Devon Data Centre & Battery Energy Storage System – September 2026 Update

Introduction

This is an update of the article I wrote for the last Eagle, which is also on the Data Centre page of Yarnscombe's website (dated 4th August after a minor update). A reminder of the key facts is included at the end of this update for those who missed the article last month. Included is what has happened since last month, an explanation of the various petitions and a summary of what we can all do (including useful links) if we so wish. Since last month, I have been visiting people to collect petition signatures. As the vast majority of the village are against the Data Centre, this article is unashamedly partisan!

What has happened in the last month?

Posters

You will no doubt have seen posters going up in the village. Both main groups have copious amounts of flyers, banners and posters of different sizes. I have some small black and yellow 'leave Devon alone' posters. Larger ones (A4, A1 paper and A2 board/composite at the time of writing) are available free of charge from Whiskers Pet Shop in Torrington. The aptly coloured green boards can be obtained from 3 Mill Street, Torrington for a small donation. Apparently, there is always someone in!

Petitions

I might also have visited you to sign the paper petition (see below for explanation of petitions). Thank you to all those who have signed. Please let me know if I have missed you and you would like to sign.

Lobbying

The main opposition groups and our Devon County Councillor, Cheryl Cottle-Hunkin have visited the proposed site and posted videos on Facebook, on which there is an enormous amount of material from both groups and groups fighting data centres in their part of the country. Sir Geoffrey Cox has held surgeries locally and has apparently agreed to visit the site.

Appeal Lodged

Unfortunately, an appeal has now been lodged, following the recent refusal of the application by Torridge District Council of planning permission at Woodtown (land at West Webbery Farm) Battery Energy Storage System (BESS). This is the 94 acre site to the North East of Alverdiscott, mentioned in Reminders section below. Comments /objections can be submitted on the Planning Inspectorate website at https://appeal-planning-decision.service.gov.uk/.../enter..., quoting appeal reference 6013918. Closing date **16th September.**

Protest



A number of objectors - including at least 2 stalwarts from Yarnscombe- formed a human 'NO' sign on the Old Bowling Green in Torrington in late July for a drone and small plane to take aerial views. This is one of the pictures.

Elizabeth Humphrey, a key organiser of the US protest group **Not In My Valley** came and spoke in Torrington to motivate and support the protest efforts. Her main advice was to continue protesting and maintaining visibility and awareness.

Devon Data and Bess Action Group (DDBAG) teamed up with the CPRE – Campaign for the Protection of Rural England producing a very visible display at the North Devon Show. I am sure several of you saw them there. CPRE will be providing support for individuals and groups intending to object when the time comes, so it is well worth registering as an objector now. (No membership required). DDBAG will be holding a meeting on Thursday 3rd September at 7pm at The Church of St Michael and All Angels in Torrington This information is on their website under 'events' (see Reminder below)

Devon County Council plans to mount a legal Challenge to the Government's proposed re-organisation of Devon into 4 Unitary authorities of which Torridge would be part of the rather unwieldy Devon Coastal and Countryside.

Petitions – please sign if you object to the Torrington Data Centre/BESS

The petition situation can be quite confusing. Gone are the days when there was one petition for one thing and everybody signed it! Nowadays petitions are organised to complain to a particular organisation or person and request it or them, to do something. People can sign as many petitions as they wish about the same issue, as long as they are directed differently. In the case of the Data Centre and BESS, there are many petitions that have been instigated.

1 Online. Local. Developed quickly to raise awareness and publicise the amount of protest on social media. This is online on a platform called Change and has over 30,000 signatures. Although compiled using Torridge District Council guidelines, it does not, at the moment, seem to carry a lot of weight for whatever reason.

2 Paper. Local. This petition requests Torridge District Council to discuss the issue of Data Centres and BESS (Torrington in particular) in full council as opposed to the planning sub-committee of the council, which would otherwise be the case. 2000 signatures are required and over 1000 have been collected. This is the petition I am bringing round to the village to sign, and which was also available to sign at the village fete. Whiskers Pet shop in Torrington (and possibly other businesses) also have copies to sign.

3 Online. National. This petition is directly addressed to the Energy Minister to act to remove Data Centres and BESS from UK Critical National Infrastructure. i.e. reversing Ed Milliband's edict of late July. This would prevent TDC and other local councils being completely disempowered and ensure local objections are fairly considered during the local planning process. It should (hopefully) also remove the current implication that Data Centres such as these would have first call on energy and water over and above the needs of local citizens and businesses. This petition would appear to fit Parliament's petition standards and should be eligible for consideration when 100,000 signatures are received. As of writing, there are over 86,000 signatures. 😀

Here is a list of all the relevant petitions in relation to this proposed development.

- https://www.change.org/NoDevonDataCentre - local online
- https://devoncpre.org.uk/data-centre-and-battery-field/ - Devon CPRE petition
- https://act.38degrees.org.uk/act/datacentres - 38 Degrees
- https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/776949 - Introduce urgent moratorium on AI Data Centres and BESS outside AI Growth Zones (set up by DCC Cllr Cheryl Cottle-Hunkin)
- https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/776517 - Ban the construction of new AI Centres
- https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/768378...- Stop a single Minister having the final say on national infrastructure projects
- https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/766093... - Remove the grey belt planning rules
- https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/767687 - Hold a UK-wide briefing on climate and nature risks
- https://www.globalactionplan.org.uk/.../stop-dirty-data... - Global Action Plan

What we can all do

Write or email Sir Geoffrey Cox with your objections. His email address is tellgeoffrey@geoffreycox.co.uk. It is probably fair to say that he will have received a mountain of objections! It is best to keep the main email short, and to the point, so he might read it. If you think you have an original twist, so much the better! Any evidence or detail can be attached at the end of your letter or message as he will delegate others to look at it. However, tempting, don't throw the kitchen sink at him. A very small number of carefully considered well-argued points would have the most impact.

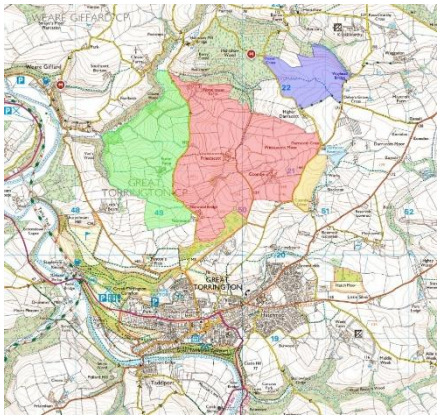
Show we object by putting up posters, signing petitions, lobbying, objecting to related local planning applications and generally keeping up the momentum. The developer will be hoping to submit plans just after Christmas when we have all forgotten about it. Let's make sure we don't!

As I said in the last article, decide and prepare the objection you will lodge when the planning application is filed. The more you can do in advance, the better quality the objection. Campaign for Rural England (CPRE) has a list of topics you might want to consider as well as other information about the Data Centre and BESS. https://www.cpredevon.org.uk/

Reminder of the key facts

- 800+ acres Data Centre site twice the size of Torrington and 40m high
- 100+ acres BESS site which equates to 47 football pitches containing 2700 container-sized lithium iodide batteries (the same type as in electric cars)
- 6-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)
- 65-92 decibels of multi- frequency noise 24/7 PER BATTERY, much of which may go through the ground.
- 32,000 signatures against it and counting. There are less than 6,000 people in Torrington!
- **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 impact is expected to impact people living within a 10-mile radius of the development (Yarnscombe is 4 miles)
- Two opposition groups have been formed:
    - **SAY NO TO Devon Data Centre and BESS - LEAVE DEVON ALONE** which focusses on raising awareness, signing petitions (online and paper), producing leaflets and general campaigning.
        - Website : www.leavedevonalone.info .
        - Email Leavedevonaloone@outlook.com.
    - **Devon Data and Bess Action Group** which are focussing on scientific research to develop cogent objections to the proposal, once it is submitted for planning. They are also planning a petition supported by Councillor Cheryl Cottle-Hunkin.
        - Website: https://www.nodevondatacentre.co.uk/
        - Email actiongroupsteeringcommittee@gmail.com.



I am planning to follow developments and update people via our parish magazine on a monthly basis. Please do get in touch if you have any questions, if you would like a copy of an update or want to help/ take a poster/petition form etc. etc.

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Updates on this subject is changing literally every day.

Keep an eye on the respective campaign websites and Facebook pages!



