

An earlier hearing discussed issues surrounding safety and Battery Energy Storage Systems or BESS. I wish to bring to the attention of the Examining Authority an investigation undertaken by the South Korean government's Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy or MOTIE.

The investigation was prompted after a series of 28 fires at battery sites across the country between 2017 and 2019. MOTIE highlighted the issue of poor installation practices and problems arising when installers combined energy management and control system components from different manufacturers, when such components were not designed for use in integrated systems. It found that additional factors included the application of strong incentives and inadequate regulation.

The ministry also utilised the Social Construction Of Technology theory or SCOT, to investigate the construction process of battery storage technology. They concluded that the pursuit of economic incentives underestimated the risks associated with such technology.

My understanding is that there are currently no recognised UK standards and regulations covering BESS safety, which could be of particular importance when related to installations and components being supplied from overseas sources. Should these not be put in place as a matter of urgency before a Development Consent Order should be issued?

A number of local residents have raised concerns with me around issues related to decommissioning and reinstatement. They're particularly conscious of the use of the term 'temporary' in reference to contracts likely to last 40 years. They have expressed scepticism on the practicality of agreements made now which will not take effect until the second half of this century and of the volatility of energy markets which might result in developments either changing hands, or with operators going out of business. I understand that Escrow Agreements are commonly used to cover such circumstances.

Am I correct?

If so, can I be provided with a copy of the Heads of Terms for such an agreement as our community needs assurance that any such agreement covers all necessary conditions for the release of funds back to the developer or land owner?

Can you also confirm that any future transfer of the ownership of the land is covered and reassure local residents that no financial burden should fall on Local Authority council tax payers?