



Department for Energy Security & Net Zero

Rt Hon Lord Hunt of Kings Heath OBE
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Helen Whately MP
House of Commons
London
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Our ref: MCB2024/21055
Your ref: HW60844

4 February 2025

Dear Helen,

Thank you for your letter of 18 December to the Secretary of State regarding concerns over the Cleve Hill Solar Park project. I am responding as this matter falls under my Ministerial portfolio.

Responding to each of your points in turn:

1. What agency is responsible for ensuring the safety of the Cleve Hill Solar Park development?

The safety of the Cleve Hill Solar Park development is overseen by several organisations, each with specific responsibilities.

- i. Health and Safety Executive (“HSE”) – regulate the safety of battery storage systems, ensuring that installers and operators implement necessary measures throughout the construction, operation and decommissioning phases.
- ii. Kent Fire and Rescue Service – collaborate with developers to address fire safety concerns, providing guidance on emergency response and ensuring compliance with fire safety regulations.
- iii. Swale Borough Council – is involved, as the local planning authority, in approving safety management plans and ensuring that the development adheres to local planning conditions
- iv. Environment Agency – considers the environmental and public health risks associated with large-scale battery storage sites and may implement measures such as environmental permitting to manage these risks.

2. Who will be inspecting it before it is switched on?

The responsibilities of the above organisations require the solar park to meet all safety, environmental, and regulatory standards before it begins generating electricity.

3. Will the Government be adding battery storage systems to the environmental permitting regulations? If so, when will the consultation take place?

As this question relates to environmental permitting regulations, this should be directed to the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) who is responsible for those regulations. We understand that Defra will consult by June 2025 on the principle of including grid-scale batteries within the Environmental Permitting Regulations (“EPR”). Defra and regulators will engage with industry and other stakeholders on the detailed design of the proposals to include batteries under the EPR, including scope and standards. The detailed proposal would then require further consultation and the laying of a statutory instrument after June 2025.

4. If not, what approach to ensuring the safety of grid-scale batteries do the Government intend to take?

Grid-scale lithium-ion batteries are regulated by the HSE within a robust framework which requires battery designers, installers, and operators to take the necessary measures to ensure health and safety throughout all stages of the system's processes and is kept under review to respond to changing circumstances. In 2018, DESNZ set up an industry-led electricity Storage Health and Safety Governance Group which is responsible for ensuring that an appropriate, robust, and future-proofed health and safety framework is sustained.

I hope you will find this helpful. Thank you again for taking the time to write.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rt Hon Lord Hunt". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "R" and "H".

RT HON LORD HUNT OF KINGS HEATH OBE
Minister for Energy Security and Net Zero