

Agenda Item	5.1
Report No	PLN/002/22

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: North Planning Applications Committee

Date: 25 January 2022

Report Title: 21/05957/PAN : Whirlwind Energy Storage Ltd
Land 295M South Of Mill House, Stainland, Thurso

Report By: Area Planning Manager – North

Purpose/Executive Summary

Description: Creation of an energy storage facility with a capacity of up to 49.9MW comprising up to 50 energy storage containers, control building, transformers, switchgear and ancillary infrastructure

Ward: 02– Thurso and North west Caithness

Recommendation

Members are asked to note the submission of the PAN and highlight any material issues they wish to be brought to the attention of the applicant before the submission of an application for planning permission.

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 This report informs the Planning Applications Committee of the submission of the attached Proposal of Application Notice (PAN).
- 1.2 The submission of the PAN accords with the provisions of the Planning etc. (Scotland) Act 2006 and was made valid on 21 December 2021. The PAN is a statutory requirement for planning applications for major or national developments and must be lodged at least 12 weeks prior to the submission of a planning application. Members are asked to note this may form the basis of a subsequent planning application.
- 1.3 The submitted information attached includes:
- Proposal of Application Notice (Application Form)
 - Location Plan
- 1.4 In line with Covid-19 public health advice and temporary modifications made to the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Scotland) Regulations 2013, the prospective developer proposes to undertake an online public consultation. This will take place on
- Thursday the 20th of January 2022 between 4:00 pm and 7:00 pm
- 1.5 The consultation will take the form of a 'drop in' pre-application consultation event presentation using the 'Zoom' application and will be accessible via the following link:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2272520580>
- 1.6 The online consultation will be publicised and advertised in accordance with the appropriate statutory requirements with adverts to be placed within Caithness Courier at least ten working days before the consultation. The Planning Authority have also requested that a maildrop be undertaken by the applicant to make people aware of the proposed development. This should cover a minimum radius of 1.5 km from the proposed site. The PAN form also indicates that Castletown Community Council will be notified in line with statutory requirements.
- 1.7 The forthcoming application will require to be accompanied by a Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) report explaining the consultation undertaken, feedback received, and any resultant amendments made to the planning application.

2.0 DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 2.1 The PAN provides notice of the developer's intention to submit a planning application classified as a Major Development. The proposal comprises the creation of an electrical energy storage consisting of a compound containing up to 50 energy storage containers with an electrical control building, transformers and switchgear.
- 2.2 The project would store electrical energy when there is an excess of generation on the network, and then export this when required either by peaks in demand, or to cover generation outages. This balancing role which energy storage schemes provide on the electrical network is becoming important as generation from

renewable wind and solar power increases in line with the delivery of Scottish decarbonisation and renewable energy targets and such projects have a very important role in delivering this decarbonisation agenda.

2.3 The wider overhead line proposals are to be the subject of a separate application to the Scottish Government's Energy Consents Unit, under Section 37 of the Electricity Act 1989, the determination process for which requires further consultation with The Highland Council.

2.4 The applicant has not yet carried out formal Pre- Application Consultation with the Council.

3.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

3.1 The PAN boundary comprises 10ha of grazing land located north of Upper Geiselittle and approximately 1.7 km to the south east of Thurso. The site lies to the east of the A9 that runs from Watten to Thurso. Two overhead electricity lines cross the western boundary of the site.

3.2 Immediately to the north of the site is Thurso substation. To the west, the site is bound by the A9 where the site would be accessed via a new access track. To the south, the site is bounded by a large open field. The topography of the site is generally rising in a south-easterly direction.

3.3 The site lies about 580m to the east of the River Thurso Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and (SSSI). Approximately 2.7km further to the north west of the site is located the Newlands of Geise Mire with designation of the Site of Scientific Special Interest (SSSI).

3.4 Some historic environment features are identified on the Council's Historic Environment Record in proximity of the site including Bainstown Scheduled Monument which is approximately 100m to the south east of the site.

3.5 The majority of the site is free from flood risk, with the exception of small low lying areas of pluvial surface water at the north east boundary of the site. Immediately outwith the proposed site boundary, there are indicative areas of fluvial flood risk in the 1 in 200 year scenario identified on the indicative flood risk maps produced by SEPA as the Burn of Stainland runs west-east to the north of the site.

3.6 The site lies within Farmed Lowland Plain Landscape Character Area as identified by NatureScot. It is not within any designated landscapes.

4.0 DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The following policies are relevant to the assessment of the proposal:

4.1 Highland Wide Local Development Plan (2012)

28 - Sustainable Design

29 - Design Quality & Place-making

30 - Physical Constrains

31- Developer Contributions

36 - Development in the Wider Countryside
55 - Peat and Soils
56 - Travel
57 - Natural, Built & Cultural Heritage
58 - Protected Species
59 - Other Important Species
60 - Other Important Habitats
61 - Landscape
63 - Water Environment
64 - Flood Risk
66 - Surface Water Drainage
67 - Renewable Energy Developments
69 - Electricity Transmission Infrastructure
72 - Pollution
74 - Green Networks
77 - Public Access

4.2 **Caithness and Sutherland Local Development Plan (CaS) (2018)**

The site is not covered by any specific development allocation or safeguarding notation within the Caithness and Sutherland Local Development Plan.

4.3 **Highland Council Supplementary Guidance**

- Developer Contributions (Nov 2018)
- Flood Risk & Drainage Impact Assessment (Jan 2013)
- Green Networks (Jan 2013)
- Highland Historic Environment Strategy (Jan 2013)
- Highland's Statutorily Protected Species (Mar 2013)
- Physical Constraints (Mar 2013)
- Roads and Transport Guidelines for New Developments (May 2013)
- Standards for Archaeological Work (Mar 2012)
- Sustainable Design Guide (Jan 2013)

4.4 **Scottish Government Policy and Guidance**

- Scottish Planning Policy (Jun 2014 and as amended Dec 2020)
- National Planning Framework 3, NPF3 (Jun 2014) and consultive draft NPF4 (Nov 2021)
- Scotland's Energy Strategy Position Statement (Mar 2021)
- Scottish Energy Strategy (Dec 2017)
- 2020 Routemap for Renewable Energy (Jun 2011)
- Energy Efficient Scotland Route Map (May 2018)
- PAN 1/2013 – Environmental Impact Assessment (Aug 2013)
- PAN 1/2021 – Planning and Noise (Mar 2011)
- PAN 60 – Planning for Natural Heritage (Jan 2008)
- PAN 68 – Design Statements (Aug 2003)
- Historic Environment Policy for Scotland (Apr 2019)

5.0 POTENTIAL MATERIAL PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

- a) Development Plan and other planning policy
- b) Planning History;
- c) Noise;
- d) Design, Landscape and Visual Impact (including cumulative impacts);
- e) Roads and Transport;
- f) Natural Heritage including protected species, ornithology and designated sites;
- g) Built and Cultural Heritage;
- h) Soils and Peat;
- i) Economic Impact and Tourism;
- j) Outdoor Access and Recreation;
- k) Construction Impacts;
- l) Pollution;
- m) Decommissioning;
- n) Any Other Material Considerations Raised within Representations.

6.0 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The report presents the information submitted to date as part of the PAN. The policy considerations against which any future planning application will be considered have been summarised as well as the potential material planning considerations and key issues based on the information available to date. The list is not exhaustive and further matters may arise as and when a planning application is received and in the light of public representations and consultation responses.

7.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Not applicable.

8.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 8.1 It is recommended the Committee notes the submission of the PAN and advises of any material issues it wishes to be brought to the applicant's attention.

Designation: Area Planning Manager – North

Author: Negar Maydanchi

Background Papers: Documents referred to in report and in case file.

Relevant Plans: Plan 1 – Proposal of Application Notice

Plan 2 - Location Plan

The Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 as amended by the Planning Etc. (Scotland) Act 2006 Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Scotland) Regulations 2008

The Council will respond within 21 days of receiving the Notice. It will advise whether the proposed Pre-application Consultation is satisfactory or if additional notification and consultation above the statutory minimum is required. Please note that a planning application for this proposed development cannot be submitted less than 12 weeks from the date the Proposal of Application Notice is received by the Council and without the statutory consultation requirements having been undertaken. The planning application must be accompanied by a Pre-application consultation report.

Applicant	Whirlwind Energy Storage Limited	Agent	Dan Grierson
Address.	The Media Centre, 7 Northumberland Street, Huddersfield, HD1 RL	Address.	The Energy Workshop The Media Centre 7 Northumberland Street Huddersfield, HD1 1RL
Phone		Phone:	07545336960
E-mail		E-mail:	dan@theenergyworkshop.co.uk

Address or Location of Proposed Development

Land immediately to the east of the A9, north of Upper Geiselittle approximately 2km to the south of Thurso. It is envisaged that the energy storage unit would be located in the eastern part of the area indicated on the attached plans, to minimise it's visibility from the A9.

Description of Development

The creation of an electrical energy storage facility consisting of a compound containing up to 50 energy storage containers. The site would also include an electrical control building, transformers and associated switchgear. The site would have an inner enclosure consisting of 3m tall security fencing, with a significant area of planted native tree belts and bunding outwith this fence. The latter would be designed to complement the existing landscape character and would utilise appropriate native species. Habitat enhancements will also be undertaken in all other undeveloped parts of the site with the aim of delivering a net biodiversity gain.

The site would be equipped with motion-sensitive lighting to serve visitors and would have no permanent lighting.

The project would occupy an area not exceeding 2 hectares and the developed part of the site would, it is envisaged, occupy an area of circa 0.6ha.

The site would be accessed from the A9 via a new access track. Once operational the site would be operated remotely and would generate very low levels of traffic, consisting of occasional visits by a car or light van.

Plans of the site plans are appended.

Pre-application Screening Notice

The Highland Council has confirmed that a Pre-application notice will be required.

Community Consultation

The parties listed below will be consulted with regard to the proposal and the PAN process:

Community Council/s <i>Castletown Community Council</i>	Date Notice to be Served <i>04/01/22</i>
Other parties <i>The relevant MP, MSP and Ward Members</i>	Date Notice to be Served <i>04/01/22</i>

Please give details of proposed consultation

Proposed public event <i>Online drop-in video consultation.</i>	Venue <i>Online (Zoom)</i>	Date and time <i>20/01/22 (TBC)</i>
Newspaper Advert – name of newspaper <i>Caithness Courier -</i>	Advert date(where known) <i>by 07/01/22 (TBC)</i>	

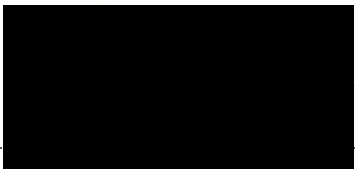
Details of any other consultation methods (date, time and with whom)

A letter describing the proposal, providing details of the drop-in video consultation event and inviting feedback will be sent to all addresses within 1km of the project (Or as advised by the LPA). This will be posted by recorded delivery by 07/01/22.

Contact details (phone and email) for the developer’s agent will be provided in all correspondence so that interested parties can make direct representations and request further information.

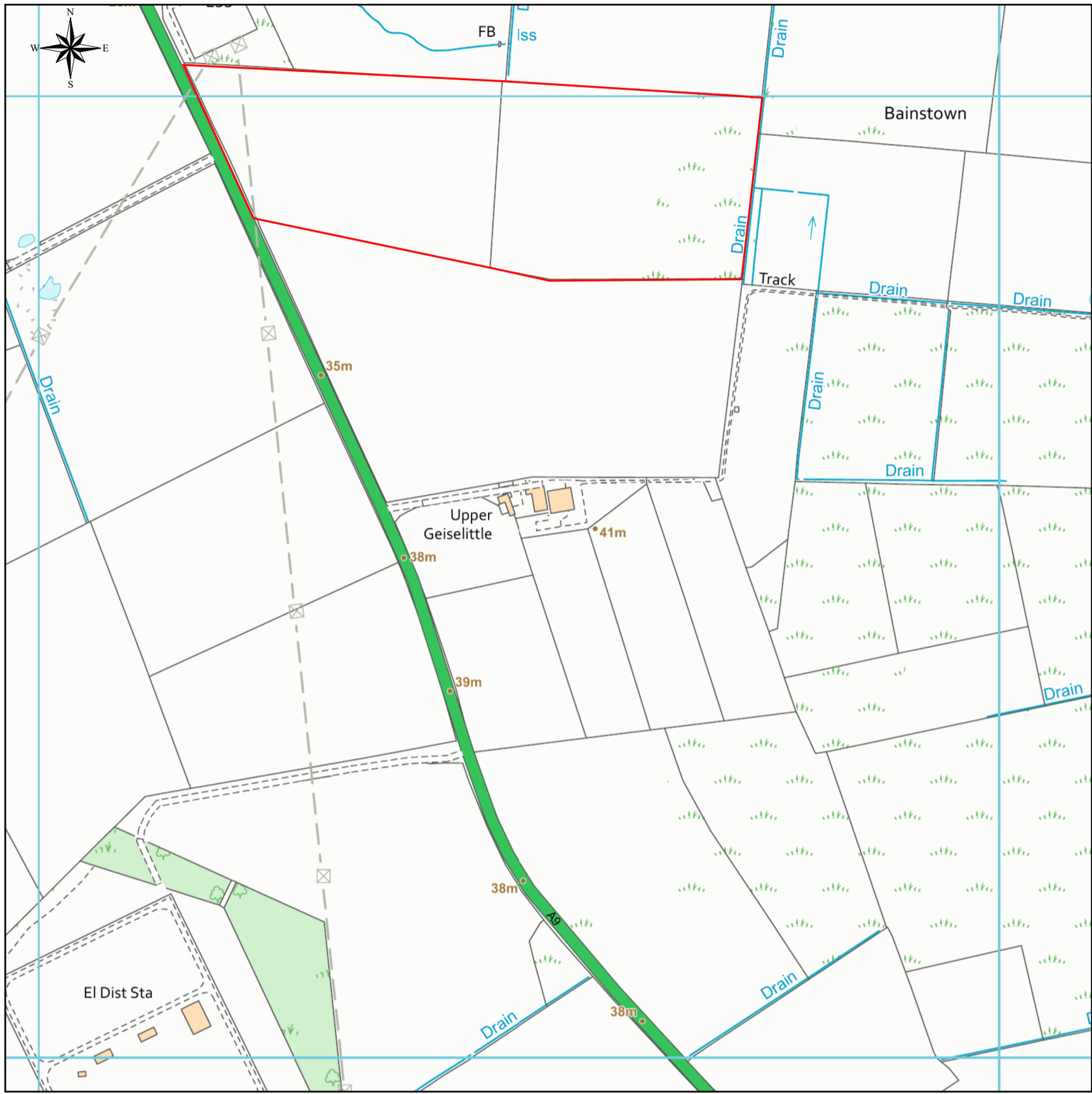
A project website will be set up and will be live by the 07/01/22.

Signed



Date...17/12/21.....

Stainland Energy Storage Project



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