## **Battery Storage at Dog Trap Lane – Planning Proposal**

## Presentation by:

## James Woods (Pelagic Energy - Planning Applicant) and

## Phil Roden (Axis PED - Planning Consultant for Pelagic)

## re **Planning Application PL/2022/00404**

 Key points:

* Pelagic explained their business background and a summary of the need for battery storage and how it works, highlighting key benefits of proposed battery/ energy storage scheme (BESS) re meeting government policy/ GHG emission targets, which increased demand on the electricity grid.  The government target of carbon neutral by 2050 was explained. They explained the lease is for 40 years and screened with a 5-meter wooden wall around it – which they felt was sensitive to the environment. Trees would also be planted – although they would not be beneficial to the aesthetic for 10-15 years
* Minety Substation was one of 260 (in total) major electricity hubs in the UK, of which half had remaining ‘surplus capacity’ for energy inputs (whether BESS or Solar PV etc). A noise assessment was offered as part of their explanation of 32db (a quiet bedroom at night, or a low hum)
* Pelagic had/ and had identified other development sites the area - the site near Dog Trap Lane would require substantial cabling works along B4040 to connect to the sub-station.
* Technical and environmental factors were outlined; Pelagic said they could do more to try to reduce perceived negative community impact of the BESS, including more screening etc.

The explained that thermal runaway risks on legacy lithium-ion batteries were very low risk with the technology they are proposing.

Ecological and biodiversity surveys have been undertaken – but Pelagic did not explain the impact these identified.

Flood risk was considered, and Pelagic felt that permeable stone was a good substitute for the land that was being dug out to support concrete foundations for the batteries.

The parish council committed to sending Pelagic’s pack out to the community.

The question was asked “Will there be other batterie sites? There are batteries sites in various stages of development – and some not in use. So why do we need another site so far away from the substation while others are closer. Why can’t this be closer”

A: Minety is a super grid, and we need to put as much capacity in where we can.

It was felt that the location was not appropriate and too far away from the substation site.

Pelagic confirmed that the site would only be connected to the grid to collect and reuse power when it is needed. They did not answer the location question clearly, beyond this being the land they had acquired. Not that it was most suitable. They reconfirmed that need for battery storage nationwide to be net zero by 2050. And to decarbonise the grid by 2035.

The question of why near us was posed. The answer was that there is an available grid connection. Cable would be laid underground – and along the highways to reach the substation.

It was asked how Minety benefits Socially, Economically and Technically – how will it benefit Minety? Primarily the committed answer was a national benefit to the national grid requirements. Assistance in supporting a Jubilee wood project with the parish council was mentioned – but not committed.

It was asked how profitable the project is too Pelagic – no answer was forthcoming beyond a pension fund backing and Constantine energy pension fund – owned by Constantine group. A privately owned company.

Further concern was raised about the cumulative impact locally with many battery storage sites in progress. In addition, the financial benefit of building on “inexpensive” land rather than brownfield was raised – and would some of those savings be contributed to Minety community.

It was explained by Pelagic that there were no brownfield sites around Minety Substation, and no land that was available for use.

It was observed that the white noise of 32db was taken across the whole frequency spectrum. However, 32db purely at low frequency would be much more noticeable.

A visit to a site was requested to support an understanding of noise levels. Pelagic responded with information about how often the batteries might be active. It was reiterated that a requirement for a site visit was important.

Neighbouring properties complained that there was no information presented to them until the PC informed them.

It was confirmed that a small pond was going to be required to manage run off from the site. It was confirmed that this would be 2 meters deep. BUT it was said that it may not be needed by Pelagic, subject to drainage strategy investigation. It was confirmed that run off is purely rainwater, and no other contaminates.

Pelagic confirmed that the screens were required as the noise levels would be exceeded at neighbouring properties if the screening was not installed. The fence would be wooden.

It was confirmed that woodland planting would soften the “view” of the screening.

It was confirmed that the lithium-ion batteries were relatively safe (compared to legacy batteries). The battery management system is expected to shut down cells that are out of a normal operating system range. The computerised monitoring system is automatic not manned.

Pelagic confirmed that there is no permanent lighting on site. Lighting equipment would be brought to site if needed.

The Parish Council would like conditions attached to the plan to ensure safety of batteries – using latest technology.

The PC also would like additional screening measures in place.

It was asked about the strategy of battery sites, and Pelagic said they are not involved in other sites except the one off the access track to the substation. The other site has not been developed. It is a greenfield side by the substation.

Pelagic confirmed they made an application 18 months ago for their other site – but have not started development there. They confirmed both sites are likely to be developed at much the same time if possible – subject to planning.

Pelagic confirmed that the site would not be redeveloped within the 40-year lease with alternative solutions. It may be that batteries are upgraded as technology develops. Alternative solutions would require new planning.

Pelagic were asked about options to put additional batteries near the substation where there is physical room? The current location is not advantageous to the community – closer to the substation is better. Pelagic confirmed that this was the only location they had access to, and therefore the only place they could request planning permission for, although battery locations nearer were probably available, but not with an option for Pelagic.

Pelagic felt they have put a proposal forward that had limited impact on the area, although can only put a proposal forward where they have negotiated a lease.

It was felt by the attendees that there are better, closer places to the substation where batteries could go without upsetting the community and the countryside.

It was proposed by the attendees that the land proposed for use was not in the right place, and that they took the land offered to them without consideration for other land areas. It was confirmed by Pelagic that they engaged with farmers and landowners near to the site, and that it is easier when the landowner “puts their hand up” and offers the land.

It was explained that the site entrance was not in an appropriate place, with road traffic dangers, and visibility from the road needing additional consideration

Pelagic confirmed that there were no additional height requirements (for cooling etc) above the body of the battery housing.

Pelagic said that they would look at access, and that the screening would reduce visibility. Pelagic said there was no ducting on top of their battery housing.

The state of the road condition on Dog Trap Lane was highlighted – it is considered a dangerous road and has not been resurfaced for 40 years. (Chuck Berry said he would raise this with the Council.)

The final view of the meeting was that Minety would suffer because the land for Pelagic’s option is in the wrong place for the community.

Pelagic confirmed that a planning refusal would result in an appeal. Minety felt a large industrial installation on a green field site that impacts the community is not appropriate when other sites with a much-reduced impact are available. Albeit not owned by Pelagic. Pelagic are simply requesting an application first.

It was stated that the area is an important wildlife location – with wildlife living close by in the woodland.

It was asked if adjoining fields would be developed in the future, as they are owned by the same landowner? Pelagic did not answer this question. The PC confirmed our concern and our intent to prevent this should planning be approved.

It was confirmed that objections should be submitted before March 11th.

See next page for Parish feedback

**Parish feedback:**

i/ Strong negative feedback, concerns about noise, aesthetic and environmental impact voiced by parishioners in the meeting.  Negative feedback also received by the council prior to the meeting.

ii/ One resident/ adjoining landowner was sceptical of the noise impact assessment – concentrated low frequency sound would have bigger impact than a ‘louder but wider range’ frequency noise.

iii/ Other residents commented about the poor choice of location, impact on enjoying of their properties, views from their homes and disruption – also the poor surface quality of Dog Trap Lane.

iv/ Residents frustrated that no prior notice had been given to them either by Pelagic or Wiltshire Council … they’d only recently been advised of the application by MPC.

v/ Another resident asked if proposed site entrance, which would be opposite his front gate, could be moved northwards. He was horrified that development of rural land was allowed, especially with so much energy related development already taking place on the other (west) side of his property nearer the Substation.

vi/ Dog Trap Lane Residents felt the proposed site entrance near the bend was potentially dangerous as cars travelled as some speed along that road, given national 60mph speed limit applied.

vii/ Parishioners posed details questions to Pelagic as to why this site specifically had been selected/ why Pelagic felt this site it was particularly suitable?  There was mute response on this … it was simply a site that Pelagic had managed to secure an ‘option right’ over – Pelagic had considered that the relatively discreet location away from the road would be better than it being closer to public view.

viii/ It was common ground that parishioners and councillors considered more suitable sites could be identified nearer to the Substation.

ix/ An informal show of hands showed the vast majority objected outright to the BESS planning application; there were no votes in favour of it.

The council later deliberated the pros and cons of the BESS application.  Whilst acknowledging the need for energy infrastructure development in the area and nationally, the Dog Trap Lane site was not considered to be appropriate for this type of development due to the unspoilt rural nature of the site and the impact on local residents (health and safety, noise and visible impact) and impact on wildlife.