸ was set up in July 2024 at www.bowshielsolarfarm.co.uk. The website continues to provide information about the Proposed Development, and throughout pre-application, it was maintained to keep up-to-date information about the Proposed Development, opportunities to engage with the project team and participate in public consultation, and the anticipated timeline and stages of the consenting process.
- 3.6.1.2 An accessible consultation platform was also integrated and clearly signposted within the Proposed Development website. This platform aimed to maximise ready access to consultation information and participate online. It included copies of all public drop in event information including banners and an information booklet as well as an interactive map of the site boundary, an online feedback form, details of in-person events, contact details, and freely downloadable versions of all information. The online consultation platform can be found at: <https://www.voltaliashareyourfeedback.co.uk/bowshiel-solar>⁹.
- 3.6.1.3 In October 2024, the Applicant also integrated the use of AssetChat, a bespoke artificial intelligence (AI) question and answer tool, onto the Proposed Development website. This was integrated so that visitors to the website could type in questions they had about the project, and the AI tool would generate a response based on the available information

⁸ Bowshiel Solar Farm Project [online] Available at: [Bowshiel Solar Farm Website - Solar Farm](http://www.bowshielsolarfarm.co.uk). (Accessed May 2025).

⁹ Bowshiel Solar Farm Project Consultation Platform [online] Available at [Bowshiel Solar Farm project | Voltalia Share Your Feedback](https://www.voltaliashareyourfeedback.co.uk/bowshiel-solar). (Accessed May 2025).

contained within the Scoping document. Between October 2024 and March 2025, AssetChat was asked 21 questions by visiting stakeholders about the Proposed Development.

- 3.6.1.4 In January 2024, the Applicant uploaded Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's) and responses to these questions on the online consultation platform. This included questions relating to site selection and choice of site location, as well as questions on visual impacts and consideration for impacts on local wildlife.
- 3.6.1.5 The website content and layout, as well as the consultation platform, can be seen in **Appendix C1 and C2**.

3.7 Public Drop-in Events

- 3.7.1.1 Two phases of public consultation were held including two public drop-in events (held on 28 August, 2024 and 13 March, 2025), both held at Cockburnspath Village Hall, which was central to the community and closest to the site.
- 3.7.1.2 The approach taken to notify stakeholders and raise awareness of the consultation is described further in this section of the report.
- 3.7.1.3 The first consultation was held in early stages of the Proposed Development, lasting 28 days and starting on 20 August 2024 and ending on 17 September 2024. A description of this phase of consultation is included in **Section 4** of this report.
- 3.7.1.4 A summary of how the consultation feedback was considered in refining plans for the Proposed Development is included in **Section 5** of this report.
- 3.7.1.5 A further consultation period was used to share feedback with the community on progress of the Proposed Development and how feedback had been considered. This started on 3 March 2025 and ended on 30 March 2025, lasting 28 days.

3.8 Email Notifications

- 3.8.1.1 The following list of stakeholders received emails between August 13 and August 19, 2024, providing access to the project website and inviting them to participate in the early consultation stage. This included an invitation to attend the public consultation on Wednesday 28 August 2024.
- 3.8.1.2 Ahead of consultation drop-in events, representatives of Cockburnspath and Cove Community Council and Grantshouse Community Council were invited to attend an hour before doors opened to the general public, to see the information and hold discussions with the team. This offer was taken up by some representatives.
- 3.8.1.3 Ahead of the second consultation drop in event, emails inviting the following stakeholders to attend and hour before doors opened were sent on Thursday 25 February 2025, to:
 - Paul McLennan (MSP for East Lothian)
 - Lynn Jardine (Councillor for Dunbar and East Linton)
 - Craig Hoy (MSP for South Scotland)

3.9 Postcard Invitations

- 3.9.1.1 Postcard invitations were distributed to 778 residential properties and business addresses in the defined consultation zone. A copy can be seen in **Appendix D1**.
- 3.9.1.2 The invitations were in line with Section 36 guidance and provided an overview on feedback mechanisms, consultation events and contact details.
- 3.9.1.3 The first invitation for stakeholders to access and participate in the early consultation and attend the first drop in event was sent by first class mail via Royal Mail on 12 August 2024. This gave 14 days' notice of the drop in event that took place on 28 August 2024.
- 3.9.1.4 A later resident invitation was sent by second class mail via Royal Mail on 19 February 2025. This gave more than 14 days' notice of the consultation event that took place on 12th March 2025.
- 3.9.1.5 Email notifications were sent to stakeholders identified in **Appendix A1** on 13 August 2024 for the first public consultation (see notification sent in **Appendix D2**) and on 25 February 2025 for the second public consultation (see notification sent in **Appendix G2**).

3.10 Press Advertisements

- 3.10.1.1 The chosen outlets, dates of advertisement and expected reach are provided in **Table 3.1**.

TABLE 3.1 ADVERTISEMENT AND REACH

| PRESS OUTLET | ADVERTISEMENT DATES | EXPECTED REACH |
|---|--|--|
| East Lothian Courier | Thursday 15 August and Thursday 20 February. | Average distribution of 6,340 copies per week, based on information from the advertising agency. |
| Border Telegraph | Wednesday 14 August and Wednesday 19 February. | Average distribution of 1,329 copies per week, based on information from the advertising agency. |
| The Berwickshire News and Berwickshire Advertiser | Thursday 15 August and Thursday 20 February. | Average distribution of 817 copies per week, based on information from the advertising agency. |

ERM, 2025.

- 3.10.1.2 Advertisements were posted at least seven days ahead of public information events.
- 3.10.1.3 The drop-in event for the Proposed Development was advertised alongside the advertisement for the Applicant's nearby Springfield Solar Farm & BESS project event. The events were held on consecutive days. Advertisements were distinct in visual identity to maintain differentiation whilst providing the same participation opportunity.
- 3.10.1.4 Copies of advertisements for the event in August 2024 can be found in **Appendix D3-D5** and for the event in March 2025 they can be found in **Appendix G3-G5**.

3.11 Social Media

- 3.11.1.1 The Applicant recognised that the local community of Cockburnspath and Cove uses social media to share information. Two posts were made about the Proposed Development and there was one re-post relating to the Applicant's nearby Springfield Solar Farm & BESS project. These were made via the Cockburnspath and Cove Village Facebook page.
- 3.11.1.2 Key sentiment included challenges to the efficiency of solar technology, concern for loss of agricultural land, fire risk and operational noise impacts of battery storage, visual impact on Ewieside Hill Fort (SM369), perception that consultation is not meaningful, recommendations around raising objections to local authorities, and an approach to coordinating opposition.

3.12 Feedback Mechanisms

- 3.12.1.1 Consultees were given an opportunity to provide feedback in several ways. These were explained consistently across all consultation materials and via the website. Mechanisms included:
- A downloadable feedback form from the Bowshiel Solar Farm website: www.bowshielsolarfarm.co.uk;
 - An online feedback form that could be submitted directly within the consultation platform;
 - Attachment or submission directly by email to: bowshielsolarfarm@erm.com;
 - Provide feedback verbally via freephone telephone: (+44) 0131 221 6862; and
 - Posting a copy free of charge, by writing 'Freepost BOWSHIEL SOLAR FARM' onto an envelope.
- 3.12.1.2 Attendees were encouraged to complete a feedback form at the community events before leaving; however, most feedback was provided via the online submission using the consultation platform.
- 3.12.1.3 A copy of the feedback form from early consultation in August/September 2024 can be found in **Appendix E1**.

4. PUBLIC DROP-IN EVENT AUGUST 2024

- 4.1.1.1 This section summarises the consultation held in the early stages of the Proposed Development. It provides an overview of the level of participation achieved and key themes from stakeholder feedback.

4.2 Overview

- 4.2.1.1 A consultation period was held over a four-week period, between 20 August and 17 September 2024, at an early development stage. This provided introductory information about the Proposed Development.
- 4.2.1.2 A drop in public consultation event was held in Cockburnspath Village Hall on 27 August 2024 between 3pm and 8pm.

4.3 Consultation Information

- 4.3.1.1 The materials provided to consultees with a description of the Proposed Development and an explanation of its early stages of design and how feedback would seek to refine plans moving forward. Information made available included:
- **Banners:** These introduced the Applicant and early plans for the Proposed Development, including maps of the site, information about planned surveys and the EIA process, a description of how consultees can provide feedback and an overview of the planning process. A copy of the banners can be found in **Appendix E2**.
 - **Project information booklet:** This contained the same introductory information as the banners, in a format that could be taken away. A copy of the booklet can be found in **Appendix E3**.
 - **Printed large scale printed site layout and environmental constraints map:** Showing the location of the site and notable local environmental designations and assets. A copy can be found in **Appendix E4**.
- 4.3.1.2 All consultation materials were also made available via the project website and consultation platform for those unable to attend the events. Information was also kept available once the consultation had closed.

4.4 Participation

- 4.4.1.1 During the four-week consultation period, 46 individuals attended the public drop-in event. One feedback form was collected at the event, four feedback forms were submitted online and three were received by freepost. In addition to feedback forms, three responses were made by email and are included in this consideration for completeness.

4.5 Online Engagement Analytics

- 4.5.1.1 In total, 75 visits were made to the Bowshiel Solar Farm project consultation platform during the consultation period. Traffic was highest during the first week of the consultation launch and towards the last week of the consultation period, typically with less than five visits per

day. The high peaks of between 20 and 30 visits per day correspond with social media reminders during the final days of the consultation.

- 4.5.1.2 The greatest route of traffic to the site (53 visits) was generated through direct access such as typing the platform URL into a search engine. These are likely the visitors who received invitations via postcard to access the platform and attended the in-person consultation drop-in event. 12 people accessed the platform via referrals which is likely to be from QR codes accessed from the drop-in event and could also be via re-direction from third party sites.

4.6 Feedback Received – Feedback Form

- 4.6.1.1 Eight feedback forms were completed for the Bowshiel Solar Farm project. Due to the small number of respondents, some of whom are from the same household, the feedback may not accurately reflect the community's feelings toward the project.
- 4.6.1.2 Four feedback forms were supportive of the project, two were not supportive and two were neutral / not sure yet. Some common themes included:
- Perception that East Lothian and neighbouring areas are hosting many renewable energy projects;
 - Concerns for impacts on agricultural land and landscape; and,
 - Concern for impacts from construction traffic.
- 4.6.1.3 The consultation feedback form can be found in **Appendix E1**.

4.7 Verbal Feedback – In-Person Event

- 4.7.1.1 During the drop-in event, attendees were encouraged to provide feedback using the consultation forms provided. The team also captured feedback and questions raised during the event from the project team's engagement with the attendees.
- 4.7.1.2 46 individuals attended the in-person event. At the in-person event, verbal feedback was provided, which was recorded by the team to deliver a more cohesive community view of the Bowshiel Solar Farm project. Key themes and requests made were:
- 4.7.1.3 A thematic summary of all verbal feedback is included in **Table 4.1**, identifying concerns raised and questions asked.

TABLE 4.1 THEMATIC VERBAL CONSULTATION FEEDBACK

| TOPIC | CONSULTATION FEEDBACK – CONCERNS AND QUESTIONS |
|---|---|
| Water Resources and Flood Risk (including drainage) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During large spells of rain there can be sitting water on the A1 south of the Bowshiel Solar Farm project site. • Consultees raised that they'd like confirmation on how the project will manage water run-off and divert water away – ideally to the west away from the A1. |

| TOPIC | CONSULTATION FEEDBACK – CONCERNS AND QUESTIONS |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Visual Impacts | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> When travelling north along the A1, the Bowshiel Wood is a lower topography than where the panels will be. Consultees raised concerns around glint and glare for drivers. |
| Traffic Management | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Traffic issues and poor state of existing A1 trunk road. |
| Agriculture | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Loss of agricultural land necessary for food security. |
| Local Development | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residents raised concern about the number of development pressures in the general locality, which were primarily energy-related development and is overwhelming for some. |
| Stakeholder History | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feedback that residents had mixed experiences with developers including some bad experiences with wind farm developers. |
| Community and local benefit | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Securing community benefit and mechanisms to deliver as well as and opportunities for locals. Consultees suggested that it was disappointing that electricity generated is exported to the grid for use elsewhere. |
| Ecology | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concern for ecological impacts including all types of flora and fauna and perception that grass won't grow back beneath arrays. |
| Operational Noise (Solar and BESS) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concerns over noise through experience with wind farm development. |
| Health and Safety | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concern around risk of fire from Battery storage. There is a perception that this is a widely established concern with BESS projects. |
| Operation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lifespan of solar technology and maintenance requirement during operation. |
| Project Viability | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scepticism over the solar yield and viability of solar generation in eastern Scotland. |

4.8 Feedback on Community Benefits

4.8.1.1 In response to question 5, “Do you have any ideas or suggestions for how Valtalia can help provide benefits and opportunities for the local community?” Consultees provided feedback and suggestions in relation to Bowshiel Solar Farm project. These included:

- Link in/join the new Cockburnspath & Cove fund;
- Provide opportunities for local employment;
- Possibility for tours seasonally/several per annum;
- Improve local energy security;

- Financial benefits to decrease energy bills;
- Opportunities to offer jobs to the young;
- Funding local projects that the whole community would benefit from;
- Funding for local children regarding playpark provisions; and,
- Providing battery storage in the village (Cockburnspath and Cove).

5. CONSIDERATION OF FEEDBACK

- 5.1.1.1 This section provides a summary of how feedback from consultation was used to refine the site layout. This section illustrates how stakeholders were informed of these changes and how they could access further information.

5.2 Overview

- 5.2.1.1 This section describes the changes that were made based on feedback and how this was shared with stakeholders.

5.3 Changes Made

- 5.3.1.1 Feedback was used to further refine the layout of the Proposed Development. A design review workshop was held to review feedback received from the early consultation, as well as feedback collected from discussions with nearby residents and findings from ongoing technical studies and surveys. This also considered feedback received on the Scoping Report.
- 5.3.1.2 Changes made to the site layout as a result of feedback included:
- Changed the proposed location of the substation to a lower lying area to reduce potential impacts on the setting of a Scheduled Monument.
 - Areas where solar panels have been removed in fields 12 and 14 to the north and west.
 - The inclusion of an offset between solar panels and the Core Path through Bowshiel Farm towards the Southern Uplands Way.
- 5.3.1.3 Revisions to the layout included identifying areas for potential enhancement, such as wildflower planting, and ensuring the area beneath the panels remains suitable for grass growth and supports biodiversity.

5.4 Sharing Feedback

- 5.4.1.1 As part of the continued engagement efforts, the Applicant took steps to ensure that stakeholders were kept informed of updates throughout the pre-application process:
- 5.4.1.2 Following the first round of consultation, a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) section was uploaded to the Proposed Development's website to respond to stakeholder's questions and concerns that were heard. These are included in **Appendix F1**.
- 5.4.1.3 A letter was posted on 17 January 2025 to 778 residents and businesses within the consultation zone to provide a progress update, signpost stakeholders to FAQs and share plans for further consultation and the second public drop in event. A copy is included in **Appendix F2**.

5.5 Public Drop-in Event March 2025

- 5.5.1.1 The Applicant held a further phase of public consultation in March 2024 and held a drop-in event in Cockburnspath Village Hall on 12 March 2025 between 3pm and 8pm. 18 individuals attended the event.
- 5.5.1.2 Postcard invitations were distributed to 778 residential properties and business addresses (**Appendix G1**), email notifications were sent to stakeholders listed in **Appendix A** (Email copy in **Appendix G2**) and press notifications were made using the same three outlets as the first round of consultation (**Appendix G3-G5**).
- 5.5.1.3 The invitations were in line with Section 36 guidance and provided an overview on feedback mechanisms, consultation events and contact details.

5.6 Consultation Materials

- 5.6.1.1 The consultation materials responded to feedback received to date and shared with the Applicant and also considered responses to the Scoping Report.
- 5.6.1.2 The Applicant focused on providing information that responded to feedback received and described clearly the changes made to the site layout and why. This included:
 - 1. **Consultation 'what you told us, how we considered this' booklet:** This included a summary of the key themes emerging and how this was being considered, an update on how the site has changed (including a revised layout). It explained how feedback had influenced the revised site layout, including feedback from scoping responses had informed the EIA, such as the inclusion of a socio-economic assessment. A copy can be found in **Appendix H1**.
 - 2. **Site layout map annotated with changes made:** Displaying changes made to the Proposed Development design, as well as environmental mitigation measures. A copy can be found in **Appendix H2**.
 - 3. **Banners:** These included further detail around key areas of feedback such as the use of perimeter fencing and CCTV. Photographs from the Applicants other developments were used to provide a realistic depiction of these aspects. A banner provided update on the next steps for the planning process and a reminder of the opportunity for stakeholders to provide further representation. Another banner provided further explanation around the Applicant's commitment to working with the community to maximise community benefits, including requesting continued feedback on suggestions for maximising this to best meet local community needs. A copy can be found in **Appendix H3**.
 - 4. **Plans showing the Zones of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV):** These were presented to show the locations from which the BESS and substation, and the solar panel areas would be visible. Copies can be found in **Appendix H4 and H5**.

5.7 Further Feedback

- 5.7.1.1 This consultation and drop in event aimed to raise awareness of the changes made as a result of feedback and gather perceptions on whether these changes were an improvement.
- 5.7.1.2 Feedback was requested on the following themes:

- Recognition of changes made to the Proposed Development and whether these were an improvement;
 - Awareness around further opportunity to raise feedback to Scottish Ministers; and
 - Further suggestions for how the Applicant can work with and contribute to the local community.
- 5.7.1.3 The consultation feedback form can be found in **Appendix H6**.
- 5.7.1.4 Opportunity was also taken at the drop-in event to collect further information about access and land use associated with the site for recreational use, by asking attendees to annotate a large site map.

5.8 Awareness of Project Updates

- 5.8.1.1 While only one response was received to the consultation, which was provided using the online consultation feedback form, there were 97 visitors to the online consultation platform between March 3 and March 30, 2025. Of the 97 visitors, 47 were made aware of the project and 18 became informed through visiting multiple pages and downloading consultation documents.
- 5.8.1.2 The one response using the feedback form, provided a neutral response to the statement in Q1 which was *"The Bowshiel Solar Farm project plans have evolved since the first consultation."*
- 5.8.1.3 As a response to Question 2, *"The communities feedback has been used to inform the project so far"*, the response was neutral.
- 5.8.1.4 In response to Question 3, *"The changes made to the Bowshiel Solar Farm project following the first consultation are an improvement"*, the response was neutral.
- 5.8.1.5 Feedback heard at the second public event was mostly related to the Proposed Development's siting within a rural location and concerns about BESS and fire risk.

5.9 Further design changes

- 5.9.1.1 Following consideration of further feedback during the second consultation and ongoing discussions with stakeholders, further design changes were made to the site layout and are reflected in the accompanying EIAR.
- 5.9.1.2 These changes included:
- The number of BESS units was reduced to 40 to provide a generating capacity of up to 80MW. This reduction also resulted in a reduction in the number of associated items of electrical infrastructure required in the BESS compound; and
 - Several small changes were made to the location of solar panels in order to avoid, where possible, the placement of infrastructure within vegetated areas close to waterways.
- 5.9.1.3 A full description of how the Proposed Development has evolved is included in **Chapter 2 Site Design and Evolution** of the accompanying EIAR.

6. SUMMARY

- 6.1.1.1 The Applicant has carried out an accessible pre-application consultation in respect of the Proposed Development, primarily focused on the local community but also including consultation with other key stakeholders.
- 6.1.1.2 The approach was proportionate to the Proposed Development and gave stakeholders multiple ways to access information and provide feedback. This is in accordance with national policy and guidance.
- 6.1.1.3 The Applicant recognised that there was a level of coordination amongst the community and other energy projects in the area.
- 6.1.1.4 The consultation included advertisement using targeted emails and through postcards to 778 residential and business addresses, a press advertisement in at least one local newspaper (including three press outlets).
- 6.1.1.5 The level of participation and engagement in the pre-application stage was good. This included 64 attendees at the two drop-in events. Despite good turnout at public events and good engagement online (including downloads of consultation materials), a total of nine consultation responses were received throughout the pre-application stage.
- 6.1.1.6 The feedback received was considered in the EIA and iterative design processes for the Proposed Development. This included careful consideration of stakeholder response to the PAC process and engagement with neighbours of the Proposed Development.
- 6.1.1.7 The key themes of the consultation relate to choice of site location, ecology and biodiversity, heritage setting, traffic and transport, landscape and visual impacts. **Section 5** above sets out how the Applicant considered the feedback and took this into account.
- 6.1.1.8 How the Proposed Development evolved during the pre-application process was shared and described to the local community, including tailored materials such as large site layout plans with annotations of changes made and information booklets to describe consideration thematically of feedback received and how it informed design evolution and updates to the assessment.

7. NEXT STEPS

- 7.1.1.1 This report is part of the Applicant's request for permission to construct and operate the Proposed Development. It has been submitted to Scottish Ministers under section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989.
- 7.1.1.2 The Applicant has a duty to undertake statutory publication of the EIAR in accordance with Part 5 of the Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 and the Electricity (Applications for Consent) Regulations 1990. A notice will be published as follows:
- On the Bowshiel Solar Farm & BESS Proposed Development website;
 - In the Scotsman;
 - In the Edinburgh Gazette; and
 - In the Border Telegraph for two successive weeks;
- 7.1.1.3 In addition, the Applicant is undertaking the following:
- Making available physical copies of the Non-Technical Summary (NTS) of the EIAR via email to local community councils and offering to provide the entire application via USB on request (free of charge).
 - Make physical copies of the EIAR available for inspection at Cockburnspath Village Hall and Dunbar Library.
 - Communicate with the community to explain where they can access the application documents and how they can make further representation to the ECU.

7.2 Contact Information

- 7.2.1.1 The Applicant is committed to continued engagement with the local community, host local authority, and key stakeholders following the submission of the Application, as well as throughout the construction and operation of the Proposed Development.
- 7.2.1.2 The Applicant will maintain its dedicated email address (Bowshiel@votalia.com) to receive comments about the Proposed Development and will maintain ongoing contact with local residents, community groups and the community council at their request.
- 7.2.1.3 The Applicant will continue to engage with the local community where appropriate, as well as upholding its commitment to participate in local groups and forums. The Applicant will also maintain an open door for *ad hoc* questions and continue to maintain its project website with up-to-date information.

BOWSHIEL PRE-APPLICATION CONSULTATION REPORT: LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX A SITE LOCATION

A1 – SITE LOCATION

APPENDIX B CONSULTEES

B1 – LIST OF CONSULTEES

B2 – CONSULTATION ZONE

APPENDIX C WEBSITE

C1 – PROJECT WEBSITE

C2 – CONSULTATION PAGE

APPENDIX D ROUND ONE: PRESS ADVERTISEMENTS

D1 – CONSULTATION POSTCARD ISSUED TO LOCAL HOUSEHOLDS AND PREMISES

D2 – COPY OF NOTIFICATION EMAIL

D3 – EAST LOTHIAN COURIER 15 AUGUST

D4 – THE BORDER TELEGRAPH 14 AUGUST

D5 – THE BERWICKSHIRE NEWS 15 AUGUST

APPENDIX E ROUND ONE: CONSULTATION MATERIALS

E1 – FEEDBACK FORM

E2 – CONSULTATION BANNERS

E3 – PROJECT INFORMATION BOOKLET

E4 – SITE LAYOUT & KEY CONSTRAINTS

APPENDIX F

COMMUNICATION FOLLOWING CONSULTATION

F1 – FAQ's

F2 – JANUARY PROJECT UPDATE LETTER

APPENDIX G

ROUND TWO: NOTICES AND PRESS

G1 – CONSULTATION POSTCARD ISSUED TO LOCAL HOUSEHOLDS AND PREMISES

G2 – COPY OF NOTIFICATION EMAIL

G3 – EAST Lothian Courier 20 February

G4 – The Border Telegraph 19 February

G5 – The Berwickshire News 20 February

APPENDIX H

ROUND TWO: CONSULTATION MATERIALS

H1 – CONSULTATION BOOKLET

H2 – SITE LAYOUT WITH CHANGES FOLLOWING THE FIRST CONSULTATION

H3 – CONSULTATION BANNERS

H4 – ZTV MAP OF WOODLAND & SETTLEMENTS - BESS AND SUBSTATION

H5 – ZTV MAP OF WOODLAND & SETTLEMENTS - PANEL AREAS

H6 – FEEDBACK FORM