

Consultation Information Leaflet

March 2024





1. Introduction

Island Green Power is bringing forward proposals to build a new utility-scale solar and battery energy storage project on land near Malmesbury in North Wiltshire.

Lime Down Solar Park could deliver 500 megawatts of homegrown, renewable electricity through groundmounted solar photovoltaic (PV) panels. This is enough clean, affordable electricity to power 115,000 homes.

The proposed scheme would also include a battery energy storage system. This would provide an important balancing service for the grid, allowing electricity generated by the panels to be stored at times of low demand, then exported onto the system when demand increases.

Why do we need Lime Down Solar Park?

The way we consume energy is changing. The move towards renewables and the transition away from fossil fuels is an environmental and economic necessity. However, national electricity demand is increasing and expected to double by 2050. Increasing our solar energy capacity is therefore essential if the UK is to hit its target of achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2050 while also meeting demand.

The UK has set ambitious climate change targets to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050 and to ensure that the energy supply remains secure, reliable, and affordable. Together with legally binding commitments such as these, the UK Government has further set out how the deployment of renewable technologies such as solar will be accelerated in the latest plan Powering Up Britain (April 2023).¹ Lime Down could make a vital contribution to achieving these targets by ensuring the supply of clean, affordable electricity to UK consumers when it's needed.

This consultation

We want to ensure those communities living and working in proximity of where we are proposing to build Lime Down have the chance to inform and influence the development of our proposals.

This initial consultation runs from 14 March to 26 April 2024. It provides the opportunity for us to introduce Island Green Power, share information about our plans for Lime Down Solar Park and give you the opportunity to provide us with your views.

We will use feedback you submit to this consultation to help us identify and better understand the potential impacts of our proposals so we can decide how and where we build the scheme with minimal impact on the local area and communities living there.

This information leaflet provides an overview of the proposals we are developing, who we are, what we are consulting on and how you can take part.

The deadline for responding to this consultation is 26 April 2024.

2. Island Green Power

Established in 2013, Island Green Power is a leading developer of renewable energy projects. We specialise in the development of utility-scale solar projects and battery energy storage systems; overseeing the entire development process from start to finish, including sourcing land, securing grid connections and obtaining planning consents.

We are committed to help the UK decarbonise and meet net zero goals. Our mission is to help the UK increase its solar energy generation, making more renewable energy possible while drastically reducing carbon emissions.

We are equally committed to responsible land use, developing projects that work in harmony with local communities and the environment, while delivering bespoke benefits and enhancements best suited to the surroundings.

Over the last decade we have successfully delivered 34 projects worldwide totalling more than one gigawatt of clean, renewable energy assets. This includes 17 projects in the UK and Republic of Ireland.



3. Our proposals

Lime Down Solar Park would comprise the installation of solar photovoltaic (PV) panels and an on-site battery energy storage facility, plus infrastructure to connect the scheme to the national grid at Melksham substation so the electricity it generates can be made available to the UK's homes and businesses.

The project is anticipated as having a generation capacity of around 500 megawatts (MW). This is equivalent to providing enough clean energy to power around 115,000 homes.

Location

The solar park is entirely located within the administrative boundary of Wiltshire. The solar park element is proposed as being built across five sites comprising agricultural land of approximately 857 hectares (2,118 acres) located to the north of the M4, southwest of Malmesbury. A sixth site is located on land near Melksham substation, approximately 20 kilometres away from the solar development sites. This site has been identified as the potential location for a Battery Energy Storage System.

A map showing the location of the individual sites the solar park could be built on, and the location of Melksham substation can be found on page 9.

Site selection

We have selected the solar development sites after considering Government policy on new renewable energy projects. This includes examining whether they are within a viable distance of an available grid connection, have suitable levels of irradiation (sunlight) and other considerations such as environmental constraints, the distance of the sites from dwellings, agricultural quality of the land, and accessibility.

Further to engaging with landowners who confirmed their willingness to enter into lease agreements, the solar park development sites were identified as suitable for a number of additional reasons:

- They comprise arable fields of regular shape.
- Gently undulating topography makes the sites technically suitable for solar development and maximising the efficiency of panels.
- Existing hedgerows, tree belts and woodland around and across the sites mean they are well screened.
- Most of the sites are located in Flood Zone 1 which is defined as having low risk of flooding.
- There are only a small number of residential properties in proximity of the sites and effective landscaping and screening could be employed to offset or reduce any visual impacts.
- There are existing accesses for construction vehicles.

4. The solar park

At this early stage in the development process, we have not yet finalised the design and layout for the scheme. This will evolve based on the findings from the environmental surveys we are conducting, alongside feedback provided through consultation.

equipment. Assessments are being carried out to identify areas that could be set aside to create new or enhance existing habitats for biodiversity net gain, as well as buffer zones to maintain a respectful distance between infrastructure and existing homes, landscape, ecological features, and Public Rights of Way.

The principle components of the solar park include:

• Ground mounted solar photovoltaic (PV) **panels:** positioned directly on the ground to efficiently convert sunlight into electricity. While it is too early to confirm the specific solar panels we would use for Lime Down Solar Park, we fixed panels, with a maximum height of the panels (including their supports) to be 4.5 metres. The for no more than a small portion of the day. The typical height of fixed panels is around 3.5m.

PV module mounting structures: robust structures securely holding the solar panels

Supporting infrastructure including:

- **Inverters:** converting the direct current (DC) electricity generated by the panels into alternating current (AC). AC electricity is
- **Transformers:** to increase the voltage of national grid.
- **Switchgear:** to manage the flow of electricity and direct it to where it is

- Battery Energy Storage System (BESS): an on-site facility that would provide an important balancing service for the national grid by storing electricity generated by the solar PV panels when demand for electricity is low so it can then be exported onto the grid when demand peaks.
- **On-site cables:** to connect the solar panels and the battery energy storage system to the inverters, which in turn connect to the transformers. transformers and switchgear and from switchgear to off-site electrical infrastructure.
- On-site substation: to export electricity from the solar park to the national grid, ensuring it is accessible for public use.
- Security fencing: to enclose the operational areas of the site along with pole-mounted internal facing closed circuit television (CCTV) deployed around

Components of a typical solar farm

- 1. Solar energy
- 2. Fencing
- 3. Solar panels
- 7. Battery storage 4. Inverter (DC to AC 8. Underground cable power converter)

5. Landscape area

6. Substation





- Site accesses: designated entry points to allow safe access to the different areas of the solar park.
- **Planting:** new trees and vegetation planted around the site perimeter to enhance biodiversity and contribute to the overall landscape improvement.

In addition, during construction one or more temporary construction compounds will be required,

connected into the existing electricity transmission system at the National Grid's Melksham substation.

Solar PV – additional design considerations

Solar PV technology is advancing quickly. To ensure we can incorporate the most current technology when we begin construction, our development consent application will be designed to be flexible.

When it comes to our application, we will seek a consent that restricts aspects of the solar park which have potential environmental impacts including:

- Solar panel height
- Dimensions of the infrastructure i.e. • onsite substations
- Location of the panels across the site

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5. Connecting to the national grid

6. Project location map

The electricity generated by Lime Down Solar Park is expected to be exported to the national grid at Melksham substation.

An electrical connection will form part of the design for the project to connect the solar park into the national grid.

Cable route search corridors

At this stage we have identified three cable route search corridors an electrical connection could follow between the solar park and Melksham substation:

- South from the 400kV substation, going across the M4 near Sevington then to the east of Yatton Keynell, continuing to run south across the A420, then west of Gastard and east of Corsham until it reaches Melksham substation.
- . South from the 400kV substation, crossing the M4 near Leigh Delamere, before continuing to the west of Kington St. Michael, across the A420, east of Gastard and West of Norton.
- A route that broadly follows the A350 road having run south from M4 junction 17.

We have selected cable corridors to minimise ecological impact and preserve cultural heritage by avoiding designated ecological areas, mature and historic woodlands, listed buildings, scheduled monuments, and conservation areas. Additionally, we have aimed to reduce their length and the number of crossings over roads, railways, watercourses, and hedgerows as much as possible.

We are now carrying out studies to refine these corridors so we can select one and determine the exact route the connection between the solar park and Melksham substation will take.

What is a cable route corridor?

A route corridor is a broad ribbon of land through which an electrical connection could be routed. The corridor may vary in width depending on a range of factors including the location of:

- Built up areas where people live. •
- Infrastructure including roads and • railway lines.
- Physical landscape features as well as other features that may be sensitive in terms of ecology, heritage or landscape.
- Protected sites including nature conservation areas.

Building the connection

We anticipate building the connection for Lime Down Solar Park using underground cable.

Underground cables can be buried in areas without land restrictions. However, after the land is restored, restrictions may be applied to reduce the risk of cables being disturbed or damaged.

A sealing end compound will be needed where a section of underground cable comes above ground. For example, where it joins Melksham substation.





7. The development process

Lime Down Solar Park is anticipated as being able to generate around 500MW of electricity. Since its generation capacity exceeds 50MW, the project is classified as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP).

Planning

The development consenting regime for an NSIP comes under the Planning Act 2008. This means that we need to submit an application for a Development Consent Order (DCO) to build, operate and decommission Lime Down Solar Park to the Planning Inspectorate, rather than the local planning authority.

In the case of energy related NSIPs, the Planning Inspectorate acts on behalf of the Secretary of State for Energy security and Net Zero. The Planning Inspectorate will carry out an examination of our application and then make a recommendation to the Secretary of State on whether to grant consent. The Secretary of State will make the final decision on whether to grant consent for Lime Down Solar Park.

We expect the development process through DCO submission and examination will take between two to three years. We intend to submit our application to the Planning Inspectorate in early 2025. Subject to obtaining consent, the earliest construction would start is 2027.

While the DCO application will not be submitted to the local planning authority, Wiltshire Council and stakeholder groups will play a key role in the planning process and be consulted as the project progresses.

You can find more information about the application process for NSIP projects on the Planning Inspectorate website at: **infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk**

Consultation

Public consultation forms an important part of the pre-application process for NSIPs. Early ongoing engagement will serve to inform and influence the design of our project throughout the pre-application stage of the development process; with Wiltshire Council, political representatives, and local communities all having an important role to play.

We are committed to engaging openly throughout the development process, undertaking clear and comprehensive public consultation before we submit our application. The development of our proposals for Lime Down Solar Park will be an iterative process; structured to make sure that people receive the right information at the right time and have the opportunity to make a meaningful contribution to the process.

We are committed to open engagement throughout the development process and welcome views at any time. However, before submitting our DCO application to the Planning Inspectorate, we plan to conduct two stages of consultation to invite feedback on our proposals.

Holding two stages of consultation means that we can present our evolving proposals and share how feedback has been considered.

Where we are now

We are currently at the first stage of consultation. This is non-statutory consultation, and while not formally required, is intended to provide local communities and interested parties with the opportunity to gain a better understanding of our proposed development and influence how our emerging proposals evolve.

The aim of this consultation is to introduce Island Green Power and the overall project, share our early-stage proposals, and give you the opportunity to share your views and local knowledge.

We will use the feedback we receive to inform and shape a strong set of proposals that are sensitive to and respect the concerns of local communities while generating clean energy.

Statutory Consultation (Autumn / Winter 2024)

The next stage of consultation will be a statutory. We anticipate this will take place later this year.

Ahead of statutory consultation taking place, we will work with Wiltshire Council to develop a Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC). This will set out how we engage with and obtain feedback from local communities and residents on our detailed proposals for Lime Down Solar Park. Start of desk-based environmental surveys

First stage of community

consultation on SoCC

Development timeline*

Development of and

consultation (non-statutory) launches

Prepare the DCO and supporting documents Finalise EIA and prepare the Environmental Statement

Finalise DCO application

DCO Examination and determination process



8. Environmental Impact Assessment

Lime Down Solar Park is classified as an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) development. This requires us to assess the potential significant environmental impacts of our proposed development, as mandated by the Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017.

EIA is the iterative process in which the assessment of environmental impacts is carried out in parallel with the development design process.

We will use EIA as a tool to identify the potential effects Lime Down might have on the environment positive as well as negative.

The purpose of the EIA process is to make sure that where we identify any significant effects, we put in place measures to avoid or reduce any negative impacts, while also seeking to enhance positive effects.

EIA is broken down into many topics that we need to assess. These include:

- Ecology and biodiversity
- Landscape and visual
- Cultural heritage
- Transport and access
- Soils and agriculture
- Hydrology flood risk and drainage
- Socio-economics, tourism and recreation
- Noise and vibration
- Climate change
- Air quality
- Human health
- Glint and glare

For each of these topics we will assess the impact of the project on them throughout its lifecycle from construction through to operation and decommissioning.

The results of the EIA will be set out in the Environmental Statement (ES) which will be included in our final DCO application.



The EIA process for major infrastructure projects is broken down into three stages as follows:

Stage 1: EIA Scoping

- We are preparing an EIA Scoping Report to submit to the Planning Inspectorate (PINS).
- This will provide an overview of our proposed development and the environmental baseline surveys that we intend to undertake, describe how we intend to assess any likely significant environmental effects, and set out the proposed scope and content of the EIA and ES.
- The scope of the EIA will be informed by technical expertise and by engagement with stakeholders to ensure that the methodologies for environmental assessments are sufficient to accurately identify
- proposed approach to EIA and the topics to take forward for assessment and presented in the ES.

Stage 2: Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR)

- We are required by the Planning Act 2008 to prepare a PEIR.
- This is a core technical document that will set out the initial findings of the EIA and identify those measures we are proposing to reduce, enhance and improve the effects our proposed development may have on the environment.
- The PEIR will be published at statutory consultation so consultees can develop an informed view of the potential impacts Lime Down may have on the local environment and provide us with their views and feedback.

Stage 3: Environmental Statement (ES)

- After statutory consultation we will produce the ES.
- This will be prepared based on the Scoping Opinion and will advance the content of the PEIR, incorporating feedback received during statutory consultation and the outcomes of our assessments undertaken.
- The ES will describe any changes to the project and those measures we are proposing to implement to reduce, improve or enhance the impacts of the project.
- The ES, along with a Non-Technical Summary (NTS), will form part of the DCO application we submit to PINS.

More information

Our initial work has identified a number of environmental considerations which will inform the development of our detailed design for Lime Down Solar Park. A summary of these topics can be found overleaf.

9. The local environment

We have been getting to know the local environment through site visits, early-stage environmental surveys and desk-based information gathering. The results of this work will help to shape our project design.

Because we are at an early stage of the project development process, the information below provides a summary of the assessments we will to carry out and the work we have done so far. We will provide more information on the likely environmental impacts associated with our proposed development and how these will be managed at the next stage of consultation.

Landscape and visual

A full Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment will be produced so we can identify any potential visual impacts associated with the development we're proposing and put in place appropriate measures to reduce them. For example, views of equipment could be screened by enhancing existing hedgerows and planting new ones.

We are also committed to going beyond the requirements and plan to undertake a Residential Visual Amenity Assessment which seeks to mitigate potential impacts on private views and amenity. Where appropriate, we will propose bespoke measures to visually reduce the potential impacts of the development for each of the properties that may be impacted.

Ecology and Biodiversity

Detailed survey work will be carried out to understand where and what wildlife is currently found across the site so we can identify the potential impacts of our proposals on local species, as well as ways we can protect, promote and enhance wildlife habitats in our plans. These will include:

- Breeding bird surveys
- Bat surveys
- Badger surveys
- Great crested newt surveys
- Water vole and otter surveys

Cultural heritage

We recognise the cultural and historical importance of this area of Wiltshire, and are carrying out studies to fully understand the significance of heritage assets in the surrounding area, such as Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas and Scheduled Monuments. We have undertaken site visits and desk-based assessment to understand the heritage value of the site, and will carry out detailed ground investigation and archaeological surveys to ensure that any assets are protected and avoided during the construction phase of the project. We will also be undertaking field walking and a geo-physical survey of the entire project area to get a better understanding of the potential for buried archaeology.

Transport and access

We are evaluating traffic and access considerations, and have undertaken initial site visits to identify the existing access points into Lime Down Solar Park. We will assess the potential impact of our proposals on traffic, and produce a Construction Traffic Management Plan to outline how we will minimise impact on local traffic during construction and operation.

Soils and agriculture

We will carry out surveys of the agricultural land within the site to identify its agricultural value. A Site Selection report included in our application for development consent will explain how the areas of land proposed for Lime Down Solar farm were identified and selected.

Hydrology, flood risk and drainage

Emerging flood risk findings from initial research we have carried out indicate that the majority of the project area is located within Flood Zone 1 which is classified as having a 'low' risk to flooding. However, some of the project area is located within Flood Zones 2 and 3, so we will prepare a Flood Risk Assessment in line with the requirements of National Policy Statement for Energy. We have also identified land between some Lime Down sites (B and C) is located within Flood Zones 2 and 3.

Additionally, we will conduct a drainage assessment that describes baseline land drainage conditions and existing site runoff rates, also producing a concept strategy for managing site runoff during the operational lifetime of the development, inclusive of resilience to climate change.

Socio-economics, tourism and recreation

We recognise the need to deliver Lime Down Solar Park sensitively and make sure we have considered local communities in designing the scheme. We are therefore seeking to design the project in a way which will maintain amenity and provide continued access to recreational benefits in the local area.

We are committed to keeping Public Rights of Way in place and open to the public. There may be temporary diversions during the construction period for safety reasons.

Noise and vibration

We will carry out baseline noise monitoring at those residential properties closest to the site area to understand the noise levels currently experienced.

Solar developments do not tend to produce a significant amount of noise during operation. However, we will model noise which could arise from the electrical transformers across the site and the cooling equipment associated with the battery storage facility, which has potential to be a source of noise from the development. This is so we can assess any potential impact at the nearest properties and then determine appropriate mitigation to include as part of the design.

Other environmental topics

As part of the EIA, we will be undertaking baseline surveys, modelling and assessment of a range of other issues including, but not limited to:

- Climate change
- Air quality
- Human health
- Waste
- Arboriculture
- Ground conditions

We invite your views on our proposed approach and welcome any information you might have about the project area that could our understanding of the effects our proposals could have on the environment.



10. Additional considerations

Community benefits

Island Green Power offers a community benefits package with the renewable energy schemes that it promotes.

being best placed to recommend what they believe a

We are committed to working with you to identify and define community benefits. Therefore, as part of this initial stage of consultation, we are inviting suggestions for local schemes and projects we could support – including both on-site and off-site initiatives.

On-site environmental mitigation and enhancements will be inherent within the material design and woodland, hedgerows and ponds, and delivery of encourage more native wildlife increasing habitats and considering are listed below: food sources for insects and birds, and maintaining existing wildlife corridors. Additional considerations public access and recreation, and improving amenity resources in the area.

Off-site, we are considering the possibility of existing community amenities, such as sports facilities, • children's playground, and village halls, or provision of electric charging points or provision of subsidised solar PV for domestic installation.

Examples of wider off-site initiatives we could support include improvements to existing community amenities such as sports facilities, children's playground, and village halls, or provision of electric charging points.

boards, wildflower meadow planting, and seating or bird watching areas, as well as the introduction of new paths across and around the site area. We encourage feedback from anyone who has ideas on this topic.

Biodiversity net gain (BNG)

A well-managed solar farm can be a nature reserve - helping boost and protect wildlife and extend

their projects will boost biodiversity by a minimum 10 per cent. This means our plans need to ensure that local wildlife habitats are in a measurably better state than before. Lime Down Solar Park could boost local biodiversity through means such as establishing wildflower areas that provide habitats for pollinators and birds, promoting wetland habitats to reduce flood risk and support aquatic and avian life, and restoring hedgerows and native species.

enhances local wildlife by delivering a net gain in biodiversity, specific examples of initiatives we are

- Sowing land between and under the arrays as grassland and meadow management with a mix of some areas being grazed.
- Filling gaps in existing hedgerows with additional
- Managing hedgerows to enable wildlife to benefit from them year-round.
- Maintaining appropriate vegetated buffers with
- Installing bird nest and bat boxes on trees to provide opportunities for a range of local species.
- New tree planting where appropriate.

Alongside the results of the environmental studies we are undertaking to assess how to achieve biodiversity net gain, we welcome views on how we can best enhance the local environment and deliver BNG.



11. Taking part in this consultation

This initial stage of consultation on our emerging proposals for Lime Down Solar Park is open from 14 March to 26 April 2024.

During this time, we are inviting feedback on:

- The overall project.
- The location of infrastructure associated with the solar park.
- The broad route corridors for an underground cable that would connect the solar park into the national grid.
- Local projects and community initiatives we could support to create benefits for communities in proximity of our proposed scheme.
- . Additional considerations for how we deliver the next stage of consultation.

There are a number of ways you can learn more about what we are consulting on and how you can take part:

- Join us at one of our information events or webinars to find out more about our proposals, speak to members of the team and provide us with your comments. A list of events taking place can be found on our website.
- Visit our project website to access information • about the project at this stage and submit feedback to the consultation. All the information being made available at the information events we are holding will also be available on the website.
- Contact our community relations team if you have any questions on our proposals or this consultation, if you would like help accessing the information available or support to respond to the consultation (see back page for contact details).

How to provide us with your views

You can submit your comments to this consultation online or in writing

- Online: go our project website www.limedownsolar.co.uk - and complete the online feedback form.
- In writing: collect a feedback form from an in-person information event or contact our community relations team to request a copy (see back page for contact details). Complete as many sections of the form as you like and hand it back in at an event to a member of the team or post it to us at FREEPOST Lime Down Solar. You do not need a stamp.

Any letters or emails sent to the project Freepost address or email during the consultation period will be considered as feedback.

Please provide us with your response to this consultation by Friday 26 April 2024.

Your feedback

We will acknowledge and record all the comments submitted to this consultation; taking them into consideration to help inform and shape our proposals. We will not however be able to respond to you individually.

12. Next steps

After this consultation closes, we will review all the comments we receive. Together with the findings from our ongoing environmental and technical studies, we will use your feedback to help us refine our proposals for Lime Down Solar Park.

We will then hold a second stage of consultation and ask for your views on:

- Our updated design for the solar park, including the location of equipment.
- The route an underground cable could follow to connect the solar park into the national grid.
- How we are proposing to build the project.
- The measures we are proposing to reduce the impact of the project.

We will review our detailed proposals in light of feedback from this second consultation, along with the outcomes of ongoing assessments, to finalise and submit our application for development consent to the Planning Inspectorate.

As the applicant, we have a duty to demonstrate how we have taken your views into account in developing our final proposals for Lime Down Solar Park. The application we submit to the Planning Inspectorate will include a Consultation Report summarising all the issues raised in consultation feedback, along with an explanation of how we have taken views into account to develop our final proposals.

This report, along with all the other application documents will be published on the Planning Inspectorate's website should our application be accepted for examination. We will email or write to those who have taken part in the consultation to confirm when this information is available to view.

Further opportunities to contribute

The second stage of consultation we hold will likely be the last time we consult on our proposals for Lime Down Solar Park. However, subject to our application being accepted for examination, you will be able to register your interest in our proposals with the Planning Inspectorate who will then keep you informed about its progress and provide you with information on further opportunities to contribute to the project development process.

Register for updates

If you would like to be kept informed about our project, please register your details with us by completing the registration form on the project website or by sending an email to the community relations team (see back page for details).



Contact us

If you have any questions our proposals or this consultation, would like help accessing the information available or responding to the consultation please contact our community relations team using any of the following methods:



info@limedownsolar.co.uk



Freephone 0808 175 6656 (open 09.00-17.00 Monday to Friday excluding bank holidays)



FREEPOST Lime Down Solar



www.limedownsolar.co.uk

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