

exagen

Buttercombe Solar Farm

Public consultation

October / November 2024



Introduction

Dear occupant, we want to introduce you to Exagen and our new proposed project, Buttercombe Solar Farm, located to the north-east of Braunton. As a local resident, we would like to take this early opportunity to understand your views and feedback on our evolving plans.

At Exagen, we are creating the next generation of renewable energy projects and grid-balancing battery storage facilities to support the UK's energy future. We do this in partnership with the local community.

Buttercombe Solar Farm is connecting into an existing on-site overhead 33,000 volt line within the site boundary that utilises the available grid capacity at Braunton substation. The solar farm will provide low cost, low carbon electricity to the UK grid.

The yearly output of the solar farm is predicted to equate to the electricity use of approximately 6,200 average UK homes per year. Braunton has approximately 3,500 households.

We are seeking your views on this proposal ahead of submitting a formal planning application to North Devon Council. We seek to take an involved approach with the local community, building feedback into our project design. We have already been in contact with the planning team at the council via their pre-application service gathering valuable insight with this same goal.

Through this public consultation, discussions with the council and through conducting surveys and assessments we will look to create a project which is sensitively designed and helps accelerate us towards achieving the UK's climate goals. This is your opportunity to influence our design.

We want you and your community to be involved and stay informed, that's why we've created:

A dedicated website.

exagen.co.uk/projects/buttercombe-solar-farm

An online survey for you to provide feedback and stay updated on the project.

bit.ly/buttercombe-survey

We invite you to attend an online webinar on the project, delivered by our project team and the in person drop in exhibitions we are hosting in Braunton. Should you not be able to make a time below, a webinar recording will be available on the project website.

In-person drop-in sessions

We are hosting two drop in events hosted by our project team to present the project and answer any questions.

Braunton Parish Hall

Chaloners Rd, Braunton, EX33 2ES

Tuesday 29th October
12:00 - 15:00 and 16:00 - 19:00

Thursday 14th November
13:00 - 17:00



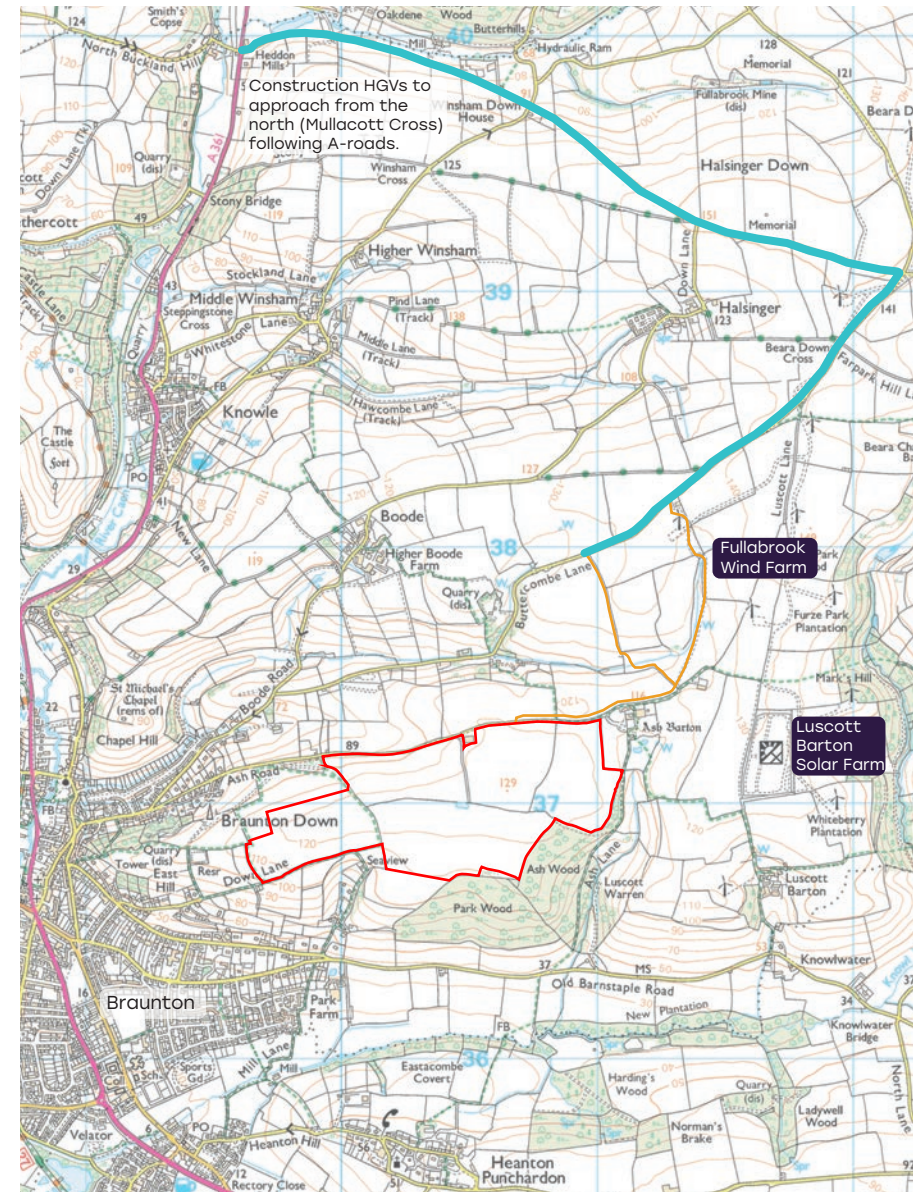
Webinar Presentation

Sign up with this QR code or link below.

6:30pm Monday
4th November

bit.ly/Buttercombe-Webinar

Site Location Plan



- Land available for development
- Proposed access routes options from Buttercombe Lane (under review)
- Proposed access route from A361

Cheap, clean power

Ground-mounted solar energy is one of the cheapest power sources in the UK, and is significantly cheaper and cleaner than gas which often delivers a significant amount of our daytime supply.

Whilst the electricity generated from Buttercombe Solar Farm will feed into the national electricity grid, as solar is deployed across the country, bills for everyone should become more consistently cheaper and less reliant on expensive fossil fuel imports.

Sensible land use

Large-scale ground-mounted solar such as at Buttercombe Solar Farm does take up farmland, however Exagen are committed to using lower-quality land where available; the site has no land determined Best and Most Versatile, confirmed by site survey.

In the UK, solar farms currently occupy 0.1% of land. Should enough solar be deployed to meet our legally-binding climate targets, this would increase to just 0.3% of all land, or 0.5% of farm land, roughly the same as golf courses.

Significant power provided

The electricity generated from the Buttercombe Solar Farm would be enough to power 6,200 average sized homes per year. Braunton has approximately 3,500 households according to Census data.

Robust energy system

The amount of electricity we generate in the UK is projected to increase which helps boost our energy security in an international context, and enables the electrification of key industries such as transport, heat, and technology.

Meet our climate targets

The UK has a legally binding obligation to meet our climate targets, and government policy highlights the urgent need to deploy renewables to enable this. 70GW of solar capacity is needed as soon as 2035; as of 2024 only around 16GW had been deployed.

Great for biodiversity

Solar farms, including Buttercombe, can be managed for biodiversity and on similar sites, wildflowers and grassland quality and biodiversity has increased substantially compared with the monoculture of crops.

Community Benefit

Local contractors and businesses will be engaged as far as possible during the construction and operational phases, where services offerings are not specialist.

When the project is operational we will provide a community benefit fund which will be tied to the project for its lifetime, this can provide funding for local amenities and support for organisations. We welcome suggestions on where and how this money should be used. More details will be shared as the project progresses.

Pre-Planning Process

Exagen are currently undertaking numerous environmental surveys to establish any potential effects of the proposed development of the solar farm on the site and surrounding areas.

The final design will be informed by ongoing consultation and environmental assessments, including:

- Landscape and Visual Appraisal
- Ecological Impact Assessment
- Ecology species surveys for Great Crested Newt, bats, both breeding and wintering bird surveys.
- Heritage Assessment
- Archaeological Geophysical Survey
- Topographic Survey
- Arboricultural Impact Assessment
- Agricultural Land Classification
- Transport Statement and Construction Traffic Management Plan
- Flood Risk Assessment
- Noise Assessment
- Glint and Glare Assessment

The findings of these assessments, alongside your comments, will be used to refine the final design ahead of a full planning application submission.

We have submitted documents to the council's pre-application service to gather valuable feedback on the site design.

Construction and Access

Construction of the solar farm will take approximately six months. During this time, HGVs will be used for delivery of solar panels and substation equipment.

The proposed access route shown on page 3 avoids Braunton and Knowle. Instead construction traffic will be routed on A-roads to the north, using the roundabout at Mullacott Cross.

Construction traffic will leave the A361 onto an unnamed road, until turning right onto Buttercombe Lane before reaching the site entrance utilising existing access tracks and farm turnings.

The roads for the access route were used for the construction of Luscott Barton Solar Farm built in 2014 and nearby tracks have been built for the construction and maintenance of Fullabrook Wind Farm.

We are considering two options for access off Buttercombe Lane which are still under review by our transport consultant.



You can provide feedback on our plans using our **online survey** using the QR code above. (bit.ly/buttercombe-survey)



Public Consultation Concept Map

The plan on this page shows the initial design for the project within the land available for renewable energy development.

All fields included for solar have additional planting of new hedgerow and trees to screen the solar areas and reduce visual impact. We welcome your input on what other additional screening would be beneficial.

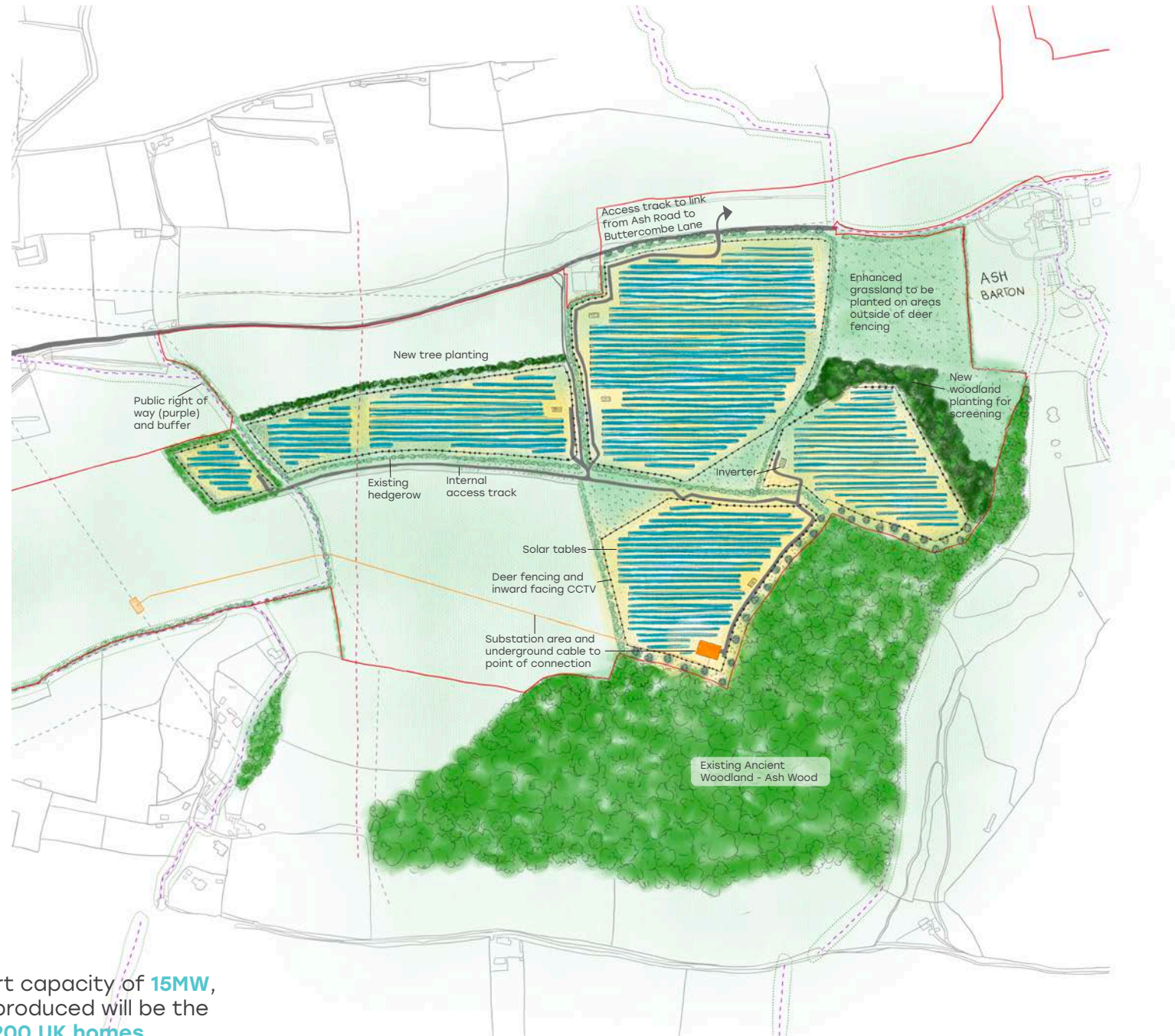
The substation compound area is outlined on the layout with the final design for the substation compound to be finalised.

Through our initial feasibility appraisal and design suitability process, Exagen identify key statutory and non-statutory environmental, heritage, and planning designations as a baseline for creating the concept map. Part of this process also considers how enhancements might be best delivered.

The concept map offsets design elements from sensitive local features including taking into account the following considerations wherever possible to site proposed infrastructure:

- 5m from hedgerows
- 10m from all trees
- 15m from the ancient woodland
- Significant distance and screening from local properties

The solar farm will have an export capacity of **15MW**, across the year, the electricity produced will be the same as the annual usage of **6,200 UK homes**.



Landscape and visual impact

Buttercombe Solar Farm is situated on the brow and behind the hill to the north-east of Braunton, overall there are very limited views of the solar farm from Knowle, Braunton and the burrows.

The site benefits from the existing Ash Wood which reduces views from the south, including most of the areas situated along the estuary.

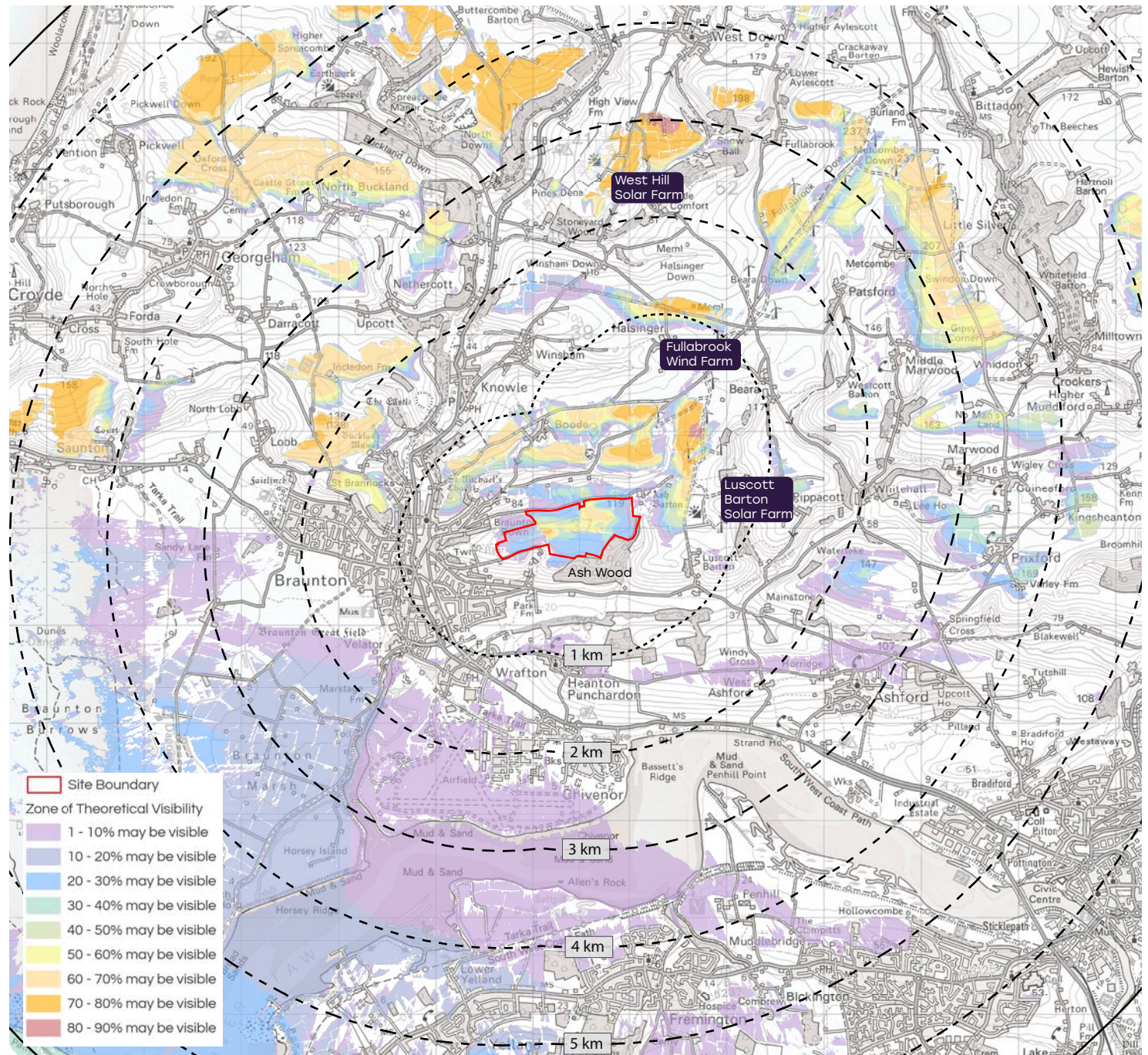
The most prominent feature in the landscape is the Fullabrook Wind Farm, located 200m north of Buttercombe Solar Farm.

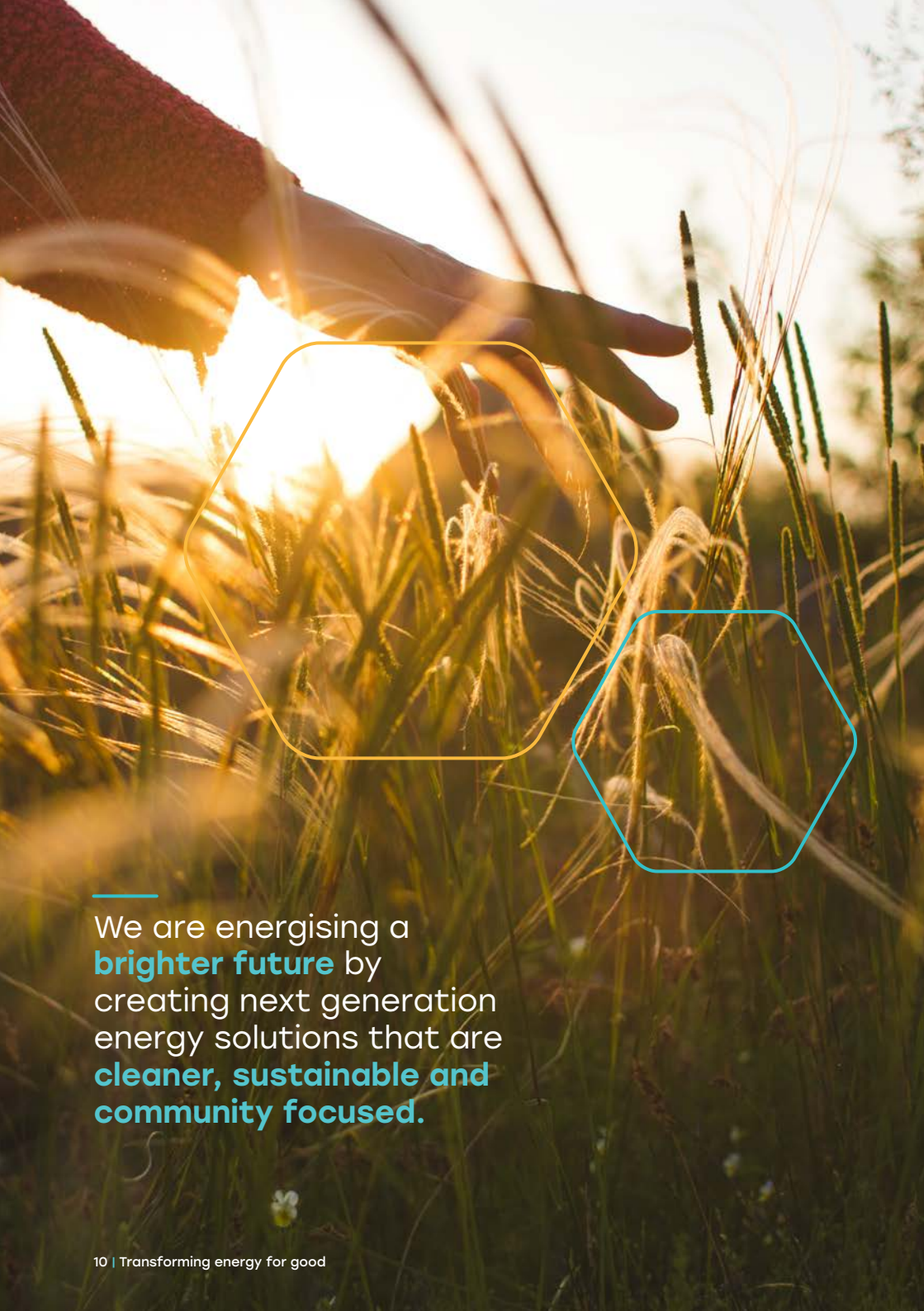
Views of the back of panels from the north and nearby properties are to be reduced by wood and hedgerow planting across the site.

The views from nearby North Devon National Landscape area have been considered and we have taken on board feedback from the landscape officer at the council and consultants to refine the layout and the landscape mitigation plan for the site to reduce impact.

The Zone of Theoretical Visibility shown opposite shows where parts of the solar farm could be visible from the surrounding area with screening implemented. A majority of Braunton is predicted to have no view of the solar farm due to the topography of the local area.

Areas to the south are predicted to have at most 10-20% view at over 3-4km distance where the Fullabrook Wind Farm is more clearly visible. The areas to the north shown in orange are generally open rural locations away from properties and public rights of way. Again at a distance from the site, the view of the solar farm will be in context of the nearby wind farm.





We are energising a **brighter future** by creating next generation energy solutions that are **cleaner, sustainable and community focused**.

Transforming energy for good

Exagen develop, build and operate renewable energy projects for the good of people and our environment.

We are involved in projects all the way through from origination through planning to construction and operation.

The Exagen Development Team comprises of staff with more than 100 years combined experience in development of renewable energy projects in the UK.

You can provide feedback on our plans using our email buttercombesolarfarm@exagen.co.uk

To find out more about Exagen, this project and the work we do, please visit our website exagen.co.uk/projects/buttercombe-solar-farm/

Project team



Ben Fawcett
Commercial and Development Director



Andrew Mott
Head of Planning and Environment



Tom Tabram
Project Developer



Will Philps
Senior Development Planner



Becca Leake
Environmental Planner



Sam Warne
Community Engagement Officer

Our partners



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