

PRESS RELEASE

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Naturalis launches plans for the Blandford Hill Eco Hub Local residents are invited to find out more and share their views at a public consultation event on 4 March

Naturalis, a joint venture between renewable energy companies REG Power Management and Falck Renewables, is working on proposals for an 'eco hub', featuring superfast electric vehicle (EV) charging, a solar farm and battery storage. The hub would be accessed from the A354 north-east of Winterborne Whitechurch near Blandford Forum, bringing superfast charging using green power to the heart of Dorset.

The development is in its early stages and Naturalis has recently started the public consultation process.

Matt Partridge, Development Director for the project said: "Electric cars have a vital role to play in the transition towards a more sustainable, low-carbon society, particularly where they can be powered by clean energy. The Blandford Hill Eco Hub combines modern electric vehicle charging with clean energy from a new solar farm "next door" and batteries to store power and balance supply and demand. This is an innovative and exciting project that will provide a modern charging hub for aspiring EV drivers and help avoid so called 'range anxiety'. The site is well suited to this development and would plug a regional gap in charging infrastructure. A five-fold increase in the rate of installation of chargers¹ will be required to allow the rapid roll-out of electric driving. The sale of new petrol and diesel cars will be banned in less than 9 years' time!"

He continued: "At the eco hub, around 12 electric vehicles at a time would be charged with green electricity, generated on-site by the proposed solar farm and stored in batteries when necessary. By encouraging EV use and ownership, the project would play a role in tackling the Climate Emergency declared by Dorset Council in May 2019 while helping to reduce local air pollution; "the biggest environmental threat to health in the UK" according to Public Health England."

The project team is looking forward to briefing local residents on the plans and invites feedback before any planning application is submitted to Dorset Council. The plans will be presented at an online consultation event on **Thursday 4th March 2021 between 5.30 and 7.00pm**. Members of the public are invited to attend and meet the project team, provide feedback and ask any questions they may have. A dedicated project website www.blandfordhillecohub.co.uk has been launched where a recording of the event will be uploaded if people are unable to attend at that time.

- ENDS -

¹ Policy Exchange "Charging Up" 2 February 2021

NOTE for the EDITORIAL STAFF

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About the site

The proposed site is situated about 6km to the south west of Blandford Forum, approximately ¼ 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