Devon Data Centre & Battery Energy Storage System – October Update

By now I anticipate you will know about the proposed data centre near Torrington, as I have come round to many of you in the village with a petition to sign if nothing else.

A huge thank you to everyone who has signed the paper petition. There are now enough signatures on this petition to achieve its objective, which I will explain further below.

There is one online petition which is the most important to sign now, above all others. This is an official parliament petition started by our County Councillor Cheryl Cottle-Hunkin. It requests Parliament to put a moratorium on general Data Centre development and restrict Data Centres and BESS to designated growth areas, which North Devon is not. 100,000 signatures are required for Parliament to discuss this issue. This is a huge number for a small community like ours, so every share to like -minded friends up country is crucial.

Why a moratorium? Because nobody really knows what impact Data Centres and BESS will have on our environment – both humans and animals. Rural areas like ours are particularly vulnerable because we have such a richness of habitat and a dependency on our beautiful countryside for our work and enjoyment. For example, I spoke to a friend of mine who is a world-renowned butterfly expert, about the impact of battery noise on the pearl bordered fritillary, which has four English habitats, one of which is just below the golf course on Torrington Commons. That is barely 1 mile away from the proposed development. My friend explained that nobody really knows the impact and pointed out one could also argue that butterflies thrive in noisy cities! The moratorium would allow these crucial environmental studies to be carried out.

Our infrastructure (roads, water, electricity and internet) will be affected for years – perhaps for ever. Even if we, in Yarnscombe, are not directly affected by the noise or the light because of the topography of the land, the minute we try to drive anywhere towards Torrington or Bideford we risk getting into gridlock. The problems we experienced over the last year with the roadworks/ closures on the B3232 will pale into insignificance the minute there is any kind of weather incident, accident or legitimate road closure for maintenance purposes because of the additional traffic of enormous, un-manoeuvrable, slow transport vehicles all day long. And that traffic won't stop. Maintenance of the batteries for example, will result in around 200 being replaced per year, every year, once they are operational. And that is just one example of many.

As I wrote this article, I intended to include the number of petition signatures to date. The brilliant news is that, even while I wrote the paragraph above, an additional 500 signatures took the total to **over 20,000** (which was a growth of over 3,000 in a few hours), so this info should be well out of date by the time you see this.



(Screenshot taken 20/09/2026)

But there is still a long way to go to 100,000. Please SHARE with contacts anywhere in the UK as widely as you can (https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/776949)

If Torrington can be stopped, it will be more difficult for planning permission to be granted in other parts of the country. If it doesn't get stopped, the floodgates will be opened all over the country. This petition aims to change this Government policy and to allow developers to be called to account financially (which they are not currently).

https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/776949

or just scan this QR code to sign the petition

Another important development has been the release of Xlinks' detailed planning information for the Data Centre from a Freedom of Information (FOI) request to TDC which makes essential if disquieting reading. Detailed information is on the Yarnscombe website, the Devon Data Centre and Bess Action group's Facebook page and website.

https://www.facebook.com/DevonDataAndBESSActionGroup

https://nodevondatacentre.co.uk/

What is clear from the result of the FOI is that TDC (NOT our elected councillors, who are understood also to have been unaware) was made aware of detailed plans for the Data Centre 18 months before any information was made public. A step-by-step analysis of the differences between what the developers have told the Council versus the public can be found on the Devon Data and Bess Action Group Facebook page and their website (above). The paper petition many of us have signed requires the Council to discuss the Torrington Data Centre in full Council. Members of the public can attend this meeting and usually there are a few speaking slots for a given issue. Obviously, as a result of the emerging discrepancies in the developer's proposal, it is very important to hear the councillors' understanding and attitude towards this.

On September 3rd, there was a public meeting held in Torrington Church for people to be updated by the Devon Data and Bess Action group. Over 360 people attended from all over the area and beyond, including a good representation from Yarnscombe. There were some very stark facts – just the sheer scale and level of potential pollution were horrifying. The view at the meeting was unequivocally that the developers are speculative and money-making with no track record in developing BESS or Data Centres, never mind the largest in Europe! Personal perspectives and experiences from the floor were very moving at times and served to focus us all on what we must do to keep our countryside. The main message was that this is a marathon, not a sprint. People need to keep focussed and be prepared to act when necessary. There will be another meeting in mid-November.

The key facts are as follows:

- 800+ acres Data Centre site twice the size of Torrington and 40m high
- 100+ acres BESS site which equates to 47 football pitches containing between 1700 and 2700 container-sized lithium ion batteries (similar type to electric cars)
- 6-8 year construction and transportation project with materials and batteries are thought to be transported from East the Water harbour via Alverdiscott to the site on Darracott. (There is no actual information)
- **IN ADDITION** planning permission has been granted for 433 acres of BESS/Solar farms in the Alverdiscott/Newton Tracey area [source Campaign for Rural England]
- **IN ADDITION** 291 acres of BESS/Solar has a planning decision pending (Alverdiscott/Newton Tracey) of which 99.4 acres refused by Torridge District Council on 2/7/26 [CPRE]

- The developer of the proposed BESS at West Webbery (not Xlinks) has appealed to the Planning Inspectorate following TDC's refusal of planning permission.
- A proposed BESS development near Axminster had an appeal refused by the Planning Inspectorate because of incursion into the water course.
- The impact is expected to impact people living within a 10-mile radius of the development (Yarnscombe is 4 miles).
- A visibility map was released through the FOI showing visibility of the Data Centre from Bideford, Monkleigh and Frithelstock locally and potentially from Dartmoor and possibly Exmoor.

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