

Agenda Item	5.3
Report No	PLN/076/24

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: North Planning Applications Committee
Date: 29 October 2024
Report Title: 24/03835/PAN: Ecocel Energy
Land 250M SE of Geise Farm, Halkirk, Thurso
Report By: Area Planning Manager – North

Purpose/Executive Summary

Description: The construction and operation of a battery energy storage system (BESS) with a maximum installed capacity of 49.9 Megawatts consisting of up to 40 storage containers, control buildings, transformers, landscaping, lighting, CCTV, formation of access, and associated works.

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. 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 4 September 2024. 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 October 2022, The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Scotland) Regulations 2013 were amended by The Town and Country Planning (Pre-Application Consultation) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2021. The new legislation changed the consultation requirements for those PANs submitted after 01 October 2022 with developers now required to undertake two in-person public consultation events. The first event was held in the Pentland Hotel, Princes Street, Thurso on Wednesday 18th September 2024 between 16.00 – 19.00. A second event is scheduled for Monday 28th October 2024 between 16.00 – 19.00.
- 1.5 The first event was publicised in the John O' Groat Journal and Caithness Courier on 06 September 2024 and 11 September 2024 respectively, seven days prior to the event in accordance with statutory requirements. The applicant has confirmed that they will also advertise the second consultation event in the Caithness Courier and John O' Groat Journal and on 16 October and 18 October respectively. An invitation maildrop was undertaken to make local residents aware of the proposed development and the consultation events. The catchment for the maildrop covered a radius of 2.5km from the proposal site. The applicant has advised that the Castletown Community Council and Caithness West Community Council along with local elected Members, the MSP and MP have been notified in line with statutory requirements.
- 1.6 The applicant has made a dedicated consultation website available at www.g-s.co.uk/GeiseFarm to allow members of the public further opportunity to provide feedback.
- 1.7 Any forthcoming application will 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. DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 2.1 The proposed scheme is for a battery energy storage system (BESS) facility, with a maximum installed capacity of 49.9 Megawatts using up to 40 energy storage units and associated electrical equipment. The development will also involve control

buildings (number not specified), a lighting scheme, CCTV, the formation of an access, and other associated works.

3. SITE DESCRIPTION

- 3.1 The PAN boundary comprises 4.36ha of agricultural land at the Geise Farm steading within the Farmed Lowland Plain Landscape Character Type (LCT), LCT143 as mapped and described by NatureScot. The site would be accessed from the B874. The River Thurso runs to the site's northeast and is designated a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) for its Atlantic Salmon interests. There are no other natural or landscape designations covering or within connectivity distance of the proposal site with Dunnet Head Special Landscape Area (SLA) being over 9km to the site's northeast and outside of the proposal's influence.
- 3.2 There are no Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings, or Conservation Areas likely to be impacted by the development nor are there any features listed on the Historic Environment Record within the site. However, the buildings associated with Geise Farm Steading and several other features in the surrounds do form a part of the non-designated historic environment, meaning that there is potential for archaeology on site. There are no known flood risks within the application boundary however it does fall within a Scottish Water Drinking Water Protection Area.

4. DEVELOPMENT PLAN

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

4.1 National Planning Framework (NPF) 4 (2023)

Policy 1 – Tackling the climate and nature crisis
Policy 2 – Climate mitigation and adaptation
Policy 3 – Biodiversity
Policy 4 – Natural places
Policy 5 – Soils
Policy 7 – Historic assets and places
Policy 11 – Energy
Policy 22 – Flood risk and water management
Policy 23 – Health and safety
Policy 25 - Community Wealth Building
Policy 29 - Rural development

4.2 Highland Wide Local Development Plan (2012)

28 - Sustainable Design
29 - Design Quality and Place-making
31 - Developer Contributions
42 – Previously Used Land
51 - Trees and Development
55 - Peat and Soils
58 - Protected Species
59 - Other Important Species

- 60 - Other Important Habitats
- 63 - Water Environment
- 64 - Flood Risk
- 65 - Waste Water Treatment
- 66 - Surface Water Drainage
- 67 - Renewable Energy Developments
- 70 - Waste Management Facilities
- 72 - Pollution
- 77 - Public Access

4.3 **Caithness and Sutherland Local Development Plan (CaSPlan) (2022)**

The site is located within the wider countryside.

4.4 **Highland Council Supplementary Guidance**

- Construction Environmental Management Process for Large Scale Projects (Aug 2010)
- Developer Contributions (Nov 2018)
- Flood Risk and Drainage Impact Assessment (Jan 2013)
- Highland Historic Environment Strategy (Jan 2013)
- Highland's Statutorily Protected Species (Mar 2013)
- Managing Waste in New Developments (Mar 2013)
- Physical Constraints (Mar 2013)
- Public Art Strategy (Mar 2013)
- Roads and Transport Guidelines for New Developments (May 2013)
- Standards for Archaeological Work (Mar 2012)
- Sustainable Design Guide (Jan 2013)
- Trees, Woodlands and Development (Jan 2013)
- Biodiversity Enhancement Planning Guidance (May 2024)

4.5 **Scottish Government Policy and Other Guidance**

- Onshore Wind Energy Policy Statement (2022)
- Draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan (2023)
- Scottish Energy Strategy (2017)
- 2020 Routemap for Renewable Energy (2011)
- Energy Efficient Scotland Route Map, Scottish Government (2018)
- Historic Environment Policy for Scotland (Apr 2019)
- PAN 1/2011 – Planning and Noise (Mar 2011)
- PAN 60 – Planning for Natural Heritage (Jan 2008)
- PAN 61 – Sustainable Drainage Systems (Jul 2001)
- PAN 68 – Design Statements (Aug 2003)
- Circular 1/2017: Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations (2017)

5. **POTENTIAL MATERIAL PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

- a) Development Plan and other planning policy;
- b) Residential amenity, including operational noise impacts;
- c) Roads and transport;
- d) Drainage impacts;

- e) Design, landscape, and visual impact (including cumulative impacts);
- f) Natural heritage including protected species and habitats;
- g) Impact on trees and woodland;
- h) Built and cultural heritage;
- i) Economic impact and tourism;
- j) Construction impacts;
- k) Pollution;
- l) Decommissioning and restoration;
- m) Outdoor access; and
- n) Any other material considerations.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The report presents the information submitted to date as part of the PAN. Summarised are the policy considerations against which any future planning application will be considered 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. IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Not applicable.

8. 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.

Signature: Dafydd Jones
Designation: Area Planning Manager – North
Author: Mark Fitzpatrick
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 and Planning (Scotland) Act 2019

Town and Country Planning (Pre-Application Consultation) (Scotland) Regulations 2021

The Council will respond within 21 days of validation 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.

The Proposal of Application Notice will be valid for a period of 18 months from the date of validation of the notice by the Council.

Data Protection

Your personal data will be managed in compliance with the Data Protection legislation. You can read our privacy notice for planning related certificates on the Council's website at: https://www.highland.gov.uk/directory_record/1052173/planning_applications_consents_and_notice_of_review

I have read and understood the privacy notice.

Contact Details

Applicant	Ecocel Energy	Agent	Graham + Sibbald
Address	44 Milton Road East Kilbride G74 5BU	Address	233 St Vincent Street Glasgow G2 5QY
Phone	c/o Agent	Phone	07803 896942
Email	c/o Agent	Email	murray.rankin@g-s.co.uk

Address or Location of Proposed Development

Please state the postal address of the prospective development site. If there is no postal address, please describe its location. Please outline the site in red on a base plan to a recognised metric scale and attach it to this completed Notice.

Land at Geise Farm
B874
near Thurso
KW14 7XH

Description of Development

Please include detail where appropriate – eg the number of residential units; the gross floorspace in m² of any buildings not for residential use; the capacity of any electricity generation or waste management facility; and the length of any infrastructure project. Please attach any additional supporting information.

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

Pre-application Screening Notice

Has a Screening Opinion been issued on the need for a Proposal of Application notice by the Highland Council in respect of the proposed development?
If yes, please provide a copy of this Opinion.

 Yes

 No
Community Consultation


State which other parties have received a copy of this Proposal of Application Notice.

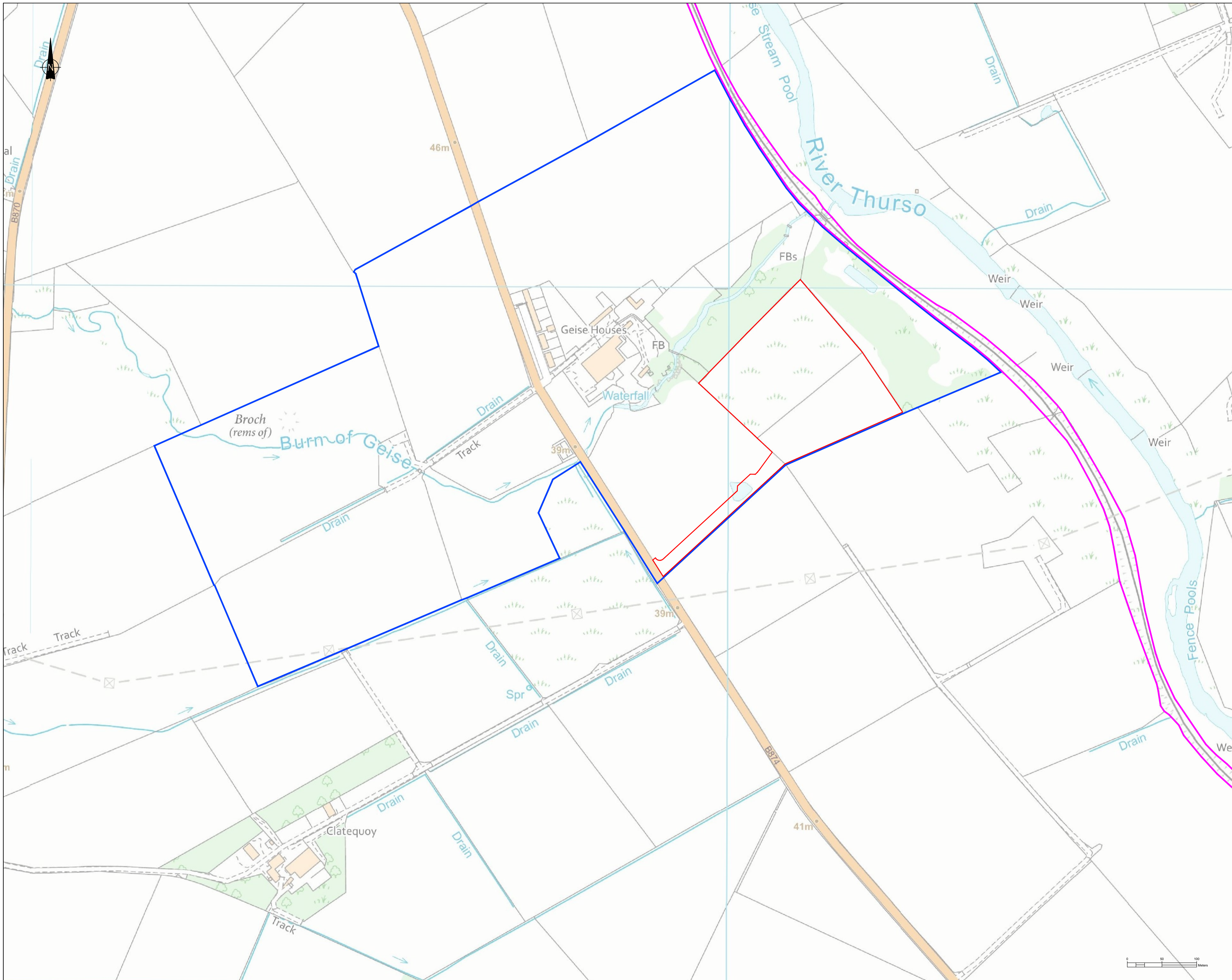
Community Council/s	Date Notice Served
Caithness West Castletown	4th September 2024 4th September 2024
Local Elected Members	Date Notice Served
Cllr Ron Gunn Cllr Struan Mackie Cllr Matthew Reiss Cllr Karl Rosie	4th September 2024 4th September 2024 4th September 2024 4th September 2024
Members of Scottish Parliament and Members of Parliament	Date Notice Served
Jamie Stone MP Maree Todd MSP	4th September 2024 4th September 2024
Names / details of other parties	Date Notice Served

Details of Proposed Consultation		
Proposed Public Event 1	Venue	Date and Time
Public Consultation Event 1	Pentland Hotel, Princes Street, Thurso, KW14 7AA	18 th September 2024 4pm-7pm
Proposed Public Event 2 <i>(at least 14 days after Public Event 1)</i>	Venue	Date and Time
Public Consultation Event 2	Pentland Hotel, Princes Street, Thurso, KW14 7AA	28 th October 2024 4pm-7pm

Publication of Event		
Newspaper Advert	Name of Newspaper	Advert Date
Event 1	Caithness Courier John O’Groat Journal	11 th September 2024 6 th September 2024
Event 2	Caithness Courier John O’Groat Journal	16 th October 2024 18 th October 2024

Details of any other consultation methods (date, time and with whom)
<p>Consultation website: www.g-s.co.uk/GeiseFarm</p> <p>Letter drop carried out to residents within 2.5km of the site, notifying residents of consultation events and project website.</p>

Signed		Date	04/09/2024
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LEGEND:

- LAND OWNERSHIP
- DEVELOPMENT RED LINE BOUNDARY
- NETWORK RAIL OWNERSHIP

Rev	Date	Description	Drn	Chd
02	04/09/24	RED LINE BOUNDARY & OWNERSHIP AMENDED	BS	CH
01	03/09/24	RED LINE BOUNDARY & OWNERSHIP AMENDED	BS	CH
00	21/09/23	ISSUED FOR INFORMATION	JB	MG

Project
**BATTERY STORAGE
GEISE FARM**

Title
**LAND OWNERSHIP &
RED LINE BOUNDARY**

Client
ECOCEL ENERGY (STORAGE) LTD



Kilooh Associates
Local Engineering for Local Clients
Unit 6, Pitreavie Court,
Pitreavie Business Park,
Dunfermline, Fife,
KY11 8JU
t: 0131 629 3434
e: enquires@kilooh.co.uk
www.kilooh.co.uk

INFORMATION

Drawn by	Date	Designed by	Checked by
BS	SEPTEMBER 2023	CH	CH

Scale @ A1
work to ground dimensions only. 1:2500 Project No. **KIL2319**

Drawing No. **KIL2319_102_0001** Rev **02**