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The Rt Hon Miatta Fahnbulleh MP
Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero
Department for Energy Security and Net Zero
1 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0ET

Our Ref: MP14722

7 August 2026

Dear Secretary of State,

I am writing to you following representations from Salford Priors Parish Council regarding the deployment of large-scale Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) and the adequacy of the current regulatory framework governing these developments.

As the Government continues to pursue an ambitious transition to cleaner energy, technologies that enable renewable energy storage are undoubtedly important.

My constituents have made clear that they have this in mind, and are not seeking to obstruct renewable energy deployment. Rather, they are asking whether the current regulatory regime provides sufficient assurance that safety, environmental protection and local impacts are being addressed consistently across all proposed developments.

Communities across my constituency have expressed concern that the regulatory landscape for large-scale battery storage has not evolved at the same pace as the technology. While BESS facilities are subject to some planning, environmental and health and safety requirements, there remains no single, dedicated framework that addresses the unique safety challenges associated with large-scale battery installations.

Constituents have raised concerns about fire risk, emergency preparedness, environmental contamination arising from thermal runaway incidents, and the cumulative impact of multiple energy infrastructure developments within rural communities. Although such incidents are relatively rare, they attract understandable public concern because of the difficulty associated with extinguishing lithium-ion battery fires and the potential release of hazardous gases.

In particular, I would welcome clarification on whether the Government believes existing national standards remain adequate given the increasingly large scale of battery storage facilities now being proposed throughout the country. There is concern that local planning authorities are frequently required to determine applications involving complex technical and operational risks in the absence of clear, nationally prescribed standards relating to matters such as site design, separation distances, fire suppression measures and emergency response planning.

I would therefore be grateful if you could set out the Government's position on the following issues:

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- Whether consideration is being given to the introduction of BESS-specific national safety standards for design, fire suppression, monitoring and emergency planning, and operating requirements.
- Whether there are plans to establish clearer guidance and mandatory minimum separation on the appropriate siting of large-scale battery storage facilities in relation to homes, villages, schools and other sensitive locations, for example ancient woodlands, and stronger national planning guidance on appropriate siting, especially in relation to homes, villages, high-quality agricultural land and sensitive landscapes;
- Whether local Fire and Rescue Services should have a more formal role (statutory consultee status) within the planning process for battery storage developments.
- Whether minimum national expectations should be established regarding emergency response arrangements and ongoing site monitoring.
- Whether the Government intends to review the cumulative impacts of battery storage and other energy infrastructure developments on rural communities.

As battery storage becomes an increasingly prominent feature of the UK's energy infrastructure, I believe there is merit in reviewing whether the current regulatory framework remains fit for purpose and commands public trust. We must have a more transparent and consistent framework for community engagement and community benefit where large-scale infrastructure is approved.

Following two consultations, the then government in 2020 decided to remove BESSs from the NSIP regime. The government said the “time and cost of the NSIP regime is not proportionate to the planning impacts of these technologies” (House of Commons Library BESS Briefing Note 23/06/25). The question Salford Priors Parish Council raises is what confidence, and security, will our constituents have in the proposed Arow Valley Solar project if the NSIP does not regulate BESS farms on the scale that is proposed? I would be grateful for your response and for any information you can provide regarding current or planned work in this area.

Yours sincerely

