



Little Crow

Solar Park

Little Crow Solar Park, Scunthorpe

ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT: TECHNICAL APPENDICES

APPENDIX 7.6

GREAT CRESTED NEWT RISK AVOIDANCE METHOD STATEMENT

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APPENDIX 7.6: GREAT CRESTED NEWT RISK AVOIDANCE METHOD STATEMENT LITTLE CROW SOLAR, SCUNTHORPE, LINCOLNSHIRE

CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION.....	2
2	CONSTRUCTION PHASE METHODOLOGY.....	6
3	OPERATIONAL PHASE.....	10

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The information, data and advice which has been prepared and provided is true, and has been prepared and provided in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management's (CIEEM) Code of Professional Conduct. We confirm that the opinions expressed are our true and professional bona fide opinions. This report and its contents remain the property of Clarkson and Woods Ltd. until payment has been made in full.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1.1 Clarkson and Woods Ltd was commissioned by INRG Solar (Little Crow) Ltd. to prepare a Risk Avoidance Method Statement (RAMS) in relation to great crested newts for the construction of part of the Little Crow Solar Park in Lincolnshire.

1.1.2 Works will take place within 500m of a pond where great crested newt presence has been confirmed through a positive eDNA sample taken in June 2019. The pond is 330m south of the Order Limits. Given this result it has to be assumed that great crested newts were present recently in this pond. Data search records also identified records of great crested newts south west of the Order Limits. It is acknowledged that the status of use (i.e. breeding/non-breeding or population size) is unknown. Suitable terrestrial habitat within 500m radius of this pond may be used by great crested newts during their terrestrial phase. This pond and a 500m radius is shown in Figure 1 below:

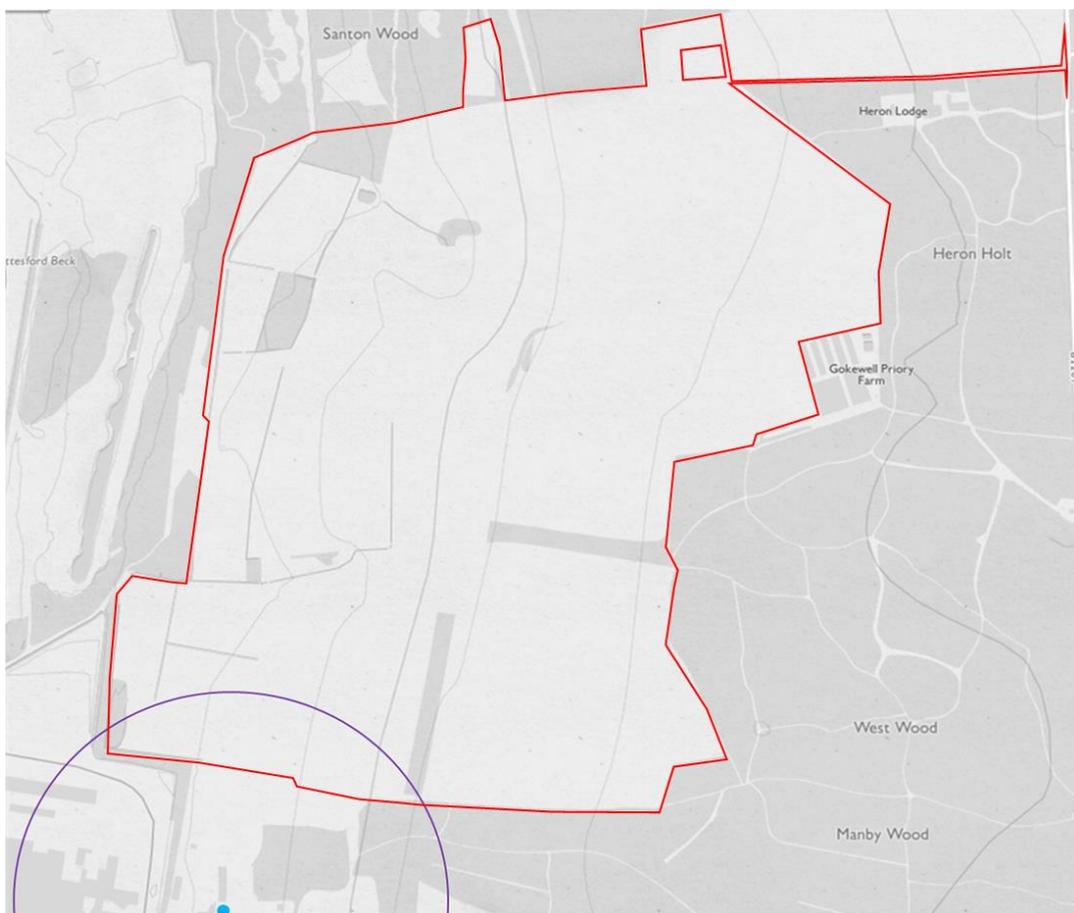


Figure 1: Plan showing location of Pond and a 500m radius around the pond where newts may be encountered. Note overlap with the proposed solar array is small comprising approximately 7Ha, of which circa 5.7ha will be within the construction footprint.

1.1.3 eDNA surveys of the five ponds on site have not found any evidence of great crested newts. It is therefore assumed that great crested newts are only likely to be found within 500m of the off-site pond.

1.1.4 A NE Rapid Risk Assessment was completed for the development to consider whether the works would be likely to require a licence. This assessment extracted below indicated that an offence was likely. Under such circumstances a derogation licence under the Habitats Regulations may not always be required where works can be modified so as to minimise the risk of encountering newts.

Component	Likely effect (select one for each component; select the most harmful option if more than one is likely; lists are in order of	Notional offence probability score
Great crested newt breeding pond(s)	No effect	0
Land within 100m of any breeding pond(s)	No effect	0
Land 100-250m from any breeding pond(s)	No effect	0
Land >250m from any breeding pond(s)	5 - 10 ha lost or damaged	0.3
Individual great crested newts	No effect	0
		Maximum: 0.3
Rapid risk assessment result:	AMBER: OFFENCE LIKELY	

1.1.5 This RAMS has therefore been prepared to detail how impacts upon newts will be minimised and/or avoided, thereby avoiding the need to obtain a licence for the development or complete mitigation processes such as translocation exercises. Adherence to the details set out within the RAMS for all works within the 500m radius around the known population of great crested newts is essential. Failure to adhere to the approach set out within this method statement risks offences under the Habitats Regulations 2018.

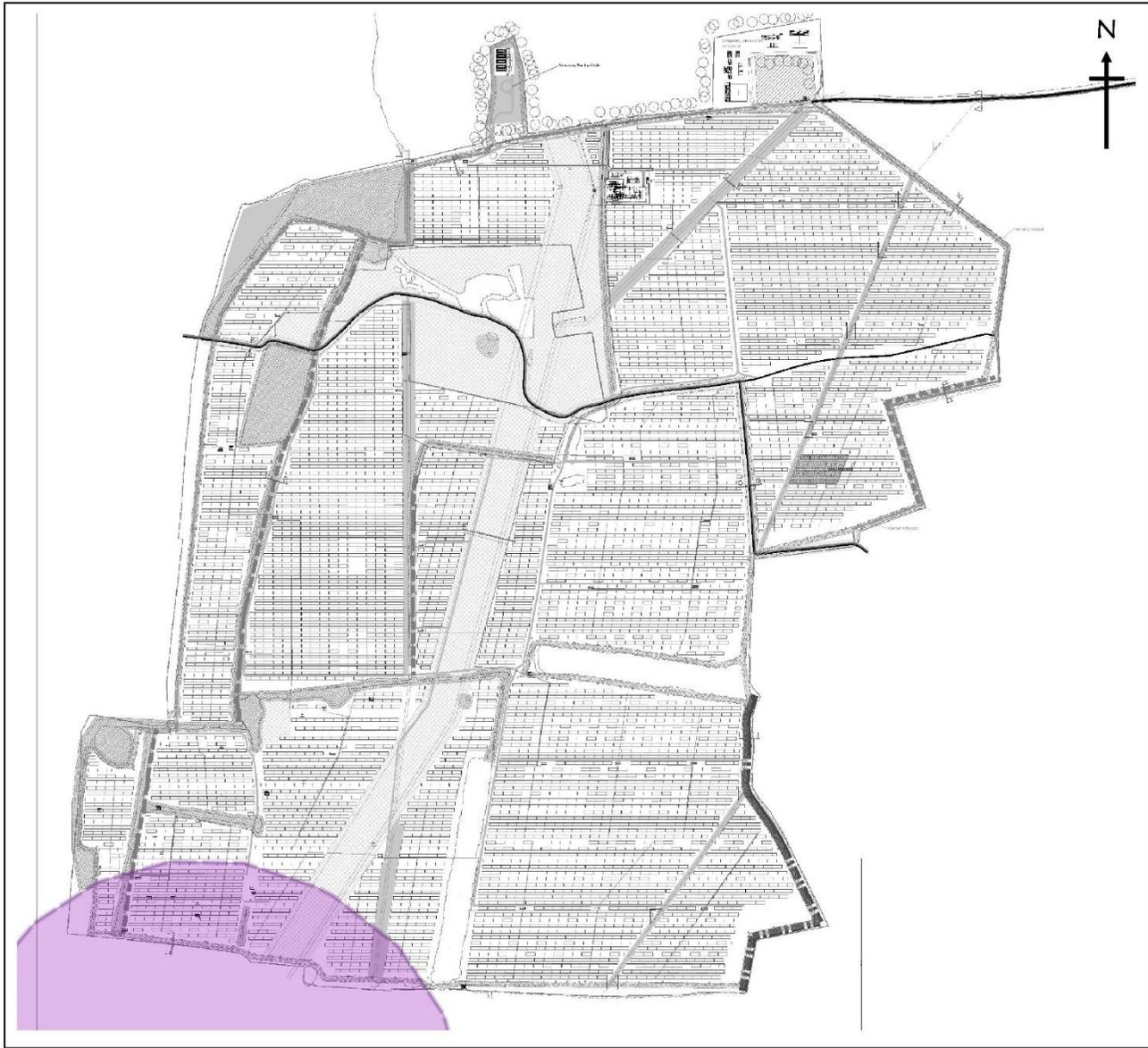
1.1.6 The purpose of this RAMS is:

- *To set out the protocol for construction of the array within a 500m radius of the identified pond to ensure that ecological constraints are appropriately mitigated;*
- *Avoid of harm or disturbance of great crested newts and their key habitats.*
- *To set out protocols for the operation within and surrounding the 500m zone to safeguard newts; and*

- *To ensure impacts to other protected and/or priority species are avoided/minimised.*

1.1.7 It is the responsibility of INRG Solar (Little Crow) Ltd. to arrange for the works to be undertaken in the manner outlined in this document. Contractors hired to carry out clearance and construction works will be appropriately experienced and qualified.

1.1.8 An appropriately qualified Ecological Clerk of Works will be on hand for key clearance activities and regular inspections of the ongoing management of the site will be required.



Key:
 GCN Working Area



Project
Little Crow Solar Array

Title
GCN Working Area

Project Number
6527

Scale	Date
Not to Scale	21/10/19

2 CONSTRUCTION PHASE METHODOLOGY

2.1 General

- 2.1.1 This RAMS only applies to works within 500m of the great crested newt pond, hereafter referred to as the Great Crested Newt Working Area (GCNWA)
- 2.1.2 An Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW) will be appointed to provide a watching brief during site works. The ECoW will be a suitably experienced ecologist who is a member of the Chartered Institute of Ecologists and Environmental Managers (CIEEM). The ecologist will hold, or be an Accredited Agent under, a great crested newt survey licence from Natural England.
- 2.1.3 In the event a great crested newt is discovered within the GCNWA, works must cease within the area until further advice has been sought from the ECoW. Potentially a licence will be required from Natural England before works can proceed within this area. Alternatively, it may be appropriate to temporarily postpone works within the area until such a time temporary impacts can be avoided.

2.2 Timing of Work

- 2.2.1 Given the distance of the GCNWA from the great crested newt pond, and considering the sub-optimal nature of the habitat within the construction area a restriction on the timing of construction is not considered essential. However, where possible in order to minimise the risk of delays and encountering newts it is recommended that construction activities within this area are scheduled to take place between November and January when great crested newts will be in hibernation.
- 2.2.2 Whilst in hibernation it can be safely assumed that great crested newts will not be present within the open arable fields or the open areas of semi-improved grassland. Hibernating newts are likely to be restricted to the field margins, ditches and woodland which are found between the pond and the Order Limits.
- 2.2.3 In the unlikely event a great crested newt is encountered during pre-construction inspections and/or regular site monitoring the ECoW will provide

advice on the need to stop work temporarily within the GCNWA until either a different time of year (when GCN will likely be absent) or until a licence can be obtained from Natural England to allow the works to continue without breaking the law.

2.3 Pre-Site Clearance/Pre-Construction Inspection

Arable Fields and Semi-Improved Grasslands

2.3.1 Arable and grassland fields will be maintained as ploughed, grazed or mown short (sward <100mm) until construction commences to maintain the sub-optimal nature of these habitats for amphibians.

2.3.2 The GCNWA will be subject to an update walkover inspection by the ECoW prior to works commencing. Where construction commences between February and October the walkover will take place within 1 month of construction commencing. Should construction commence between November and January an inspection will need to occur in October to ensure that all potential refuge features are searched and removed prior to the onset of winter and potential hibernation. Any discrete features potentially suitable for use as shelter by great crested newt which are found to lie within the construction area will be subject to a fingertip search by the ECoW. Based on the Phase 1 habitat survey the area did not contain any specific features (e.g. log piles) which may be used for refuges by great crested newts, and therefore it is unlikely that the walkover will uncover any features or encounter any newts.

Hedgerows and Field Margins

2.3.3 All hedgerows and field margins will be retained. A buffer of at least 4m will be maintained around these features to prevent any damage occurring in the event that great crested newts disperse through the site.

2.4 Toolbox Talk

2.4.1 A toolbox talk will be delivered by the ECoW to the Site Manager and/or Site Supervisor prior to commencement of work within the GCNWA. The toolbox talk will detail protection measures outlined within this RAMS required during construction.

2.4.2 In the event a change in personnel on the site occurs during construction and a new site manager is appointed, the toolbox talk will need to be provided to them by the appointed ECoW.

2.4.3 The toolbox talk will cover the following:

- Identification of Great Crested Newts
- Legal Protection Afforded to Great Crested Newts
- Details of the RAMS for great crested newts
- Location of GCNWA
- Correct approach to be adopted should GCN be encountered on site
- Anticipate scope of ongoing monitoring by ECoW

2.4.4 The site manager will be responsible for relaying information within the toolbox talk to all site staff during their initial site inductions.

2.5 Watching Brief During Habitat Clearance and Array String Installation

Arable and Grassland Habitat

2.5.1 Once the pre-clearance inspection has been completed construction operations within the GCNWA can proceed. Direct supervision of the work by an ECoW is not considered to be necessary however all site operatives will have received appropriate training on this RAMS during the toolbox talk which will be delivered to all site operatives active within this area.

2.5.2 Periodic monitoring of the works within this area will be undertaken by the ECoW (see 2.9)

2.6 Protection of suitable habitat within GCNWA

2.6.1 As set out within the CEMP (Biodiversity) (Document Ref: 7.27 LC TA7.7) for the project (MS2 – Biodiversity Protection Zone Fencing) all field boundaries including internal hedgerows, hedgerows at the edge of the site and woodland edges will be protected with appropriate fencing installed as per the method statement at the outset of construction. This fencing is considered adequate to ensure the protection of the habitats within the GCNWA which are considered most likely to support great crested newt.

2.7 Defining the GCNWA

2.7.1 The edge of the GCNWA will be defined with semi-permanent high visibility marker posts installed in the ground. This would be installed at regular (approx. 50m) intervals along the edge of the GCNWA so that operatives can see when they enter into the GCNWA and thus when additional consideration, as to the presence of great crested newts and adherence to the requirements of the RAMS is required.

2.8 Materials and Site Compounds

2.8.1 No materials are to be stored or site compounds are to be established within the GCNWA.

2.8.2 Due to the confirmed presence of great crested newts 330m south, there is a small risk that any materials stored within this area may be used by newts as shelter overnight (specifically between February and October). If newts are subsequently encountered beneath materials stored within the GCNWA the removal of these materials would risk disturbance and potentially injury of newts and would therefore be illegal. Therefore, in order to avoid the risk of offences occurring no materials will be stored or site compounds established within this area. In the unlikely event that small areas of materials require storage within the GCNWA

2.9 Monitoring of GCNWA during construction

2.9.1 Given the ongoing risk to great crested newts during works within the GCNWA an ECoW will be required to undertake regular (not less than quarterly) monitoring inspections of the GCNWA and confirm that ongoing construction activities adhere to the details set out within this RAMS.

2.9.2 Where monitoring inspections find failure to adhere to the RAMS the ECoW will seek to immediately rectify breaches. For example if materials are found to be stored on the ground within the GCNWA then the ecologist will arrange for their immediate removal.

2.9.3 In the unlikely event the ECoW records repeated breaches of the requirements of this simple RAMS the ECoW may advise that due to the inability of the

developer to adhere to the RAMS, breaches of the document will be reported to the LPA. The ECoW may also advise that works within this area will need to be temporarily ceased until a suitable licence can be obtained from Natural England and an appropriate translocation exercise can be completed. It should be noted that such an approach is likely to lead to a delay of at least 4 months.

3 OPERATIONAL PHASE

- 3.1.1 After the completion of construction of the array the ground beneath the new array strings will be seeded (onto bare ground in the arable areas and in bare patches created in the grassland within the semi-improved grassland areas).
- 3.1.2 The process of preparing the ground for grassland seeding and subsequent seed dispersal all carry a very minor risk of adverse impacts upon great crested newts. Nevertheless, given that they may be present within the area it is recommended that prior to seeding within these areas being completed that the ECoW completes a walkover survey of the GCNWA to inspect the area for evidence of great crested newt and to inspect any features which might provide shelter to newts.

