

Heckington Fen Solar Park

EN010123

Appendix 3 Non-Statutory Consultation – Publicising the Consultation

Applicant: Ecotricity (Heck Fen Solar) Limited

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February 2023



CONSULTATION REPORT – APPENDIX 3 – NON- STATUTORY CONSULTATION – PUBLICISING THE CONSULTATION

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3.1 Examples of social media advertising

Dale Vince ✓
17 Oct 2021 · 🌐

We've recently launched plans to build a very big solar project - or Sun Park as we prefer to call them.

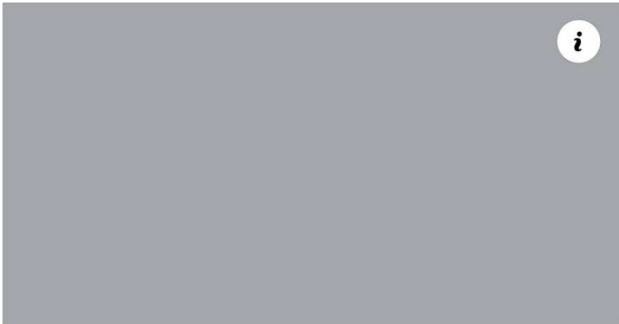
On the site of a consented Wind Park - which is being blocked by the MOD - at 500MW it could be one of the biggest in Britain and will generate enough clean energy every year to power 100k homes. And save 75k tonnes of CO2.

We're out to consultation now before submitting for planning permission in about 12 months time., with any luck.

We'll creat new habitats in and around the arrays of panels - and we'll use the latest 'bi facial' tech - these panels generate electricity from the sun hitting the top surface and also from the reflected light (from the ground) hitting the bottom surface.

If we can combine this with energy storage on site we'll have a sizeable renewable energy power plant to support the grid with.

More details here;



Heckington Fen Solar Park

👍❤️ 856 110 comments 36 shares

👍 Like 💬 Comment ➦ Share

ecotricity **Ecotricity** ✓
18 Oct 2021 · 🌐

We've recently written to local residents at Heckington Fen about our plans for a new sun park, which could be one of the largest in Britain. We're currently at the pre-planning stage and hope to be submitting for planning permission in 12 months.

Check out [Dale](#)'s post below 🙌

Dale Vince ✓
17 Oct 2021 · 🌐

We've recently launched plans to build a very big solar project - or Sun Park as we prefer... See more

3.2 Media engagement with local and regional news outlet – press release

Ecotricity reveals plans for new solar park near Heckington

Community invited to have their say on project that could power 100,000 homes

Ecotricity – the world’s first green energy company, has unveiled its early-stage plans for a new solar farm at Heckington Fen, that could power more than 100,000 homes with renewable energy and locals are invited to attend one of a series of online presentations about its plans.

The Heckington Fen Solar Park would be situated north of the A17 between Sleaford and Boston, near the village of Heckington.

Ecotricity – the Gloucestershire based green energy firm has bought forward the proposal, which would see the solar park replace existing plans for a wind park application – which was approved by the Secretary of State in 2013. The wind turbines have not been built – due to Ministry of Defence radar concerns. Instead, the company is progressing plans for solar generation on the site to create clean, renewable energy that will contribute to the UK’s net zero targets. If the solar park is approved and built, the site will not be used for wind turbines.

If built, the solar park is expected to have an installed capacity of around 500 megawatts – which could generate enough renewable electricity for more than 100,000 homes a year and annually prevent in the order of 75,000 tonnes of harmful CO₂ emissions.

Due to the size of the development, Ecotricity will need to make an application to the government for approval, this is likely to happen in early 2023.

Dale Vince, Founder of Ecotricity said:

“We all need to do what we can to fight the climate crisis, and help our country reach its net zero targets. With no realistic prospect of a solution to the MOD radar issue in the short to medium term, we want to put this location to good use – generating renewable power for more than 100,000 homes.

We’re still at the very early stages of developing our proposals and want to start our conversations with local communities to understanding their views and listen to their ideas. If you want to find out more – join one of our online events or get in touch.

“To join one of the events, or to simply get in contact, you can do so using the following details:

Email: heckingtonfensolar@ecotricity.co.uk

Phone: 0800 151 0784

Post: Freepost ECOTRICITY SOLAR PARK

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

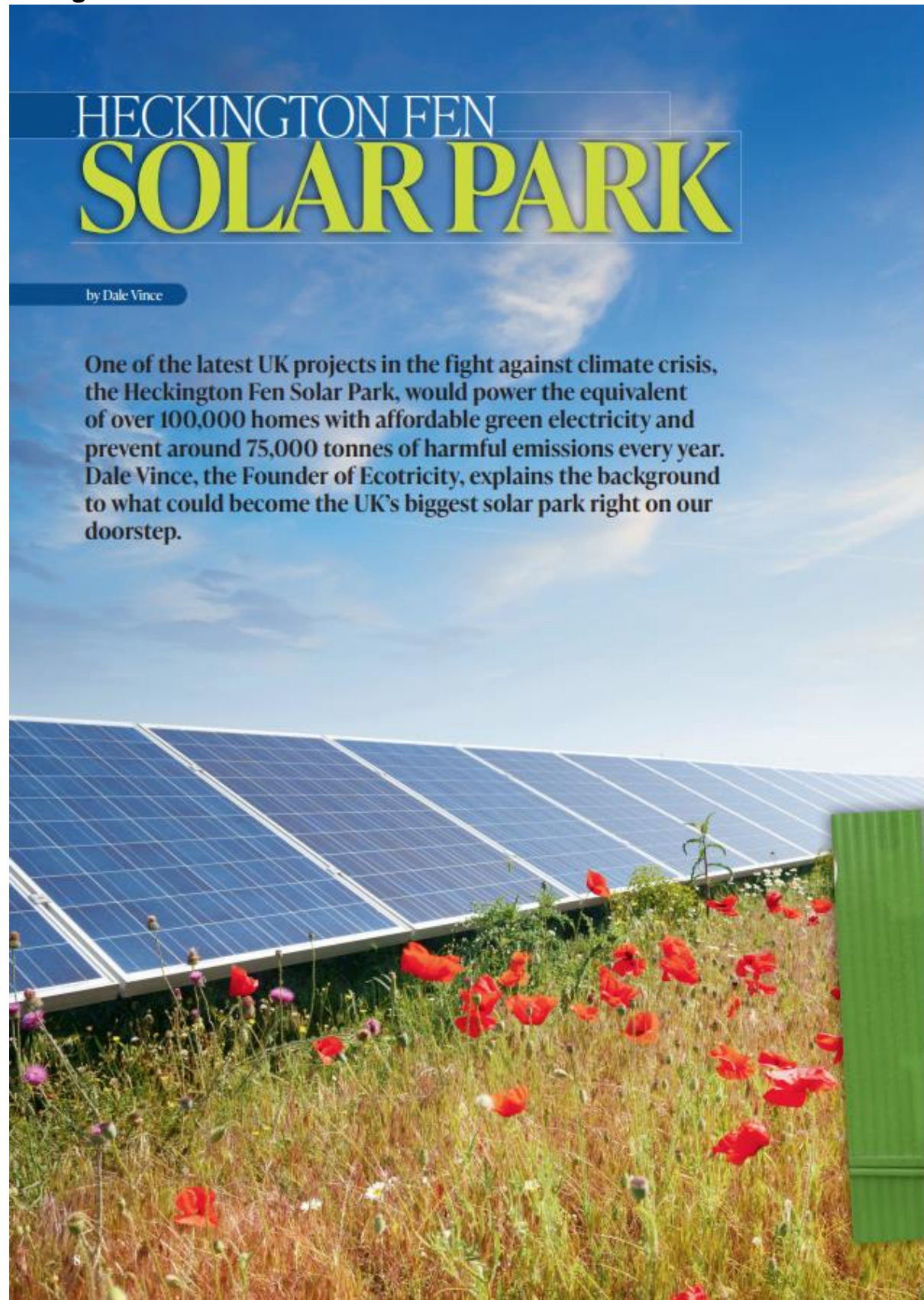
Local residents and stakeholders are being invited to take part in the first phase of engagement on the solar park proposals which will last until 17 December 2021. Following that, Ecotricity will take on board the comments received, as well environmental and technical surveys, to help develop their proposals further, before going back out to consultation with communities in 2022.

The solar park requires electrical connection infrastructure and a substation, which is planned to connect into the existing National Grid substation at Bicker. Due to the size of the development, being over 50MW, it will be classified as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP). This means Ecotricity (Heck Fen Solar) Limited will make an application to the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy for a Development Consent Order.

More information about the plans, as well as how you can give your views, can be found on the project website [\[REDACTED\]](#)

ENDS

3.3 Media engagement with local and regional news outlet – Heckington Living



Solar Park



Lincolnshire is one of the sunniest locations in the UK, and an ideal place for clean solar energy to make a big contribution to powering our homes.

In fact, the sun doesn't even need to be shining – all it takes is daylight and a field of solar panels.

We use the latest technology to harvest the maximum electricity from the smallest space, including bifacial panels which make electricity from the underside as well as the top face, from light reflected off the ground.

Why Heckington Fen?

The Heckington Fen Solar Park would be built on land already approved for the use of renewable energy, with 22 wind turbines given planning permission by the Secretary of State in February 2013. Since then, we have been unable to satisfy the Ministry of Defence's radar concerns to date, which means we have not been able to start building the wind park.

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

The proposed solar park will generate around three times more electricity than the wind turbines would, and with the addition of energy storage we'll be able to store excess green energy to use when demand on the national grid is high.

We expect the solar park to have a lifetime of 30 to 40 years, during which we'd set the land not needed for the panels to wildflowers, helping the pollinators and insects the country needs so desperately.



Dale Vince, Founder of Ecotricity.

After the operational life of the project, the solar park would be decommissioned and it is expected the land would return to intensive agricultural production.

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.

New ecology surveys are also underway which so far confirm that the land is of limited value to wildlife due to the intensive arable farming of the land which is normally used to grow crops for animal feed.

The Heckington Fen Solar Park would comprise solar panels, either fixed or ones that track the sun across the sky. Other electrical equipment, some under and some above ground, would also be needed.

Why we need solar energy

Solar power with 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.

Heckington Fen 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 percent reduction from the 1990 baseline as set out in the Climate Change Act 2008.

With legally binding commitments such as these, we need to increase our renewable energy capacity to achieve the goal of reducing carbon emissions.

Benefits of solar

The plans will create additional wildlife habitat and involve the planting and managing of new hedgerows as well as the reinforcement of boundary planting. Parts of the site may remain in agricultural use with limited conservation grazing and green manure crops returning nutrients to the soil.

Skylarks, water voles, dragonflies and pollinators are some of the species that would benefit from the proposed

Heckington Living



environmental habitat management plan, with generous setbacks to existing drainage ditches creating habitat corridors. During the on-going engagement process we would welcome public feedback on how the site can be developed for nature conservation.

Electricity generation

The solar park would create enough clean electricity to power more than all the homes in North Kesteven, making it a real milestone in the fight against the climate crisis. Our proposals would prevent over 75,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide per year from entering the atmosphere.

By comparison, the expected installed capacity of around

0.5 GW is a quarter of the size of Nottingham's 2 GW West Burton A coal fired power station.

The anticipated yearly generation of over 385 gigawatt hours (GWh) is nearly three times that of the approved wind park and would power the equivalent of over 100,000 homes with green electricity, as well as providing energy storage to help with supply and demand of electricity on the grid network.

National Infrastructure Project

Energy storage will play a key role in achieving net zero, providing flexibility to the grid so that high volumes of low carbon power such as wind and solar can be integrated.



"We're keen to use Heckington Fen to create clean, renewable energy which contributes towards the UK's net zero targets"

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 Ecotricity to apply for a Development Consent Order (DCO).

The Heckington Fen Solar Park DCO application will be examined by the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) – the independent body responsible for examining NSIPs – which would make a recommendation on the application to the Secretary of State for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS). The Secretary of State makes the final decision on a DCO application.

We expect to submit the full application to PINS in January 2023, with the site having been 'scoped' for environmental purposes with the Planning Inspectorate on behalf of the Secretary of State in January 2022.

A Scoping Opinion submitted in January will provide feedback to us from statutory consultees in February 2022. This will inform the Preliminary Environmental Information Report which will be shared with local people during the statutory consultation later in the year.

A final decision on the Heckington Fen Solar Park could be made by mid-2024 and, subject to the grid connection date, construction could start soon afterwards and is expected to take some 12-18 months. The site could be operational as early as 2026.



Drone view of the proposed Heckington Fen site.
Lee Blake Photography.

Planning and approvals

Ecotricity carried out a first phase of public consultation between the end of October and mid-December 2021 to seek views of local residents and stakeholders about the solar park plans.

Three online public events were held in November and were well attended by local residents, parish councillors and statutory consultees. Feedback received from this stage of consultation will be considered as Ecotricity develops more detailed designs for the solar park.

The Heckington Fen Solar Park location is to the north of the A17 (between Sleaford and Boston).

The site layout, includes a walking route, a potential community orchard and planting for screening and habitat enhancements. Whilst the proposed height of the solar panels is shown up to 4.5 m, however it is still hoped that environmental assessments in relation to flood risk could see this maximum height reduced.

A further stage of consultation on the evolved proposals for the site is planned this summer, when residents and stakeholders will have another opportunity to provide their views on the proposed solar park ahead of an application being submitted to the Planning Inspectorate in early 2023.

More information about the plans, as well as how you can give your views, can be found on the project



Location plan with annotated outline of site marked in red.

3.4 Engagement with Parish Councils during Non-Statutory Consultation

Parish Council	Engagement summary
Heckington Parish Council	Council couldn't remember if received newsletter, one councillor tasked with finding out more information. Emailed newsletter and feedback form.
Great Hale Parish Council	Responded to original email about tree planting. Confirmed they would ask the Chair about a meeting. Emailed newsletter and feedback form.
Little Hale Parish Council	Received email, and sent councillors the link to watch the North Kesteven District Council streamed event on 4 November 2021. Felt if it was the same presentation it wouldn't be worth our time, but if there was a group of Parish Councils getting together they may be interested in that. A lot of the questions councillors would have were covered in the North Kesteven District Council briefing. Agreed to send email copy of feedback form for completion.
Bicker Parish Council	Clerk - also the Clerk to Donington - asked about the impact on Bicker, and how construction is their biggest issue. Confirmed they would like the project to use the new Triton Knoll road. Concern over ALC. Would like a community benefit fund, direct to the village. Concerned about cumulative impact. Acknowledge we need renewable energy. Concern about traffic and access during construction and have issues with the condition of the road – suggested a community benefit fund would be used to improve this. Clerk also the contact for the Bicker Conservation and Improvement Group, and will ask Bicker Buds before giving us their details – forwarded later on. Emailed newsletter and feedback form.
Swineshead Parish Council	Left message answer phone, sent follow up email with newsletter and feedback form.
Amber Hill Parish Council	Councillors attended the online engagement events. The site will stay on their agenda going forward to follow the process. Received the newsletter (personally, at work and via parish council). Emailed newsletter and feedback form.
South Kyme Parish Council	Councillors attended online engagement event on 13 November 2021. Emailed newsletter and feedback form.
Helpringham Parish Council	No mention from any Councillors at the moment, suggests they're OK with at the moment. Emailed newsletter and feedback form.
Donington Parish Council	See Bicker PC. Emailed newsletter and feedback form.
Holland Fen with Brothertoft Parish Council	Left message answer phone. Emailed newsletter and feedback form.

Kirton Parish Council	Left message answer phone, emailed newsletter and feedback form.
Asgarby and Howell Parish Council	Chair (Clerk) wasn't available but didn't anticipate any issues. Will look out for email – Emailed newsletter and feedback form.
Ewerby and Evedon Parish Council	Left message answer phone, emailed newsletter and feedback form.
Swaton Parish Council	Spoke to Chair who confirmed has all the information they need at the moment, and will add details to the village circulation. Emailed newsletter and feedback form.
Wigtoft Parish Council	Left message answer phone. Emailed newsletter and feedback form.
Kirkby La Thorpe Parish Council	See South Kyme Parish Council above. Emailed newsletter and feedback form.
Burton Pedwardine and Burton Gorse Parish Council	No contact details online. Emailed newsletter and feedback form.