

From: EIR
Sent: 25 June 2025 09:09
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: [REDACTED]

Dear requester

Provision of requested information

Thank you for your request for information about Lithium-ion battery energy storage systems and the potential for impact on the region's water security and aquifer integrity, which we received on 9 June 2025. Your request has been considered under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004.

The Source Protection Zone (SPZ) 3 is the theoretical total catchment area of an abstraction. Therefore, water in the aquifer in that zone has the potential to contribute to the abstraction rather than all or a significant proportion of the water in that zone will end up in the abstraction.

The SPZ's relate to groundwater flow below the water table. There are other physical reasons such as permeability of deposits overlying the aquifer and depth to the water table which can determine an aquifer's overall vulnerability from surface pollutants.

As part of our raw water source risk assessments, we assess catchments for the presence of potentially polluting activities which can lead to pro-active engagement and chemical sampling to ensure treatment and monitoring at our sources is robust and proportionate to the risks present within those catchments. The assessments are reviewed periodically to ensure changes in land use are accounted for. We also provide non-statutory advice to Local Planning Authorities (LPA's) regarding the positioning of developments we feel may be a cause for concern with respect to raw water quality. This advice is normally limited to locations within source protection zones 1 and 2.

The Environment Agency publishes modelled groundwater source protection zones which are nominally split into 3 zones:

Zone 1: Inner protection zone (Less than 50 day travel time to a groundwater abstraction)
Zone 2: Outer protection zone (Less than 400 day travel time to a groundwater abstraction)
Zone 3: Total capture zone (The theoretical total catchment area of the groundwater abstraction.)

Our catchment risk assessments focus on the Zone 1 and 2 and will extend further if there are known specific risks of concern.

Our response to planning applications is made on a risk-based approach and often focused on SPZ 1 and extends outside of this in certain circumstances. We balance our comments against the current and perceived pollutant risks of the proposals and hazards that may already be present within the catchment for instance; industrial sites, quarries, historic landfills, petrol filling stations and diffuse sources such as agricultural pollution. Given the proposed BESS sites sit within a zone 3 we would not have any specific comments to make regarding the potential risk to the aquifer, as the risks to the underlying aquifer will be localised outside of the most vulnerable portion of our groundwater abstractions catchment. Our primary concern is to ensure we provide wholesome drinking water. However, we do not have powers to regulate the raw aquifer quality or have powers to take regulatory action to ensure potentially polluting activities

are controlled, reducing the risk of potential spills or discharges, as this is regulated primarily by the Environment Agency.

The Environment Agency has the most appropriate legislation available to help prevent hazardous substances and limit non-hazardous substances from polluting groundwater, therefore in this instance your concerns regarding the proposed positioning of the BESS infrastructure and the risk this presents to the underlying groundwater quality in the area would be more appropriately addressed to the Environment Agency.

The risk is and will never be zero. You are right to raise the risks although the most appropriate body with regulatory powers to protect the water environment is the Environment Agency. If they consider there is an unsatisfactory risk which could lead to groundwater pollution, then they have powers under the Environmental Permitting Regs to put in place further controls or prohibitions.

The Environment Agency can be contacted at
Environment Agency

Email enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk

Main switchboard 03708 506 506

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Legal Director, Anglian Water Services, Lancaster House, Lancaster Way, Ermine Business Park, Huntingdon PE29 6XU

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire SK9 5AF

If you have any queries about this email, please contact me.

Yours sincerely

EIR Team

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