NESO (the National Energy System Operator) strategic energy planning - what might this mean for East Lammermuir?

It has recently come to the attention of East Lammermuir Community Council that there is a suggestion of a further wave of energy infrastructure developments in our area, appearing to centre around a further substation in the Branxton area.

SPEN (SP Energy Networks) have provided the following statement: "*SPEN has a regulatory obligation to provide a connection offer to all competent connection requests. The NESO is currently undertaking a process of connection reform to rationalise the generation connection queue which, across the UK, does not currently align to the UK energy need. The connection details of all currently contracted customers are subject to review through the connections reform process.*

As of today, the new Branxton 400kV substation has connections contracts which would see the Branxton substation at capacity. As connection requests continue to be received alternative connection offers have to be made to these. The Torness nuclear power station currently connects to the overhead lines at the Branxton site through installed cables. As the nuclear station is decommissioned (anticipated from the early 2030s) the capacity of these cables becomes available meaning that other connections could be connected at a satellite or collector substation in the area and fed into Branxton via the existing cables. This potential collector substation has been nominally called Thorntonloch.

If the substation is required post connections reform its location would be subject to a full siting assessment that includes both technical and environmental considerations."

We also met last week with Chris Whitehead, Stakeholder Engagement Manager for Morvern Offshore Wind Farm which has recently been allocated a grid connection by NESO in the Branxton area, as set out in this document about their Holistic Network Design Follow Up Exercise (see P.2.).

Should these proposals become a reality, we will in East Lammermuir be in a much better position to get on the front foot and influence what happens from the word go.

Chris Bruce (ELCC Chair) and Beth Landon (East Lammermuir Energy Projects Partnership Manager) are working with both SPEN and Morvern North and East Lothian Council, with the support of Douglas Alexander MP, to ensure early engagement with the community. We have been assured that no work has taken place to identify specific sites for the proposed substation, or other infrastructure associated with the Morvern Windfarm's onshore works.

Any further information will be shared as it becomes available.