

PRESS STATEMENT

28 July 2021

Naturalis submits planning application for Blandford Hill Eco Hub

Naturalis, a joint venture between renewable energy companies REG Power Management and Falck Renewables, has submitted a planning application for the Blandford Hill Eco Hub plans to Dorset Council. If approved, the eco hub will bring ultra-rapid electric vehicle (EV) charging to rural Dorset, powered by a solar farm and battery storage.

The hub would be situated near Winterborne Whitechurch along the A354, an important transport route between Blandford Forum and Dorchester.

Matt Partridge, Development Director for the project said: "The Blandford Hill Eco Hub is an exciting opportunity to combine ultra-rapid electric vehicle charging with a solar farm and batteries. This way people can charge their electric cars using green electricity that is generated on-site, further reducing their carbon footprints. Significantly driving down carbon emissions from transport is vital if the UK is to achieve the Government's climate change targets. Projects such as the Blandford Hill Eco Hub are an important step in the right direction."

The UK has pledged to reach Net Zero emissions in less than 30 years and as part of this the Government is planning to ban the sale of new petrol and diesel cars in less than 9 years' time (by 2030). In their recently published paper *Decarbonising Transport: A Better, Greener Britain*¹, the Department for Transport confirmed that "Removing tailpipe emissions from cars and vans is fundamental to decarbonising transport, as they were responsible for almost a fifth (19%) of the UK's total domestic greenhouse gas emissions in 2019."

Mr Partridge commented: "Electric vehicles will become increasingly common over the coming years so it is vitally important to have public EV charging infrastructure in place to support this shift. It will be important to ensure that rural areas are not left behind, as they were with broadband roll-out. The Blandford Hill Eco Hub will ensure that the growing number of EVs in this part of rural Dorset, and those that pass through, will have access to modern and convenient charging facilities where, at present, a regional gap exists."

Dorset Council has published sustainability ambitions as part of its emerging Local Plan, reflecting the Climate and Ecological Emergency the council declared in November 2019. Dorset Council is expected to make a decision on the Blandford Hill Eco Hub application later in the year.

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https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1002285/decarbonising-transport-a-better-greener-britain.pdf

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About the site

The proposed site is situated about 6 miles to the south west of Blandford Forum, approximately ¼ mile north-east of the village of Winterborne Whitechurch. The site is currently used for arable farming and is immediately south of the A354, while the A354 would provide direct, safe access to the eco hub. Excess power from the solar farm would be fed into the local electricity network at Winterborne Kingston substation, with all cabling underground.

About Electric Vehicles

The EV sector is critical to achieving UK Government's commitment to net zero emissions in road transport by 2050. This is highlighted by the Government's ban on the sale of new petrol and diesel cars after 2030 and in its National Infrastructure Strategy which includes a number of commitments to the roll-out of EV charging infrastructure. According to a recent study², putting in place sufficient charging infrastructure will be key to meeting future demand and help to encourage the uptake of EVs over time. Apart from range anxiety, access to reliable, working chargepoints and how easy chargepoints are to use – including public perceptions of this – can also be barriers and slow EV take-up. Therefore, building consumer trust and understanding of the sector will be crucial to its success. In order to meet future demand, EV charging infrastructure will need to grow significantly. For a substantial proportion of potential EV users, off-street charging will not be possible (around 40-50% of homes across the UK do not have access to off-street parking).

² Competition and Markets Authority "Electric vehicle charging market study" 2 December 2020