



# CLEVE HILL SOLAR PARK

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**CLEVE HILL SOLAR PARK**

**OUTLINE SPECIAL PROTECTION AREA - CONSTRUCTION NOISE  
MANAGEMENT PLAN  
(OUTLINE SPA CNMP)**

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

This outline Special Protection Area Construction Noise Management Plan (SPA CNMP) establishes appropriate noise thresholds for the control of noise associated with the construction and decommissioning of Cleve Hill Solar Park (CHSP; the Development) which has the potential to disturb ornithological receptors associated with The Swale Special Protection Area (SPA).

An outline assessment of modelled construction noise impacts is presented with outline mitigation proposals.

As the equipment and detailed design of the Development is not fixed at the time of writing, this outline SPA CNMP is a live document to be updated prior to the commencement of construction.

## 2 ORNITHOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

Noise and visual stimuli during construction and decommissioning of the Development may cause disturbance to breeding, foraging and resting/roosting birds both within the Development site and beyond its boundaries, such as in the adjacent freshwater grazing marsh/reedbeds and intertidal habitats of the Swale. There will be works activities in the local landscape during the construction and decommissioning periods, including movements of large plant vehicles (*e.g.*, excavator, dump truck, and transport), presence of personnel and operation of one or more piling rigs.

The potential for noise and visual disturbance to birds within The Swale Special Protection Area (SPA) has been identified for the construction and decommissioning phases of the Development. Further detail on the background to this is included in Environmental Statement (ES) Chapter 9: Ornithology (DCO document reference: 6.1.9).

This SPA Construction Noise Management Plan (SPA CNMP) is therefore required to govern noise within the SPA during construction and decommissioning.

## 3 NOISE THRESHOLDS

Noise thresholds have been set based on the analysis carried out in ES Chapter 9: Ornithology. Following consultation responses, separate thresholds have been set for active piling noise, based on an L<sub>Amax</sub> level as it is impulsive, and for all other construction noise based on an L<sub>Aeq</sub> level.

The noise thresholds represent noise levels above which there is likely to be significant disturbance to ornithological receptors associated with the Swale SPA.

The most sensitive receptor locations during the breeding and wintering seasons are considered separately, and the threshold noise levels have been derived to reflect the season variation with reference to literature as set out in ES Chapter 9: Ornithology.

The construction and decommissioning phases will be designed and planned to avoid exceeding the identified noise thresholds.

Table 1 summarises the relevant noise thresholds which are also described in the following sections.

**Table 1: Noise Thresholds**

Season	Receptor Location within the SPA	Active Piling Noise Threshold (dB L <sub>Amax</sub> )	Other Construction Noise Threshold (dB L <sub>Aeq</sub> )
Breeding (1 March to 31 August)	South Bank of the Swale LNR	65	65
Wintering (1 September to 28 February)	Seaward of MHWS	70	70

### 3.1 Active Piling Noise (L<sub>Amax</sub>)

#### 3.1.1 Breeding Birds

For breeding birds, a suitable threshold active piling noise level in the areas of the SPA sensitive to disturbance during construction is considered to be **65 dB (L<sub>Amax</sub>)**, below which birds are not expected to react in a way that interrupts communication, feeding, incubating or provisioning of young.

This threshold noise level has been applied to the area of the SPA which is coincident with the South Bank of the Swale Local Nature Reserve.

#### 3.1.2 Wintering Birds

For wintering birds, a suitable threshold active piling noise level in the areas of the SPA sensitive to disturbance during construction is considered to be **70 dB (L<sub>Amax</sub>)**, below which birds are not expected to exhibit a flight response.

This threshold noise level has been applied to the area of the SPA seaward of Mean High Water Springs (MHWS).

### 3.2 Other Construction Noise (L<sub>Aeq</sub>)

#### 3.2.1 Breeding Birds

For breeding birds, a suitable threshold construction noise level in the areas of the SPA sensitive to disturbance during construction is considered to be **65 dB (L<sub>Aeq</sub>)**, below which birds are not expected to react in a way that interrupts communication, feeding, incubating or provisioning of young.

This threshold noise level has been applied to the area of the SPA which is coincident with the South Bank of the Swale Local Nature Reserve.

#### 3.2.2 Wintering Birds

For wintering birds, a suitable threshold construction noise level in the areas of the SPA sensitive to disturbance during construction is considered to be **70 dB (L<sub>Aeq</sub>)**, below which birds are not expected to exhibit a flight response.

This threshold noise level has been applied to the area of the SPA seaward of MHWS.

## 4 ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

The assessment of construction noise on ecological receptors has been undertaken based on the methodology detailed in Section 12.3.2 of the Noise Chapter.

In summary, the distance between the closest points to the ecological receptor at which each construction activity occurs has been identified, and used to calculate worst case noise levels using the source data and methodology described in BS 5228-1:2014.

The assessment of active piling operations has been undertaken based on predicted L<sub>Amax</sub> levels, while other construction activities are based on predicted L<sub>Aeq</sub> levels.

- Active piling has been assessed based on a L<sub>Amax</sub> as this activity will result in high levels of impulsive noise. In addition, due to the potentially intermittent nature of active piling, it is considered appropriate to use L<sub>Amax</sub> as a worst case; and
- Other construction activities (*e.g.*, engine noise, manoeuvring plant) will not emit impulsive, intermittent noise, and as such have been assessed as L<sub>Aeq</sub> levels.

This outline assessment presents an indication of the likely noise levels based on typical construction activities and equipment that will be used on site. This assessment will be updated, once manufacturers data becomes available, to ensure that the mitigation mitigates significantly disturbing activities, and minimises impacts on birds within The Swale SPA.

## 5 OUTLINE ASSESSMENT

A precautionary assessment is presented in order to demonstrate how construction activity could proceed in compliance with the thresholds set in Section 4.

As stated in Section 1, this assessment will be updated prior to construction using the detailed design and data from the actual plant and equipment to be deployed onsite during construction.

The assessment is considered to be worst case and precautionary as noise generated during construction will not be continuous in any one location for long durations *e.g.*, the largest field adjacent to the SPA is expected to take 6 weeks to complete. Therefore any one part of the SPA will be subject to noise emissions approaching the threshold for only a few days.

### 5.1 Active Piling Operations

Table 2 presents the predicted dB L<sub>Amax</sub> level at the SPA boundary and MHWS due to active piling operations, at the closest position to each receptor that active piling takes place.

The distance from the closest positions at which active piling could take place (solar PV module installation) to each ecological receptor is as follows:

- SPA boundary – 20 m; and
- MHWS – 80 m.

**Table 2: Predicted Active Piling Noise Level, dB L<sub>Amax</sub>**

Receptor	Active Piling Noise Threshold	Active Piling
		Predicted Noise Level, dB, L <sub>Amax</sub>
SPA Boundary (Breeding Season 1 March to 31 August)	65 dB L <sub>Amax</sub>	100.0
MHWS (Wintering Season 1 September to 28 February)	70 dB L <sub>Amax</sub>	83.0

Based upon the above assessment, as a result of 'active piling noise', an area of significant disturbance (*i.e.*, noise levels in excess of 65 dB,  $L_{Amax}$ ) is anticipated at the SPA boundary during the breeding season, and the MHWS during winter season..

### 5.1.1 Assumptions

The above predictions are based on the following assumptions:

- Four piling rigs actively piling at the same time;
- As the  $L_{Amax}$  index has been used to assess active piling noise, it is not necessary to account for the addition of other construction noise to the piling noise levels identified;
- Maximum active piling noise source height of 6 m; and
- For calculation of noise at MHWS, an additional 5 dB reduction has been applied for the sea wall acting as a noise barrier.

### 5.2 Other Construction Activity

The distance to the closest position at which construction takes place to each ecological receptor is presented in Table 3.

For each activity, the distance to each activity is presented, as well as the closest distance to the haul road, so that the assessment takes into account both the nearest activity and on-going haulage noise.

**Table 3: Distance between receptor and construction activity**

Receptor	Construction Activity							
	Site Prep - Hardstanding & Track Construction		Manoeuvring Piling Plant		Installation of PV Panels		Installation of Substation	
	Activity	Haul Rd	Activity	Haul Rd	Activity	Haul Rd	Activity	Haul Rd
	Closest Distance to Receptor, m							
SPA Boundary (Breeding Season 1 March to 31 August)	500	500	20	500	20	500	475	180
MHWS (Wintering Season 1 September to 28 February)	560	560	80	560	80	560	535	560

Table 4 presents noise emission levels due to other construction activities at the SPA boundary and MHWS.

In each case the noise from each construction activity has been combined with the noise from the nearest haul road to calculate an overall dB,  $L_{Aeq}$  at each receptor.

**Table 4: Predicted Other Construction Noise Level, dB  $L_{Aeq}$**

Receptor	Other Construction Noise Threshold	Construction Activity			
		Site Prep - Hardstanding & Track Construction	Manoeuvring Piling Plant	Installation of PV Panels	Installation of Substation
		Predicted Noise Level, dB, $L_{Aeq}$			
SPA Boundary (Breeding Season 1 March to 31 August)	65 dB $L_{Aeq}$	54.5	76.7	76.0	58.1
MHWS (Wintering Season 1 September to 28 February)	70 dB $L_{Aeq}$	50.7	60.1	59.5	51.5

Based upon the above assessment, as a result of 'other construction noise' an area of significant disturbance (*i.e.*, noise levels in excess of 65 dB,  $L_{Amax}$ ) is anticipated at the SPA boundary.

No significant disturbance (*i.e.*, noise levels in excess of 70 dB,  $L_{Amax}$ ) is anticipated at or beyond MHWS during the wintering season.

### 5.2.1 Assumptions

The above predictions are based on the following assumptions:

- All plant and machinery located at the closest point to the respective receptor where a given activity will take place;
- Refuelling will take place at least 500 m from the SPA;
- 5 dB reduction has been applied to the predicted levels at MHWS to account for the sea wall;
- Soft ground between source and receiver;
- On-time for each activity is assumed to be 100%, as the threshold levels for ecological receptors do not account for the time over which activities take place; and
- No reduction in noise due to barrier effects created by the progressive installation of the solar PV modules.

## 6 OUTLINE MITIGATION

Construction will be carried out in such a way that it can be demonstrated that noise thresholds in Section 3 are not exceeded. Where mitigation is required to achieve this, examples of such mitigation are provided below. As set out in Section 12.6.4 below, prior to commencement of construction, the proposed construction plant and methods will be subject to a revised noise assessment, to demonstrate how noise thresholds will be met.

### 6.1 Mitigation Measures

#### 6.1.1 Piling Noise

The predicted noise levels during active piling has the potential to result in significant effects at the SPA Boundary and MHWS.

In order to reduce noise at ecological receptors during active piling operations, a 10 dB reduction in noise levels should be achieved through implementation of one (or more) of the following:



- Selection of quieter equipment than that assessed;
- Use of pile hammer shrouds;
- Use of pile press rather than hammer; or
- Use of acoustic quilts, barriers or water jackets.

The implementation of mitigation to reduce noise from active piling will result in residual effects of 90 dB  $L_{Amax}$  at the SPA Boundary, and 73 dB  $L_{Amax}$  at MHWS. The predictions are based on 4 pilers actively piling at the same time.

During the winter period, only 3 dB further mitigation is required in order to meet the noise thresholds. This could be achieved by, for example, using only 2 pilers when within 30 m of nearest point of the solar PV modules to the ecological designations. This would reduce the noise levels at the MHWS to 70 dB  $L_{Amax}$ , i.e., at the threshold level during the winter period. As such, with appropriate mitigation, it is demonstrated that active piling can be undertaken during winter periods without exceeding the noise thresholds.

Based upon the above, noise levels in excess of 65 dB,  $L_{Amax}$  are anticipated at the SPA Boundary during the breeding season. For piling within the breeding season (summer), alternative solutions are required in order to meet the noise thresholds.

### 6.1.2 Other Construction Activities

As set out in Section 5.1, unmitigated, the noise from manoeuvring piling plant and installation of PV panels i.e. those activities undertaken adjacent to the SPA Boundary), could result in significant effects during the breeding season.

No significant effects are predicted at the MHWS (applicable during the winter period) from other construction activities.

### 6.1.3 Ecological Receptor Mitigation Measures

In order to address the potentially significant effects identified above for the SPA Boundary (applicable during the breeding season only), mitigation is required. This may include (for example):

- The use of quieter plant and equipment than modelled here;
- Modelling and application of noise mitigation measures, similar to those given as examples for piling noise above;
- The ECoW overseeing work undertaken adjacent to the northern boundary of the site and observing ornithological responses to inform any further action; and/or
- Applying set-back distances at which specific construction activities can take place during the breeding season.

Application of these mitigation measures is expected to deliver noise reductions sufficient that predicted noise levels at receptor locations would be below the 65 dB threshold (as applicable during the breeding season). Depending on the availability of sufficiently quiet plant and equipment, it is possible that certain construction activities will need to be restricted in the areas closest to The Swale SPA during the breeding season in order to avoid exceeding the noise thresholds identified.

This document will be updated prior to construction setting out the final mitigation options based on the equipment planned to be used on site. This is likely to be a combination of the above example measures.

## 6.2 Best Practice Mitigation Measures for All Construction Activities

In addition to the setback distances for piling works, general best practice measures should be applied to all construction activities (including piling), as follows:

- Use the quietest item of plant suitable for the required task;
- Static noisy plant (such as generators) should be located as far from the SPA as is feasible for the particular activity;
- Plant access/maintenance panels to be kept closed;
- Plant should be turned off when not in use;
- No manoeuvring alarms to be fitted to piling rigs;
- Minimise the use of reversing alarms through the considerate positioning of plant and vehicles;
- Fit broadband, rather than tonal reversing alarms where practicable; and
- Walkie-talkies/mobile phones should be used to communicate across the site; no shouting unless in an emergency.

Application of the above measures to manage construction noise will ensure that effects are minimised as far as reasonably practicable.

### 6.2.1 Irregular Noise Levels

In order to minimise the impact of sudden, irregular noise, it is recommended that piling works begin as far from the SPA as practicable (*i.e.*, in the south of the fields in most cases), and work towards the SPA. Once piling has begun, it should be undertaken with as few breaks as possible to reduce intermittency.

### 6.2.2 Minimising the Period of Construction

In order to minimise the length of time the SPA is exposed to construction noise close to the threshold levels, and to ensure construction noise levels are as consistent as practicable, it is suggested that multiple piling rigs are used, working close together in each field. While one piling rig actively piles, the remaining piling rigs can manoeuvre into position. This will also minimise the intermittency of the piling noise, which will help the birds to habituate quicker than a slower, more intermittent process.

It is recommended that the piling schedule is developed in consultation with the Ecological Clerk of Works.

## 7 CONCLUSION

Following mitigation, construction noise at the identified SPA receptor locations during the seasons as set out, will not exceed the noise thresholds in Table 1 of this SPA CNMP. This will prevent significant disturbing effects from occurring on birds within the SPA.

## 8 GLOSSARY

**Active piling:** The process of driving a pile i.e., not including manoeuvring, setting up etc.

**Decibel (dB):** The decibel is the basic unit of noise measurement. It relates to the cyclical changes in air pressure created by the sound (Sound Pressure Level) and operates on a logarithmic scale, ranging upwards from 0 dB. 0 dB is equivalent to the normal threshold of hearing at a frequency of 1000 Hz. Each increase of 3 dB on the scale represents a doubling in the Sound Pressure Level, and is typically the minimum noticeable change in sound level under normal listening conditions. For example, while an increase in noise level from 32 dB to 35 dB represents a doubling in sound pressure level, this change would only just be noticeable to the majority of listeners.

**dB(A):** Environmental noise levels are usually discussed in terms of dB(A). This is known as the A-weighted sound pressure level, and indicates that a correction factor has been applied, which corresponds to the human ear's response to sound across the range of audible frequencies. As stated in Jackson (2010)<sup>1</sup>, research shows that the shape of most birds' audibility curves are similar to those of humans. Therefore, whilst the A-weighted frequency curve correction was not specifically designed with avian receptors in mind, it is considered appropriate for the purposes of this assessment.

**Frequency:** The frequency of a sound is equivalent to its pitch in musical terms. The units of frequency are Hertz (Hz), which represents the number of cycles (vibrations) per second.

**Noise Emission:** The sound power level emitted from a given source.

**L<sub>Aeq,t</sub>:** This term is known as the A-weighted equivalent continuous sound pressure level. It is similar to an average, and represents the sound pressure level of a steady, continuous noise which has the same energy as the actual measured noise.

**L<sub>Amax</sub>:** The maximum A-weighted sound pressure level measured over a given period.

**Noise:** Unwanted sound. May refer to both natural (e.g. wind, birdsong etc.) and artificial sounds (e.g. traffic)

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<sup>1</sup> Jackson, P. Noise Impact Assessment on Wintering Birds Anna's Road Exploration Well Site, Westby Blackpool. Spectrum Acoustics 2012.