



Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities

**Department for Levelling Up, Housing and
Communities**

2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Your reference: KB49881
Our reference: PO2024/08331

Rt Hon Dame Karen Bradley

By email

3 June 2024

Dear Rt Hon Dame Karen Bradley,

Thank you for your email of 28 March to the Rt Hon Michael Gove on behalf of your constituent, Cllr Andrew Batson of 4 The Cottages, The Green, Bagnall, Staffordshire, Moorlands, ST9 9JR, regarding Bagnall Parish Council's concerns about fire safety at a proposed battery energy storage facility. I am replying on behalf of the Department.

As I hope you can understand, due to the quasi-judicial role that Ministers play in the planning process, I am unable to comment on any specific planning application. However, I can provide the following general comments, which I hope will be helpful.

This Government has put in place a regulatory framework for grid-scale battery storage which is kept under review to respond to changing circumstances. Following a recent review, the Government, through the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), committed to consult on including battery storage systems under the environmental permitting regulations. This Government also committed to consulting on adding Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) into the Environmental Permitting Regulations (England and Wales) 2016 (EPRs). I note Cllr Batson's urgency for action to be taken in this area, and I hope he will appreciate that, owing to the upcoming general election, I am unable to elaborate on potential next steps. It will be for the next Government to make any future policy decisions.

This Government has been working with the industry-led Storage Health and Safety Governance Group, whose members include the National Fire Chiefs Council and the Environment Agency, to develop new health and safety guidance for grid scale battery storage.

In August 2023, this Government updated its Planning Practice guidance to encourage battery storage developers to engage with Local Fire and Rescue Services (FRSs) before submitting a planning application, so that issues of the siting and location of Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) are dealt with before the application is made. The guidance also encourages local planning authorities to refer to the guidance on BESS published by the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) for consideration when determining applications and to consult with FRSs before issuing decisions.

I would encourage Cllr Batson to write to ministers again after the election should he wish to discuss this matter in more detail.

In the meantime, thank you for taking the time to write to us.

Yours sincerely,

Alex Badrick
Deputy Principal Private Secretary