

Frequently asked questions

Local people who attended the public exhibition on 12th June and who have sent in feedback and questions via the website, have helped to draw out the main issues that we are considering as part of our survey work. Their views will also help shape the mitigation measures that we put in place.

Here are some of the issues and questions that cropped up most often:

What will be the impact of the solar farm on the Check Bar Road/Angus core path 215/Sidlaw path network?

All walking routes - and the Core Path - will remain open. During construction of the solar farm, any detours required temporarily, will be put in place. Any other local walks through the farm that are altered, will be clearly marked - and alternative routes provided. The landowner remains very happy to encourage people to walk through the farm and enjoy the countryside.

Due to security requirements the panels do need to be fenced off, but hedgerow planting will hide the fences where possible.

There are already flooding problems within Fowlis and Binns farm properties. Will the solar farm make an already bad problem worse?

There are known, existing, flood problems in this area; it is likely that the flooding is a result of climate change by way of increased rainfall and this solar project - by its nature - is a direct response to U.K. efforts to combat climate change whilst assisting the Angus Council Climate Emergency Strategy.

Detailed hydrological impact assessments have already been conducted these indicate there is NO increased flood risk posed by the solar farm on the surrounding area.

Nevertheless, we are preparing a detailed plan of water run-off mitigation measures because construction of the solar farm would in fact provide a new opportunity to improve the current drainage facilities and waterways running through the farm.

These measures are aimed at reducing future flood risk around this site. Measures may include 'magic margins' (planting of specific grasses and plants to soak up water); measures will be designed in collaboration with James Hutton Institute and the landowner.

Furthermore, Solar 2 have been liaising with individually affected local residents as to the current problems they face in relation to flooding and will use their knowledge in designing mitigation.

These designs will be made public when they have been finalised.

How will this project impact on views – from neighbouring properties and further afield? Will there be 'glint and glare'?

There is no doubt there will be views from the nearby surrounding area but as these panels are relatively low off the ground (less than 3 m) strategic – and significant - hedgerow and tree planting programmes will help remove or reduce views from neighbouring properties.

Examples of the planting regime will be shown in the planning application. If the solar farm is consented, hedgerow and tree planting can start well before construction of the solar farm.

A detailed glint and glare assessment has shown that once screening is in place, there will be no adverse effect on neighbouring properties. It is worth remembering that solar panels are designed to absorb light, not reflect it.

How will the site impact on biodiversity? Wildlife?

The current farming practice on this site - of intensive rotational cropping - results in the area having a low ecological value.

Development of a solar farm allows the farming use to change. The whole site will be under planted with grass and/or wildflower meadows to allow sheep to graze. Furthermore, intensively farmed land does not allow the soil to rest and regenerate. The 40-year solar farm lifecycle, will allow the soil structure to recover and allow the site to act as a better habitat for all types of species from insects, birds to small mammals.

The solar farm design sticks to the current field patterns ensuring current wildlife corridors remain in place and the new hedgerows that will be planted and together with the 'magic margins', will create new wildlife corridors and habitats

Which routes will you use during construction and how will this impact on surrounding villages and the road network which is already busy and narrow?

With the current design and panel choice, it is likely to require c320 artic lorry movement to bring components to the site. Transport route assessments are ongoing to ensure disturbance is kept to a minimum during any construction period (likely to last 3-4 months).

In discussions with the landowner, he estimates that one acre of crop production in one farming year requires one artic lorry movement per year. The project will be approx. 300 acres and so following this logic, by removing 300 acres from arable crop production, there will be 300 fewer artic movements a year for lifetime of the project.

Routine maintenance of the solar farm requires only a 'white van' type or 4 x 4 vehicle and will be scheduled every month or so.

Where will the grid connection go and how will disruption be avoided?

The grid connection route proposed by the grid operator – SSE – runs from the site to the Charleston substation on the Kingsway in Dundee. The final route will be determined following a detailed assessment of impact on local ecology/archaeology etcetera. We plan that cables will be buried in road verges where possible, reducing the requirement to dig up tarmac. We will also look to run cables in field margins where possible.

Community benefit: how has the level been arrived at and why is it so much lower than for a wind farm?

The level of community benefit proposed, follows UK solar industry guidance, which is £500 per installed MW, for the duration of the project. The Scottish Government guidance on community benefit for renewables projects was drawn up before any large scale, utility solar farms were built in Scotland and therefore relates to onshore wind which was the key technology at time of writing.

It is worth remembering that community benefit is a voluntary contribution by the developer, as a recognition of the disruption during construction and of the changes that will occur to views. The construction of a solar farm is significantly quicker and less disruptive than a big wind farm would be and has significantly less impact than a wind farm would on landscape, communities and amenity.

The mechanics of how the community benefit fund will administered are being discussed with the host community council – Muirhead, Birkhill & Liff and we are hopeful they will engage either Foundation Scotland or Local Energy Scotland to advise them, should they require support.

What will happen at the end of life – recycling of panels/responsible disposal?

As part of the planning permission – if granted – a condition will be imposed on the project whereby, before the first spade is put in the ground, a decommissioning bond will be put in place and held by Angus Council and the Landowner, to the value of having the site completely returned to its current state,. The value of this bond is reassessed throughout the solar farm lifespan to ensure sufficient funds are available for the decommissioning. Details of this will be available in the planning condition should the planning permission be granted.