
BLACKHILLOCK 349 MW BESS

COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING PLAN

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REFERENCES

- A - Blackhillock Flexpower Ltd Planning pre-application
- B - National Planning Framework 4, Part 2 - National Planning Policy, 13 February 2023
- C - Moray Community Wealth Building Strategy 2024
- D - Keith Green Energy & Infrastructure Framework, November 2023
- E - Moray Local Development Plan - Community Wealth Building Planning Guidance

INTRODUCTION

1. The following document outlines how Blackhillock Flexpower Ltd intends to align the development of the Blackhillock site with Moray's Community Wealth Building (CWB) plan and support its aims. Blackhillock is a 349 MW battery energy storage system (BESS) project based in Aberdeenshire, Scotland on cultivated arable land at Gibston Farm, Blackhillock, Keith, AB55 5YN. This document is written in support of the planning application to be submitted to the ECU for consideration.

Background

2. The National Planning Framework is a long-term spatial plan for Scotland with an outlook to 2045. Scotland's 4th National Planning Framework (NPF4) [Ref B] was adopted in February 2023, within this framework community wealth building (CWB) is addressed under 'Productive Places' with policy 25 stating:

a) Development proposals which contribute to local or regional community wealth building strategies and are consistent with local economic priorities will be supported. This could include for example improving community resilience and reducing inequalities; increasing spending within communities; ensuring the use of local supply chains and services; local job creation; supporting community led proposals, including creation of new local firms and enabling community led ownership of buildings and assets.

b) Development proposals linked to community ownership and management of land will be supported.

3. CWB is an economic development approach which aims to retain wealth within the local economy and place increased control in the hands of local people. The Moray Community Wealth Building Strategy 2024 [Ref C] has been tailored specifically to the needs of the Moray economy and community. Moray's CWB plan is based around five core principles that are designed to enable and unleash the potential of the local economy, the aim for each area is detailed below:

a. Spending: Embed a local first approach to procurement within Moray where more wealth is retained locally, benefitting our local workforce and reducing our carbon footprint.

b. Workforce: Through investing in our current and future workforce, we want to remove barriers to employment by providing learning and skills development opportunities, increase access to career pathways and ensure our workforce are paid a fair wage.

c. Inclusive Ownership: Support small businesses, community organisations, social enterprises, and co-operatives to have a greater stake in the economy, with increased ownership and control of assets, to retain and circulate wealth within our communities.

d. Land and Property: We will work with key departments within Moray Council and our anchor partners to ensure communities maximise benefit and generate wealth from local land and property.

e. Finance: Capitalise on opportunities for public and community investment in local development proposals.

4. The site at Blackhillock falls within the Keith Renewable Projects Zone, as outlined in Ref D. The development framework within this strategy states that:

Any new development must support Keith and its residents and the local economy, existing businesses & employment/skills development as outlined in the Community Wealth Building Strategy and Guidance by Moray Council. This guidance supports the delivery of NPF4 Policy 25 which relates to Productive Places (Community Wealth Building) policy 11 Energy which seeks to maximise net economic benefits and LDP policy DP9 Renewable Energy. Any proposed development is to identify how it supports the local economy including socio-economic benefits.

PLAN

5. This section is broken down into the headings directed in the Planning Guidance [Ref E]. In accordance with the guidance the following definitions are adopted; a “local person” is a person with a permanent address in the Moray Council administrative area and a “local business” means a business based in, or having a significant permanent physical presence in Moray. The “North and North East Scotland” refers to the Moray, Highland, Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City administrative boundaries.
6. For the purposes of this plan the project is broken into three phases: planning, construction and operation.

Improving community resilience, reducing inequalities and maximising local job creation

7. During the construction phase of the proposed 349MW BESS site it is anticipated that approximately one hundred temporary employment opportunities will be created and up to four permanent positions will be required during the operation. The construction phase is expected to last 18 months. The site has a 25-year operational phase .
8. The development of a BESS site involves highly skilled individuals, typically sourced internationally, particularly during the planning, installation and commissioning of equipment. There are also opportunities, some of which are listed below, which could lead to significant local employment:

- a. construction workers,
- b. landscapers,
- c. cleaners,
- d. plant operators,
- e. administrators,
- f. drivers.

There is no maximum threshold to the number of positions sought from the local population and Blackhillock Flexpower Ltd intends to give local people equal opportunity to apply for all jobs relating to the construction and operation of the site. The best means of advertising jobs locally will be discussed with the Moray Business Gateway Adviser but may include a local recruiting event and web resource to enable advertisement and applications.

- 9. Early engagement with DYW Moray will be sought to identify potential ways in which the development of the Blackhillock site can provide opportunities for the local young workforce. For example, exploring the possibility of work related learning experience, school partnering and recruiting apprentices.
- 10. Should it not be feasible for the project to support local education in this way, other initiatives with community benefit shall be considered. Blackhillock Flexpower Ltd shall engage with tsiMoray to identify suitable, potential local schemes/projects/charities.

Increasing spending within communities and ensuring the maximum use of local supply chains and services

- 11. The estimated total spend for each phase, planning, construction and operation, is £525 thousand (total) for planning , £250 million (total) for construction, and an estimated £4.8 million (annual operations cost) during the operational phase.
- 12. Local and national suppliers utilised, to date, during planning phase (pre-development):
 - a. Black Hill Ecology Ltd, Aberdeen - conducted an ecological site survey
 - b. Kaya Consulting Ltd, Edinburgh - conducted flood risk assessments
 - c. DRM Consulting Engineers, Edinburgh - conducted geotechnical survey
 - d. AOC Archaeology Group, Midlothian - conducted an Heritage Impact Assessment
 - e. Womble Bond Dickinson (UK) LLP, Edinburgh - provided legal services
 - f. Scott Hobbs Planning, Edinburgh - provision of planning services
- 13. For the duration of the construction phase the site and its employees will require welfare support as suggested below, but not limited to;
 - a. catering,
 - b. accommodation,
 - c. ablutions,

- d. cleaning,
 - e. transportation of personnel,
 - f. temporary site services i.e. fuel, water, power,
 - g. welfare facilities.
14. Whilst the BESS development will require highly specialist equipment that cannot be sourced locally, there is also a significant amount of resource that may be available locally, for example;
- a. construction materials such as aggregate, cement, fencing,
 - b. groundworks,
 - c. landscaping,
 - d. haulage,
 - e. plant hire,
 - f. site offices,
 - g. security; fencing, lighting, CCTV.
15. Contracts will not be tendered for the construction phase until after planning permission has been granted, so it is not possible at this stage to list details of local suppliers. However, it is planned to engage with local suppliers and contractors through a local meet the buyer event organised with the assistance of Moray Business Gateway, in order to raise awareness of the development and encourage local businesses to tender for the relevant works. Blackhillock Flexpower Ltd would look to engage with those suppliers and contractors, that are compliant with industry standard prerequisites, within a 5 km radius of the site, this includes the totality of Keith town.
16. Once operational the site will be unmanned, with site visits required for operation and maintenance purposes. During this phase the following, non-exhaustive list, of services are likely to be sought;
- a. landscape maintenance,
 - b. transport, accommodation and catering relating to visits.

Creation of new local firms

17. As identified in the previous section there are a wealth of areas of opportunity, particularly in support of the construction and operation phases, where local business could meet the demand. In the event that such local businesses do not exist or require significant growth, Blackhillock Flexpower Ltd may look to assist local businesses to form or expand in order to deliver the required services. Again, engagement for this would be coordinated through and follow on from a meet the buyer event and any assistance would be considered on a case-by-case basis for genuine proposals.

Enabling community ownership of buildings and infrastructure

18. Blackhillock Flexpower Ltd are aware of a number of successful green energy shared ownership projects within Scotland and will look to engage with Community

Energy Moray to understand potential demand and ownership structures. If, after consultation, a lack of demand or feasibility for community ownership is found, other community benefit mechanisms will be explored, primarily through contact with tsiMoray.

MONITORING

19. Subject to planning conditions, the plan as outlined above, will be monitored and reviewed upon completion of the construction phase, whereby a statement of the plan's outcomes and achievements will be drafted for Moray Council. Further monitoring will be conducted as directed.

CONCLUSION

20. This Community Wealth Building plan has been prepared in support of the planning application for the construction and operation of a 349 MW BESS at Gibston Farm, Blackhillock, as required by the adopted national and local planning policy aforementioned in the introduction section of this document.
21. The intention of this plan is to ensure that the BESS site at Blackhillock is developed in line with the principles of community wealth building, ensuring the potential to benefit the local community is enacted to the fullest possible extent.
22. Blackhillock Flexpower Ltd will continue to work with the Strategic Planning and Development section of Moray Council to realise the plan as outlined above.