

Rt Hon Ed Miliband MP
Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero
Via email to secretary.state@energysecurity.gov.uk

8 January 2026

Our ref: AM001/ES

Dear Mr Miliband

Re: A joined-up and sensible approach to solar and battery storage in Staffordshire

I am writing regarding Government's policy approach to renewable energy and battery energy storage systems (BESS).

I want to be clear that the County Council is not opposed to renewable energy. We recognise the increasingly important role it plays in the UK's energy mix and appreciate the ambition to achieve energy self-sufficiency. However, we are a proud farming county and we also recognise the critical importance and value of food self-sufficiency and security.

We firmly believe that renewable energy and BESS need to be better planned and coordinated at both a national and regional level and anchored within with the wider land-use context of competing demands such as food security, nature recovery and biodiversity. We are aware that you consulted earlier this year, however the delay in publishing and implementing the new framework is leading to uncertainty and our communities feeling overwhelmed.

The responsibility for planning decisions for renewable energy and BESS does not sit with the County Council, however, we are increasingly hearing from the communities we serve that they are facing unnecessary disruption and distress caused by the seemingly ad-hoc way policy is being implemented locally.

It cannot be right, or indeed Ministers intention, that rural villages face the prospect of becoming encircled by the deployment of large-scale solar arrays because of uncoordinated speculative development. Similarly, the edge of town urban-rural fringe is under pressure with some of the locally important greenspaces at risk if becoming overwhelmed. It is a matter of great concern for both town and country.

Concerningly, most applications are on farmland and greenfield sites, requiring local areas to make a choice between food and energy production.

Whilst there is a national policy for EV charging infrastructure, there is nothing to govern or coordinate the spread of renewable energy and BESS. It is left to local councils and their communities to make decisions - decisions we do not believe they should be forced to make.

We are particularly concerned about the lack of a robust regulatory control regime that you might expect from industrial type of facilities such as BESS, with many of our parish councils and local fire & rescue services spending a disproportionate amount of time within local communities trying to bridge this gap during the planning consultation process.

In response to community feedback, the County Council is calling on Government to:-

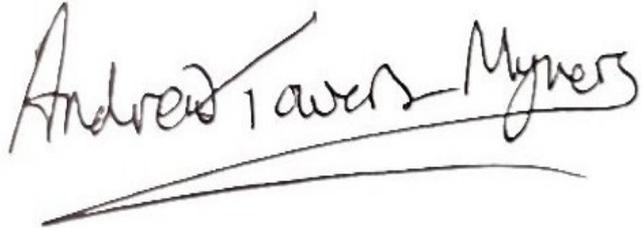
- i. develop a clear land-use policy that considers and balances renewable energy generation and storage with other needs such as food security and biodiversity, setting out a sense how it fits within a coherent strategy for England up to and post 2030;
- ii. recognise agricultural and dairy farms as critical national infrastructure for food security, starting with an understanding of national demand for food in the medium term and what this means for national infrastructure;
- iii. incorporate BESS under a permit/licence control regime given the industrial nature of the technology and associated risks;
- iv. raise the bar on the level of environmental impact assessment reports for all planning applications and greater fire risk requirements for developers;
- v. increase the scope of its devolution policy to include Great British Energy so that the local area has better oversight of the market and any community benefits, bill discount schemes, or other form of planning levies to be retained locally (e.g. energy infrastructure levies); and
- vi. make Staffordshire County Council a strategic authority for solar. Just as we lead on electric vehicle charging, waste management, and highways, we should have the power to coordinate solar development across the county.

Staffordshire is keen to play its part in meeting the UK's increasing energy needs, but this should be done in a balanced and informed way which does not place energy generation above other critical needs.

I have copied this letter to our local Members of Parliament who will be able to advise you of the negative impact that the lack of coordinated policy is having across each of their constituencies.

I look forward to hearing from you in due course.

Yours sincerely



Andrew Mynors
Cabinet Member for Connectivity