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Contullich Battery Energy Storage

Community Wealth Building Plan



Contents

- 1 Introduction 3
- 2 The Applicant 3
- 3 Statutory requirements and best practice guidance 3
- 4 Community Wealth Building Plan 3
 - 4.1 Community resilience, reducing inequality and maximising education and career opportunities..... 4
 - 4.2 Inward investment and the local supply chain 5
 - 4.3 Community benefits..... 5
 - 4.4 Delivery and monitoring 6

1 Introduction

This Community Wealth Building Plan has been developed in support of a planning application for the Contullich Energy Storage System, hereinafter referred to as the “Proposed Development”.

2 The Applicant

RES, hereinafter referred to as the “Applicant”, is the world’s largest independent renewable energy company, working across 24 countries and active in wind, solar, energy storage, green hydrogen, transmission and distribution. As an industry innovator for over 40 years, RES has delivered more than 27GW of renewable energy projects across the globe and supports an operational asset portfolio exceeding 41GW worldwide for a large client base.

The Applicant has a strong track record of working with local supply chain across Scotland and maximising inward investment opportunities wherever possible on its energy projects.

The Applicant seeks to be a power for good in the communities that neighbour its projects by working openly and constructively to ensure tangible local benefits.

3 Statutory requirements and best practice guidance

Community Wealth Building (CWB) is part of the planning process through the introduction of Policy 25 CWB in National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4).

NPF4 Policy 25 includes:

“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.”

In June 2024, The Highland Council established a Social Value Charter for Renewables Investment which sets out the community benefit expectations from developers wishing to invest in renewables in Highland. The charter aims to embed an approach to community wealth building into the Highlands; maximise economic benefits from our natural environment and resources; engage and involve relevant stakeholders to understand how we can continually improve our impact; and unlock economic opportunities for the area.

4 Community Wealth Building Plan

Due to the specialist nature of the equipment, socio-economic opportunities from battery energy storage systems, such as the Proposed Development, are limited in comparison to some larger developments such as onshore wind and utility-scale solar. Nevertheless, the Applicant is committed to ensuring the Proposed Development contributes to local, regional and Scotland-wide community wealth.

Whilst it is acknowledged that the direct economic benefits to the area are generally limited to the construction and decommissioning phases and through any ongoing community benefit, the wider, indirect investment into the region is significant and long-lasting.

The following sections set out the Applicant's proportionate approach on how local, regional and Scotland-wide community wealth could be delivered.

4.1 Community resilience, reducing inequality and maximising education and career opportunities

The Applicant has been operating from offices in Glasgow since the early-1990s and employs over 200 people across Scotland. The Applicant takes a collaborative, people-first approach to their work and provide a diverse range of jobs across the industry including corporate and business support, project management, engineering and technical and operations and maintenance (O&M) and asset management. O&M staff and asset managers are employed across the whole of Scotland supporting operational assets and the Proposed Development would further bolster the Applicant's position as a major employer in Scotland.

The Applicant has responded to supply chain challenges in Scotland, by establishing a centrally located O&M base in Bellshill, North Lanarkshire, helping to support the broadening portfolio of operational projects it services. Housing a warehouse, workshop and training facilities for the Applicant's expanding O&M team, the base will help to strengthen and expedite the availability of components and parts as well as increasing logistical and operational efficiencies across the Scottish supply chain. The dedicated base will play a big part in the growth of the Applicant's O&M activities throughout Scotland, where there is a significant and growing O&M requirement.

The Applicant also offers apprenticeship and internship programmes. Following the successful partnership with the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI), the Applicant is actively seeking further opportunities to invest in the education and career prospects of the next generation of energy leaders, locally and regionally.

The community benefit fund offered by the Proposed Development could help to achieve this aim by being used to provide apprenticeship and internship initiatives. Apprenticeships not just support local students but also local businesses. For businesses in the Highlands, hiring an apprentice could be a productive and effective way to grow talent and develop a motivated, skilled and qualified workforce. Apprenticeships can help the business to develop skills relevant to their organisation, improve productivity and improve the quality of their product or service. Further information on the community benefit fund can be found in section 4.3.

The Applicant's partnership with UHI supports a minimum of 60 students through UHI's Student Development Fund. Created with the aim of helping UHI's students to further their personal development, the fund empowers them to gain new skills, raising their aspirations, whilst also helping to build their confidence. It does this by providing financial support to students to overcome barriers to participate in learning opportunities and extra-curricular activities. The Applicant has pledged a total of £60,000 to UHI's Student Development Fund over the course of the next three years, providing the students of UHI with the best possible opportunity to maximise their talents and future careers.

As the renewables industry continues to grow, the industry will require talented individuals with transferrable skills, from a variety of diverse backgrounds to enter the workforce. The growing industry will also support the wider regional economy, and the jobs associated with it. The Student Development Fund, supported by the Applicant, is therefore open to all UHI students, studying any course, across all its campuses.

4.2 Inward investment and the local supply chain

The Applicant is committed to ensuring that, wherever reasonably practical, local contractors are used in as many aspects of the Proposed Development, as possible. Whilst battery energy storage developments involve significant specialist equipment, there is a large range of ancillary services and suppliers required in the construction and decommissioning of the Proposed Development.

Such services and suppliers include:

- Civil engineering
- Groundworks
- Electrical works
- Plant operators
- Labourers
- Cleaners
- Plant/Crane hire
- Fencers
- Concrete and aggregate
- Landscapers
- Accommodation and other hospitality services

Prior to construction, Meet the Buyer events are typically held in the local area where local businesses can learn more about the opportunities associated with the construction and operation of this site, and register their interest. The Applicant would look to engage and invite suppliers and contractors within the Highlands to a Meet the Buyer drop in event where local suppliers and contractors can speak directly to the Applicant's procurement and construction teams.

The Applicant is a conscientious employer that encourages the use of structured organisations who promote supervisor and management training for all of their employees, particularly during construction. Additionally, all contractors will require Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) and specialist health and safety training for working on a project of this nature. The proposed Contullich project will therefore support indirect employment training opportunities for those working on the project, and those providing the relevant training course and/or qualifications.

Whilst, at this stage of the project, it is difficult to specify the exact amount of inward investment, the Applicant has proven experience in maximising inward investment through its energy projects. In keeping with their commitment to maximise economic benefit to the local area, the civil engineering contractor chosen by the Applicant for a wind farm development constructed in 2016, was a company based just 8 miles from the site. The Applicant's work with this company saw more than £8 million invested into the local economy and provided employment for 45 local people. Whilst the civil engineering requirement for this specific project will be less due to its smaller footprint, significant inward investment is still possible and is expected.

4.3 Community benefits

The Applicant seeks to be a power for good in communities that neighbour their energy projects by working openly and constructively to ensure tangible local benefits.

The Applicant takes a tailored approach and works directly with the community to understand how the energy project could support the local area and help to secure long-term economic, social and environmental benefits, aligned with the priorities of the local community.

As part of the pre-application consultation period for the Proposed Development, the Applicant sought feedback from the local community on local benefits and priority projects that they would like to see supported or delivered in their community from the Proposed Development, if it is consented. Whilst no suggestions have been received to date, the Applicant will continue to liaise with the local stakeholders and communities to better understand how the Proposed Development could support the local area, if it should receive consent.

Some examples from other communities that the Applicant has worked with include a solar PV system for the local village hall and funding towards the development of a football academy promoting not just physical wellbeing but confidence, mental well-being, problem solving skills, respect and fair play.

The Proposed Development would also deliver an estimated £5 million in business rates during its operational life, supporting many vital local services for local residents.

4.4 Delivery and monitoring

Whilst it is common across the industry for projects to change hands over their operational lifetime, as well as development services, the Applicant also provide full scope construction, asset management and O&M services and would seek to maintain an interest in the scheme, throughout its operational life.

Subject to the Applicant maintaining an interest in the Proposed Development once operational, a dedicated Asset Manager will be assigned to the project. With support from the Applicant's Community Relations team, they will be responsible for the effective delivery and monitoring of the Community Wealth Building Plan.