

## Battery Energy Storage System (BESS)

Geise Farm, B874, near Thurso

Pre-Application Consultation



## Welcome

Welcome to this Public Exhibition on the proposed Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) on land at Geise Farm, near Thurso, KW14 7XH.

EcoCel Energy is currently preparing an application for Planning Permission for:

*“Development of a battery energy storage system with a maximum capacity of 49.9MW comprising up to 40 storage containers, control buildings, transformers, landscaping, lighting, CCTV, formation of access, and associated works”*

A Proposal of Application Notice has been submitted to The Highland Council for this, and this public consultation event forms part of our pre-application consultation strategy. A second event will be held, currently scheduled for the 28<sup>th</sup> of October to allow the project team to provide feedback on the first event and any changes made to the scheme as a result of this.

The planning application will be submitted by Graham + Sibbald on behalf of EcoCel Energy in the coming months.

We welcome your comments on the proposal and invite you to complete a feedback form. Details on how and where to provide comments can be found on the final display board, and on feedback forms.



## Site Location

The site is located at Geise Farm, to the east of the B874 and to the south of Thurso. The River Thurso runs a short distance to the east of the land, with a railway line also separating the site from the river. The site extends to approximately 4.5ha. The location plan below shows the approximate location of the site with regards to known surrounding features of prominence.





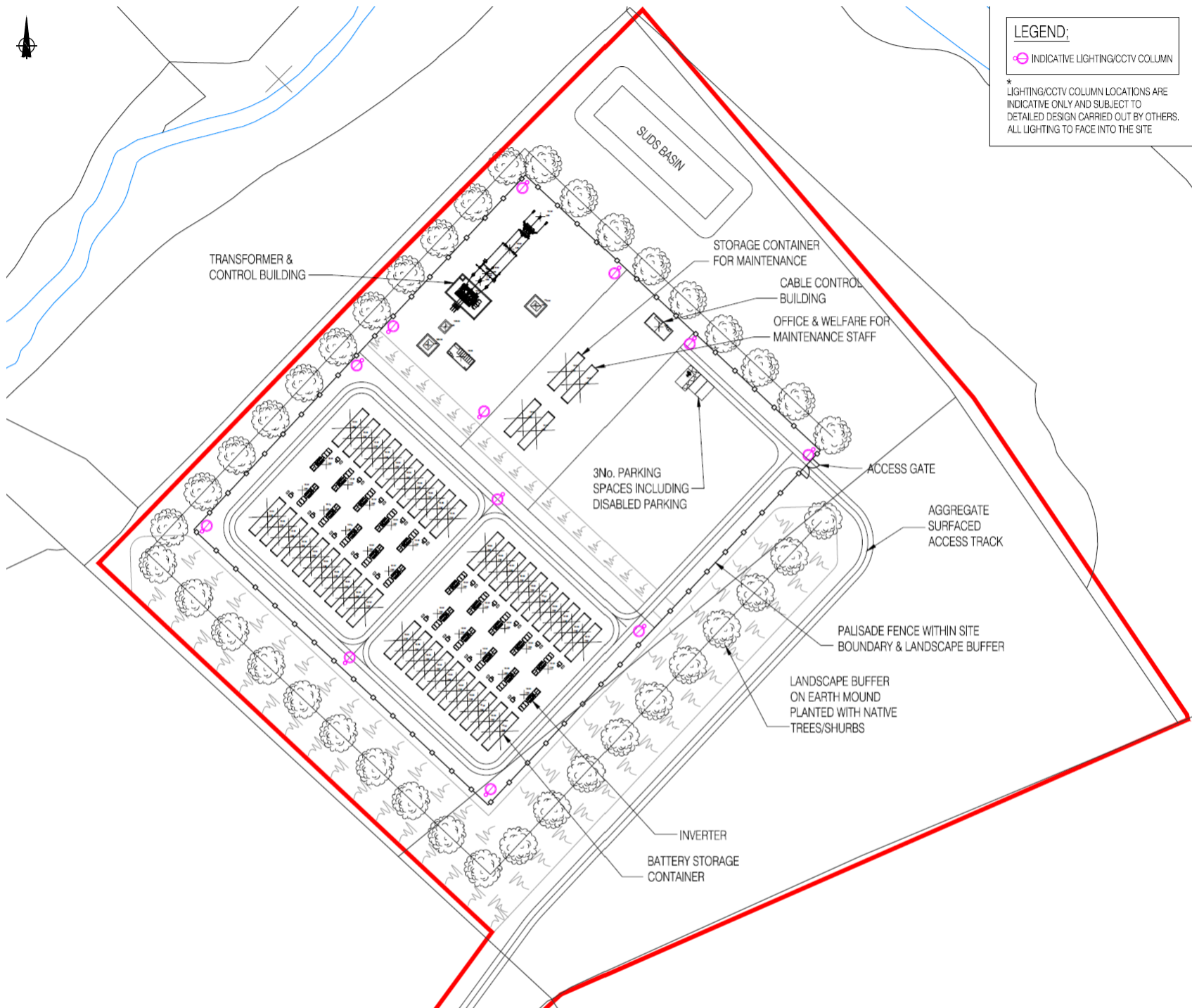
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## Site Layout Plan



## Development Proposal

The proposed BESS development comprises of the following:

- Up to 40 battery storage containers, each measuring approximately 12m x 2.4m, with a maximum height of 2.6m, featuring integrated air conditioning and ventilation
  - The containers will be arranged in pairs, with each pair sharing a small transformer
- Control building containing switchgear and electrical equipment, measuring approximately 2m x 5m x 2.8m
- 2.8m high security fence
- CCTV masts with cameras
- Lighting poles
- Landscaping
- Surface water drainage system
- Parking
- New access arrangement from the B874.





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## What is Battery Energy Storage?

Battery storage, or Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS), are devices that enable the storage of excess electricity which is then released in periods of high demand.

There is a national requirement to balance the peaks and troughs associated with electricity supply and demand to avoid strains on transmission and distribution networks and to keep the electricity system stable. The proposed Lithium-Ion (Li-ion) batteries would store electricity, which is then fed into the grid when required and would reduce fluctuations, thus improving stability and reducing the risk of power failures.

The use of BESS are growing at an unprecedented rate, helping to future proof Scotland's energy system, and creating the low carbon infrastructure needed to power more of our lives with clean and reliable energy.

The proposed BESS is designed to support the flexible operation of the National Grid and the decarbonisation of electricity supply.

The battery technology type for the proposed development will meet all relevant safety standards and will ensure a high level of performance.

**Battery Energy Storage Schemes are a key technology in the transition to a smarter and more flexible energy system, and have a significant role to play in helping Scotland to reduce emissions to net-zero by 2045.**



## About the Applicant, EcoCel Energy

EcoCel started life as EcoCel Renewables based in Hamilton.

Started in 2012 we began developing wind farm assets and major component repair and inspection. Then moving onto asset management and operations and maintenance. Our primary customers are high wealth investor groups and individuals and stringent grid network suppliers, Scottish Power, Ventient Energy, SSE and Arevon Energy.

EcoCel Energy, as an offshoot of EcoCel, runs projects for battery storage, windfarms, and hydrogen stations across the UK.





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## Benefits of the Development



The development of a BESS at Geise Farm, Thurso complies with the relevant Development Plan policies of the Highland-wide Local Development Plan, the Caithness and Sutherland Local Development Plan and National Planning Policy Framework 4.



Direct locally sourced employment during the construction of the development. This would include: accommodation; surveying and environmental enabling works; excavation and ground works; concrete and aggregates supply; plant hire; security; landscape and site reinstatement; and mechanical, electrical and supervisory services.



Specialist employment created during the operational phase of the development for the management and maintenance of the BESS facility.



The proposed development is located within a rural location, away from any significant concentrations of sensitive receptors. Some residential properties are located nearby to the site, and a Noise Impact Assessment is being undertaken to ensure that there is no significant impact on these.



The proposed BESS containers are relatively low in height and will be screened with perimeter landscape on all sides of the site to help reduce the visual impact of the proposal on its rural surroundings.



The BESS is located close to the existing Thurso South Grid substation, avoiding the need for lengthy transmission cables, ensuring an efficient and straightforward connection to the grid when required.



The BESS site contains no nature conservation or heritage designations and is not within any nationally designated landscape area.



Detailed technical assessments are being carried out to ensure that the proposed BESS will not result in any wider cumulative impact on the surrounding agricultural landscape, and identify appropriate mitigation if any impacts are identified.

## Community Benefits

Ecocel Energy is committed to ensuring that the local community benefits from renewable energy developments in their area, and therefore is providing a Community Benefit Fund for use by the local community. This will be a financial package of payments, direct or in-kind, to local communities. While the Community Benefit Fund is not a material consideration in the determination of a planning application, it is only deliverable if the proposal receives planning consent and progresses to development.

The delivery of benefits from the Community Benefit Fund is independent from the other socioeconomic benefits and outcomes listed above that may accrue from the development taking place, such as construction job opportunities, biodiversity enhancement from landscaping, or upgrades to local infrastructure.

At this stage, we would welcome input from the local community for ideas about where Community Benefit Funds could be directed. We will also seek to work with Caithness West Community Council in deciding as to how potential funds could be distributed.

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## Planning Application Preparation

The project team are continuing to progress the preparation of the application for Planning Permission. We have undertaken and are in the process of undertaking, a variety of assessments and statements for the site and proposed development.

The assessments include the following:

- Drainage Strategy;
- Flood Risk Assessment;
- Landscape and Visual Impact Appraisal;
- Preliminary Ecological Assessment;
- Biodiversity Net-Gain Assessment;
- Planning Supporting Statement;
- Design & Access Statement;
- Noise Impact Statement;
- Fire Suppression Statement; and
- Archaeological Impact Assessment.

Members of the project team are on hand to answer any questions you have about the proposals.

## Making Comments

If you wish to comment on the proposed development, there are feedback forms available. Please complete the form and submit it to a member of the project team.

Alternatively, you can send your comments by email to [murray.rankin@g-s.co.uk](mailto:murray.rankin@g-s.co.uk)

Or by post to:  
Murray Rankin  
Graham + Sibbald  
233 St Vincent Street  
Glasgow  
G2 5QY

Please submit your comments to Graham + Sibbald by Friday 27<sup>th</sup> September 2024.

PLEASE NOTE: Your feedback and comments on these proposals at this stage are to the Applicant and not to The Highland Council. Any comments you make at this stage are therefore not a formal representation to the future Planning Application. Such representations should be made directly to The Highland Council once the Planning Application has been submitted.

## Next Steps

Gather and analyse feedback received from public during consultation and from consultants as a result of the technical assessments



Hold second public consultation event, currently scheduled for 28<sup>th</sup> October 2024, to provide feedback on the progress of the application and any design/development changes



Finalise and submit Planning Application to The Highland Council - Opportunity for public to provide formal comments to the Highland Council on the proposed development

**Thank you for attending this consultation event**