

## **East Lammermuir Community Council – Meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2023**

### **Questions to SP Energy Networks**

- *Can you publish a map and put on Sharepoint so the public can have access to a common map and work schedule?*

The creation of a shared map of all local energy projects will require collaboration between companies involved in all development projects in the local area. SP Energy Networks is participating in collaborative work regarding this.

- *Will you be blasting? Will you need to remove slate?*

SP Energy Networks' Engineers have confirmed that the bedrock in the relevant area is composed of highly weathered weak sandstone and mudstone, which indicates that it will be able to be excavated and removed by a mechanical excavator, and therefore no blasting will be required. While there may be localized areas of intact rock which is stronger, harder and more difficult to remove, the engineering team expects that an excavator will still be able to break it out sufficiently for construction purposes.

- *What is the total capacity of Branxton and what will be the total capacity once the work is complete? Will it be able to take 8-9GWs?*

Capacity is not a single number that we can provide, this is determined by the kind of development (demand or generation) and configuration of network around Branxton. Currently we have 5 developments contracted to connect but this does not mean we cannot connect anymore, this depends on the size and type of development and running arrangements. Any new requests for connection will go through a technical and economic assessment to provide the most efficient solution.

- *What is the likelihood of the haul road's use being extended for use because of other developments coming along?*

In order to site the temporary haul road, SP Energy Networks required agreement from all landowners – any future use of it for other purposes would require the consent and agreement of the relevant landowners.

- *How safe will the junctions be? What can be done to improve the A junctions and is there scope for improved lighting at the junctions?*

We received significant feedback from the community during our consultation regarding the safety of the junctions regarding vehicle movements, with a particular focus on vulnerable road users. We will continue to consider options to increase safety, in dialogue with affected residents, as preparation for the works continues.

- *What more can be done for vulnerable road users? Can pathways be created to take them off the roads?*

We received significant feedback from the community during our consultation regarding the safety of the junctions regarding vehicle movements, with a particular focus on vulnerable road users. We have investigated ways to improve the safety of the entrance to the access road during the construction works, and are liaising with the relevant landowner regarding off-road paths for pedestrians. A plan for changes is contained with the Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) report, which is contained within the planning application.

— *Will there be bunding and wouldn't that cut down noise on the haul loads?*

We will investigate this further as planning for the construction works takes place.

— *Why not build Branxton as small as possible?*

SP Energy Networks' policy is to build substations with some room for expansion, to account for potential changes in demand over the lifetime of the installation. This is necessary due to SP Energy Networks' license obligations, which require it to meet connection requests from other developers, meaning that it is possible that future expansion of the substation may be an economic and efficient solution in future. Building with that potential future capacity in mind therefore reduces the likelihood of further disruption to the community in future, as well as being the most efficient use of resources for SP Energy Networks. We understand the visual impact of the substation, and presented a revised design for planning permission in order to account for this.

— *Why can't Torness be used?*

The demands of the EGL1 project as a whole, in addition to anticipated future developments in renewable energy, mean that existing cable installations at Torness cannot be used without the construction of additional grid infrastructure.

— *Can the haul roads be left as active travel routes? Can you develop a scheme to keep the haul roads and save money re reinstatement? Why reinstate back to agricultural use?*

Alternative future uses for the temporary haul road were not contained within the initial planning application as SP Energy Networks' agreement with the landowners only covers its temporary construction and use for the works at Branxton. Any other use would be contingent on agreement from the relevant landowners as well as separate planning engagement with East Lothian Council.

— *Concern that the noise assessment does not fully account for human hearing at DBA*

We will continue to consider the impact of noise caused by the construction works, having already considered noise pollution in the Environmental Impact Assessment, conducted as part of the planning application.

— *Can the consultation period be extended?*

SP Energy Networks has agreed to an extension of the consultation period to enable full responses from relevant stakeholders to East Lothian Council.

— *Can the Bilsdean junction be changed to enable local traffic to be channeled down to Cockburnspath?*

SP Energy Networks understand that local communities are concerned with the traffic impact of construction works at Branxton and are committed to addressing these through the planning process, including through creating a temporary haul road to remove traffic from existing roads. While we understand that there are complex issues surrounding the usage of certain junctions, efforts to address them are limited by the need to preserve the existing road alignment, among other design considerations. We will continue to liaise with the local community regarding the planned works in order to minimise disruption and uphold the highest safety standards for all road users.