



# Bonnyknox Solar Farm

## Report on Feedback

**September 2024**



# 1. Introduction

## Purpose of this report

RES has considerable experience in developing solar farm projects throughout the UK and strongly believes in the importance of community consultation to identify issues and concerns, as well as benefits and opportunities, which can be considered when developing and designing a project.

The purpose of this report is to summarise the written feedback received from the community during the June 2024 public exhibition and subsequent consultation period.

Each section focuses on a key topic area and summarises the key themes within the feedback.

## June 2024 Consultation

RES held a public exhibition event in the local area in June 2024, as part of its pre-application consultation for the proposed Bonnyknox Solar Farm. The event provided people with the opportunity to learn more about the project, discuss the proposals with the project team, and provide written feedback to RES on the preliminary design.

26 June 2024  
Music Room, Hospitalfield  
House, Arbroath, DD11 2NH  
3-8pm

A range of information was made available, with RES staff on hand to discuss the proposal and answer any questions. A two-week consultation period followed the exhibitions, for people to submit written feedback to RES on the proposal and preliminary design.

# 2. General Overview

More than 40 people attended the first consultation event. Strong interest in the proposals was observed among the local community, many of whom reside nearby to the proposed site for the solar farm.

RES asked a series of multiple-choice questions on the consultation itself to determine whether the local community found it a useful exercise and how future consultations could be improved.

The table below shows the responses to these questions.

<b>How did you find out about our public exhibition?</b>	81.8% Residents' newsletter	9.1.% Advert in the newspaper	9.1% Other
<b>Before visiting the exhibition how would you describe your knowledge of the proposal?</b>	43.9% Knew a little	27.3% Knew very little	27.3% Knew nothing
<b>Having visited the exhibition, to what extent do you feel you have increased your understanding about the proposal?</b>	72.8% A lot / quite a lot	9.1% A little	18.2% Very little / nothing
<b>Which part of the exhibition did you find most useful?</b>	23.1% Exhibition boards	69.2% Ability to ask project team	7.7% Other

*Table 1: Feedback on the consultation*

### **Awareness**

The feedback shows that a vast majority (81.8%) of consultation attendees were made aware of the consultation via the resident's newsletter, which was issued to over 1900 addresses within a minimum 3km radius of the proposed site. 9.1% of respondents stated that they were made aware of the consultation from the adverts placed in The Courier (Angus Edition) and Angus World on Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> of June. An additional 9.1% of respondents chose "Other" for this question, explaining that they had learned about the consultation through "word of mouth."

### **Knowledge & Understanding**

Before attending the exhibition, a significant portion of attendees had limited knowledge of the proposal, with 43.9% stating they knew a little, 27.3% knowing very little, and another 27.3% knowing nothing at all. However, after visiting the exhibition, there was a marked increase in understanding with a substantial 72.8% of attendees reporting that their understanding had increased "a lot" or "quite a lot", while 9.1% felt their knowledge had improved "a little". Only 18.2% indicated that they gained very little or no additional understanding. This demonstrates that the consultation significantly enhanced attendees' knowledge and understanding of the proposals.

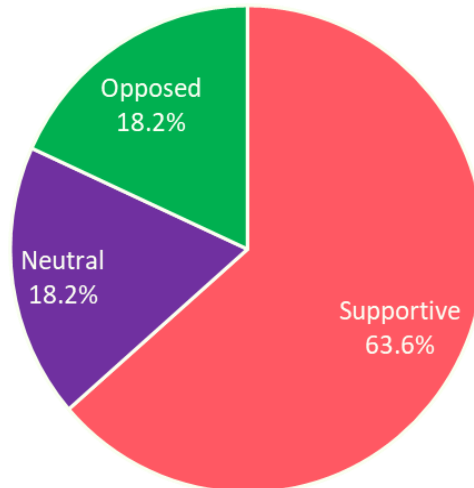
### **Useful Aspect**

The majority of attendees (69.2%) found the ability to ask questions and discuss the proposals directly with the project team to be the most useful part of the exhibition, compared to 23.1% who valued the exhibition boards and 7.7% who found other aspects most helpful.

### 3. Sentiment

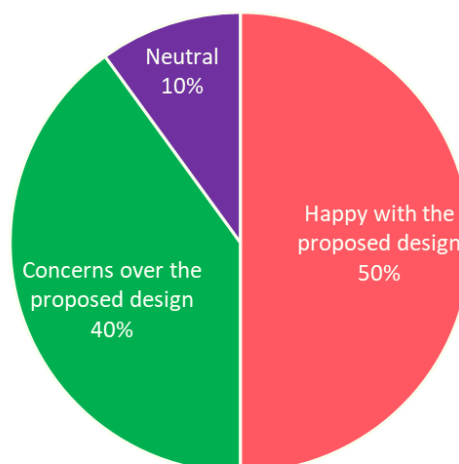
Respondents were asked for their views on the proposal for Bonnyknox Solar Farm – specifically the preliminary layout of the project where people’s comments can have a direct influence on the final design.

#### How do you feel in general about the Bonnyknox proposal?



The majority of respondents, 63.6%, expressed overall support for the proposal. Meanwhile, 18.2% remained neutral, and another 18.2% were opposed. These figures suggest that there is a strong level of support for the plans among attendees.

#### What do you think about the proposed preliminary design layout of the Bonnyknox Solar Farm?



Half of the respondents stated that they were happy with the preliminary design of the Bonnyknox Solar Farm, while 10% were neutral towards the design, and 40% expressed concerns about the preliminary design on display.

## 4. Key Themes Raised in Feedback

### 4.1 Visual Impact

Some respondents expressed concern that the solar farm will impact the views for nearby properties.

#### **RES response:**

RES is carefully evaluating the potential visual impacts of the project and exploring ways to reduce visibility, as we understand how important the natural landscape is to the community. The site was specifically chosen for its location away from more populated areas and because it does not fall within any designated landscapes.

For neighbouring properties that may have some views of the proposed development, a comprehensive landscaping plan will be implemented to help minimise visibility. Additionally, RES will conduct a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVA) to support the planning application, ensuring that all potential impacts are thoroughly considered and addressed.

Following feedback from the community, we have updated the design of the solar farm to remove panels from the south of the site, as well as parts of the west and northeast, to reduce potential visibility.

### 4.2 Construction Traffic

Some respondents and consultation attendees stated that the local road network is not adequately equipped to handle the heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) required for the construction of the solar farm, raising concerns about traffic congestion and road safety.

#### **RES response:**

Our preferred construction route for the development at Fallaws Farm would be via the A92. This has been chosen to minimise the impact on Arbroath and other local communities.

Construction traffic would access the site from the A92 at the Salmond's Muir junction, leading onto Bonnyton Road, which is only 2.6 km from the site. This route benefits from good connections, including slip roads and passing places.

Bonnyton Road is wide enough to accommodate HGV traffic, and we are proposing the development of four passing places along this road, within existing verge areas, to help manage traffic flow. Additionally, we plan to add another passing place near the site access point to further improve road safety and reduce congestion.

To minimise disruption, we will schedule construction traffic to avoid peak morning and evening periods, and a dedicated Community Liaison Officer will be appointed to engage with residents throughout the construction and operational phases, should the solar farm be approved.

We have been actively working with Angus Council highways officers and independent transport consultants to develop a comprehensive Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) which will be submitted with the planning application and will detail how we will safely manage the movement of construction and delivery traffic, including expected traffic volumes and timing restrictions.

### 4.3 Nearby Properties Being Devalued

Some residents also raised concerns that neighbouring properties of the development will decrease in value due to their proximity to the solar farm.

#### RES Response:

Currently, there is no firm evidence to suggest that solar farms do or do not affect house prices.

While Scottish and UK law does not provide a right to a view over neighbouring land or property, we understand the importance of designing projects that are sensitive to the surrounding environment. We have actively engaged with nearby residents to assess the views from their properties and, based on their feedback, have made adjustments where possible. These include increasing setbacks and adding screening measures, such as hedges, to minimise the visual impact.

### 4.4. Loss of Agricultural Land

Concerns were raised that the development of the solar farm will result in the loss of valuable agricultural land, which could have long-term implications for local farming activities and food production.

#### RES Response:

The proposed Bonnyknox Solar Farm will be located on Grade 2 and 3 land, which is considered lower-quality agricultural land. If approved, the site will continue to support agricultural use through sheep grazing once the solar farm is constructed, ensuring that farming activities can coexist with renewable energy production.

It should be noted that one of the biggest risks to food security is the changing climate. According to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), climate change could reduce the UK's stock of high-grade agricultural land by nearly three-quarters by 2050<sup>1</sup>.

## 5. Community Benefit

RES is strongly committed to ensuring that solar developments generate meaningful local benefits, and we are committed to engaging with the community to gather feedback on their priorities and deliver projects that contribute to long-term economic, social, and environmental sustainability. This collaborative approach enables us to create a tailored package of benefits aligned with the specific needs of the local community.

As part of the consultation, respondents were invited to propose initiatives that the Bonnyknox Solar Farm could support. These suggestions have been summarised below.

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/united-kingdom-food-security-report-2021/united-kingdom-food-security-report-2021-theme-2-uk-food-supply-sources#united-kingdom-food-security-report-2021-theme2-indicator-2-1-15>

### Summary of community suggestions:

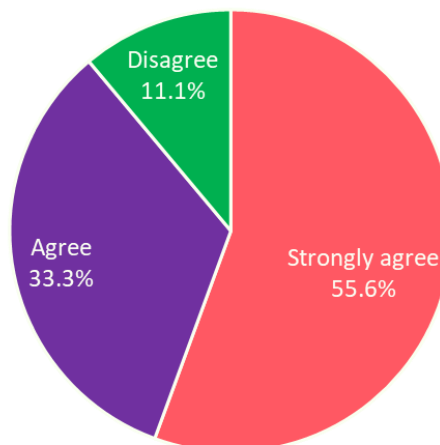
- A community trust in Arbirlot helps maintain the village environment and seeks to upgrade paths around the waterfall and nature trails. Community benefit funds could support these upgrades.
- Creating a wildlife area for public and educational use would be welcomed.
- Local residents, directly impacted by the development, should be compensated, not just those in nearby towns.
- Need for improved paths and site access.
- Enhancing public access to the countryside would encourage locals to enjoy the scenic area.
- A public right of way around the development, linking to existing paths, would be appreciated.
- Broadband / fibre installation during solar farm construction, which would increase local support for the project.
- The area lacks reliable internet access; improving it would be beneficial.

As part of the second round on consultation, we are again asking the community to provide feedback on what type of initiatives the Bonnyknox Solar Farm should support, and are asking the community to rank their prioritisations for community benefit.

## 6. Climate Change

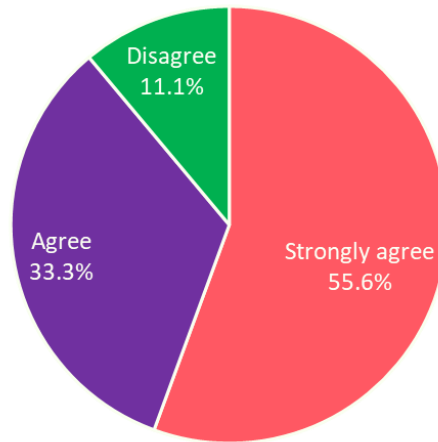
Respondents were also asked a series of questions to help RES understand people's thoughts on how renewables can help to tackle climate change and improve energy security.

### Do you agree that we are facing a global climate emergency?



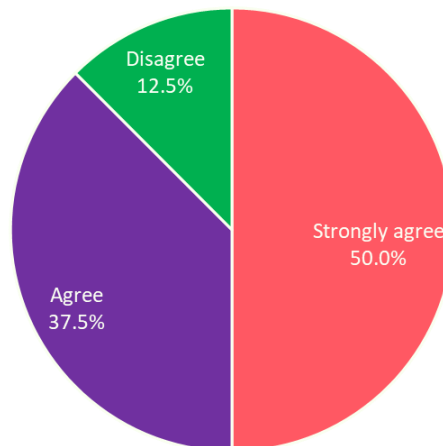
The feedback highlighted that a significant majority of respondents recognise the urgency of climate change. Specifically, 55.6% of participants strongly agreed that we are in the midst of a global climate change emergency, reflecting a deep concern about the current environmental crisis. Additionally, 33.3% of respondents agreed with this sentiment, signalling broad acknowledgment of the issue. However, 11.1% of respondents disagreed, showing a different view on the severity or immediacy of the threat posed by climate change.

**Do you agree that generating electricity from renewable sources, and reducing our reliance on fossil fuels, can help towards tackling the issue of climate change?**



Respondents demonstrated strong support for renewable energy as a solution to climate change. 55.6% of respondents strongly agreed that generating electricity from renewable sources can play a crucial role in addressing the issue of climate change. This majority reflects a strong belief in the importance of clean energy in mitigating environmental impacts. Additionally, 33.3% agreed, indicating broad consensus on the positive role of renewables. 11.1% of respondents disagreed, showing a small portion remains sceptical about the use of renewable energy.

**Do you agree that we need to develop solar farms to support greater energy independence and energy security for Scotland?**



The feedback reveals strong support for the development of solar farms in Scotland as a means to enhance energy independence and security. A majority of 55% of respondents strongly agreed that solar farms are essential for supporting Scotland's energy autonomy, highlighting widespread recognition of the role renewable energy can play in securing a stable and self-sufficient energy supply. Additionally, 37.5% agreed, further underscoring broad consensus on the importance of solar energy. Only 12.5% of respondents disagreed, indicating that while there is some opposition, the overwhelming sentiment supports the development of solar farms as a key component in achieving greater energy security for Scotland.