



Little Crow

Solar Park

Little Crow Solar Park, Scunthorpe

DRAFT STATEMENT OF COMMON GROUND WITH NATURAL ENGLAND

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LITTLE CROW SOLAR PARK LAND TO THE EAST OF STEEL WORKS, SCUNTHORPE

DRAFT STATEMENT OF COMMON GROUND (SOCG)

<STATUS & INSERT DATE>

BETWEEN:

- I. LITTLE CROW SOLAR PARK; AND
- II. NATURAL ENGLAND

ON BEHALF OF INRG SOLAR (LITTLE CROW) LTD

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PLANNING | **DESIGN** | **ENVIRONMENT** | **ECONOMICS**

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This draft Statement of Common Ground has been prepared as part of the application process for a Development Consent Order for the Little Crow Solar Park [“the Development”]. This draft document has been prepared jointly between the applicant and Natural England.

Natural England

1.2 Natural England is the statutory advisor to the Government on nature conservation in England and promotes the conservation of England’s wildlife and natural features.

1.3 Natural England is defined conservation body under Regulation 9 of The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2018 (‘the Habitats Regulations’). Natural England must also be consulted by the Secretary of State (SoS; as the competent authority for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs)) for the purposes of Habitats Regulations Appraisal (HRA). The SoS must have regard to any representations made by Natural England under Regulations 63(3) of the Habitats Regulations.

Purpose of Document

1.4 This draft statement of common ground is a working document prepared jointly by the applicant and Natural England. The document has been structured to reflect the matters and topic relevant between the applicant and Natural England.

1.5 As this is a working document, the general approach for each topic-specific sections is to provide common ground text set out in a tabulated format for Natural England to comment upon and then either agree, disagree or identify need for further negotiations. A second table is then provided which discusses the comments made during the consultation phases.

1.6 As the SoCG evolves, the aim will be provide three distinct table covering matters that are agreed; matters which are subject to further negotiations; and matters not agreed.

1.7 The remainder of this document is split into the following sections:

Section 2: Development Description

Section 3: Consultation Undertaken

Section 4: Policy Framework

Section 5: Ecology and Biodiversity

Section 18: Declarations

2. DEVELOPMENT DESCRIPTION

- 2.1 The main element of the Development is the construction, operation, maintenance and decommissioning of a ground mounted solar park with a maximum design capacity of up to 150MWp (megawatts peak) and battery storage capacity of up to 90MW. Battery storage will allow the development to fully utilise the network connection capacity when the solar park is not exporting at peak capacity. The battery element of the proposal would be available to store energy from and release electrical energy to the electricity network.
- 2.2 The solar and battery elements could either be delivered and connected to the electricity network independently of each other or at the same time. They could therefore be constructed and become operational either independently or together. An operational lifespan of 35 years is sought for each element and, subject to when they are constructed, the operational lifespans could run concurrently or interdependently.
- 2.3 A single main substation compound will serve the whole Development, and this will be required for the duration of the Development and retained thereafter. The substation compound would be located near the northern perimeter of the site and to the east of the existing double row of 132kV overhead electricity pylons which traverse the site and duly provides the point of connection to the local electricity network.
- 2.4 The Development area can be effectively split into seven land use zones, these are:-
- Zone 1: Ground mounted solar photovoltaic arrays
 - Zone 2: Battery Compound Yard
 - Zone 3: Ecological corridors
 - Zone 4: Central substation compound and connection to the national grid
 - Zone 5: Main access track
 - Zone 6: Perimeter development buffer
 - Zone 7: Temporary construction compound

- 2.5 The proposed land use zoning plan is provided at Appendix 1. The proposed layout drawings are provided at Appendix 2.

**APPENDIX 1 – LAND USE ZONING PLAN
APPENDIX 2 – PLANNING APPLICATION DRAWINGS**

Solar Arrays

- 2.6 All solar photovoltaic (PV) modules will be located within the fields enclosures / Zone 1 as defined on the zoning plan. The total solar output will not exceed 150MW with land coverage of the PV modules would be 800,000 sq m.
- 2.7 The PV modules would be static, mounted on aluminium metal racks. The racks will be laid out in multiple parallel rows running east to west across the various field enclosures. The distance between the arrays would respond to topography but would typically be between 3.5 metres to 6 metres. The maximum height of the solar panels fixed onto the framework would be under 2.5m. All PV modules will be south facing.
- 2.8 The mounting system will be primarily formed of piled posts set approximately 3.75m apart, except within areas of archaeological interest where the posts will be fixed into concrete pads resting on top of the ground. The PV modules would be dark blue, grey or black in colour with the frame constructed of anodized aluminium alloy.
- 2.9 For archaeological interests, a development exclusion zone has been provided around the area containing the former Gokewell Priory. No arrays or cable runs will go through this area. The area will be used to provide biodiversity measures and will be delineated with a stock-proof fence. The existing public right of way (Footpath 214) running through this area will be retained.
- 2.10 Inverters, transformers and associated switch gear which are required to convert the DC energy produced by the arrays into AC energy, will be spread equally across the site. Insulated DC cables from the solar modules will be routed in channels fixed on the underside of the framework. The electrical cabling from each array will be concealed through shallow trenches linking the modules to the inverters and transformers and then to the main substation. AC cables will also be laid in trenches and would run directly to the main substation compound.

- 2.11 The arrays would be set within stock-proof fencing up to 2m in height with wooden supporting posts placed at intervals of c. 3.5m. The stock proof fencing would be either green or galvanised aluminium in finish. The minimum distance between the edge of the arrays and the stock-proof fence would be 3m. Land between and beneath the panels would be used for biodiversity enhancements and seasonal sheep grazing.
- 2.12 A CCTV system mounted on poles would be positioned at intervals along the inside face edge of the stock-proof fencing (between the fence and the arrays).

Battery Storage Compound

- 2.13 The battery storage compound consists of industrial batteries that can store energy and are able to release or absorb energy from the power network. Being able to absorb and release energy, the battery storage at Little Crow can be used to contribute towards the frequency balancing services, where the power is being generated or absorbed statically or dynamically depending on the system frequency.
- 2.14 When there is not enough power, batteries are discharged to balance under frequency, preventing black and brown outs. To balance over frequency, batteries are charged to prevent dangerous spikes across electricity infrastructure¹.
- 2.15 All batteries will be located within the Zone 2 as defined on the zoning plan. The total land coverage of the battery compound would not exceed 3,500 m sq. The total storage capacity would not exceed 90MW.
- 2.16 The compound would be made secure by a 3m gated palisade fence. Battery containers would have a maximum length of 17m, maximum width of 3m and a maximum height of 4m. The maximum storage capacity of a single battery container would be c6MW. The battery containers would be dark green in colour. The maximum development footprint of the battery storage compound will be 55m by 100m and will be surfaced with stone chippings.

¹ The National Electricity Transmission System is an islanded network with no AC connections to other networks. In order to manage the system frequency within the normal operating range 49.5Hz to 50.5Hz, National Grid relies on frequency balancing service providers to modulate their active power output or consumption in order to minimise the imbalance between generation and demand on the system. The extent of the required modulation is determined by the deviation of the system frequency from 50Hz. A change in grid frequency is caused by an imbalance of supply and demand.

Substation

- 2.17 A single substation compound will be required for the Development and this will be constructed at the start of the development of the whole site. Following construction and commissioning the substation compound will be adopted and become the property of the District Network Operator (DNO, who will maintain the compound throughout the lifetime of the Development. The decommissioning of the substation is not considered as part of the Application as this will be the property of the DNO and as such would be outside the gift of the developer to decommission.
- 2.18 The maximum development footprint of the substation yard will be 80m by 80m and will be surfaced with stone chippings. Under normal conditions the site would be unmanned.

Landscape and ecological management plan

- 2.19 The Development proposal presents considerable opportunity for landscape and biodiversity mitigation and enhancement. The Landscape and Biodiversity proposal are discussed in detail in the supporting Landscape and Ecological Management Plan.
- 2.20 Ecological and biodiversity measures are promoted across the entire site and these enhanced areas are shown as land zone 3, as shown on the zoning plan. Land between and beneath the panels would be used for biodiversity enhancements and seasonal sheep grazing. Tree planting would be introduced along the north east section of the development boundary.
- 2.21 The existing woodland plantations that surround the various field enclosures would continue to be managed by the landowner as part of its woodland forestry licence. The hedgerows surrounding the field edges will also be managed via the Landscape and Ecological Management Plan.

Access

- 2.22 It is proposed that construction traffic will arrive from the M180 junction 4, the A15, the A18, the B1208 and B1207 to the site access. From the M180 junction 4 vehicles will use the A15 northbound to the Briggate Lodge Roundabout and then travel east along the A18 towards Brigg. From the A18, vehicles will turn left onto the B1208. The B1208 measures between approximately 5.5 and six metres wide.

Vehicles will travel along the B1208 to the junction with the B1207 and then continue straight ahead into the site access.

- 2.23 No construction vehicles associated with the development proposal would travel through Broughton.

Construction phase & Temporary Construction Compound

- 2.24 As stated elsewhere in this section, the solar and battery elements could either be constructed and connected to the electricity network independently of each other or at the same time. If all elements were constructed as at the same time, then the construction period would take approximately 11 months (up to 47 weeks).

- 2.25 Construction activities will be carried out Monday to Friday 07:00-18:00 and between 08:00 and 13:30 on Saturdays. Where possible, construction deliveries will be coordinated to avoid HGV movements during the traditional AM peak hour (08:00-09:00) and PM peak hour (17:00-18:00).

- 2.26 During the construction phase (or phases) one main construction compound will serve the development proposal and this will be located off the main site entrance, thus reducing the distance delivery vehicles will need to travel after reaching the site's entrance.

- 2.27 The temporary construction compound would comprise: -

- Temporary portacabins providing office and welfare facilities for construction operatives
- Parking area for construction and workers vehicles
- Secure compound for storage
- Temporary hardstanding
- Wheel washing facilities
- Temporary gated compound
- Storage bins for recyclables and other waste

All construction vehicles will exit through the wheel wash area in order to reduce the spread of mud and dirt onto the local highway network. Temporary roadways may be utilised to access parts of the development site and this would be guided by weather conditions at time of construction.

Temporary Diversion of Public Rights of Way

- 2.28 A temporary diversion of a section of the right of way (footpath 214) traversing the site will be required during the construction and subsequent decommissioning phases. The temporary diversion will only be required to allow the build out and removal of the solar park and main substation compound and this will be for a maximum of 11 months. The proposed temporary diversion is presented at Appendix 3.

APPENDIX 3 - PROPOSED TEMPORARY DIVERSION OF PUBLIC FOOTPATH 214

Decommissioning

- 2.29 An outline decommissioning strategy is included within the Environmental Statement and sets out details of the decommissioning programme to be carried out after a 35 year generation period. It includes the methods for the removal of all the solar panels, cabins, structures, batteries, enclosures, equipment and all other apparatus above and below ground level from the site and details of their destination in terms of waste/recycling, and details of how the site is to be restored.

3. CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN

- 3.1 A summary of all consultation between Clarkson and Woods and Natural England is provided in Table 4.2 below.

4. ECOLOGY AND BIODIVERSITY

4.1 The lead consultant on behalf of the applicant on ecology and biodiversity is Clarkson and Woods Ecological Consultants Ltd.

Table 4.1 Ecology & Biodiversity Common Ground

<i>Applicant comments</i>	<i>NE comments</i>	<i>Status e.g Agreed / not agreed N/A</i>
Methodology		
<p><i>Desk Study Methodology</i></p> <p>The Natural England/DEFRA web-based MAGIC database was used to identify internationally designated sites for nature conservation with 10km of the application site, and nationally designated sites with 5km. These are the correct search distances as potential impact pathways beyond those distances can be reasonably discounted.</p>	<p>Screening distances used considered appropriate for nature and scale of project.</p>	<p>Agreed</p>
<p><i>Survey Methodology</i></p> <p>A series of ecological surveys to establish the baseline have been undertaken between July 2017 and November 2019. The scope of detailed surveys was agreed in January 2018 primarily through liaison with North Lincolnshire Council. However, Natural England were satisfied that the survey effort and methods were appropriate to inform the Environmental Statement.</p>	<p>Agreed</p>	<p>Agreed</p>
<p><i>Assessment Methodology</i></p> <p>The standard approach applied in the UK to Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA) is</p>	<p>Natural England is satisfied with the assessment</p>	<p>Agreed</p>

<p>that developed by the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) in 2016 and revised in 2018². This methodology has been followed and used to evaluate existing conditions, and to assess the significance of likely effects on ecological features that may arise. The assessment methodology is considered appropriate.</p>	<p>methodology in so far as our strategic environmental interests are concerned.</p>	
<p>Baseline Information</p>		
<p><i>Designated Sites</i></p> <p>Within the desk study search area the only internationally designated site present (Humber Estuary SPA and Ramsar) was considered to be outside of the zone of influence, due to the distances and intervening habitats. It is agreed that there would be no likely significant effect on this internationally designated site. It has been agreed that a Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) is not required.</p> <p>Of the five Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) located within 5km of the Site, only one was taken forward into the assessment as it is situated adjacent to the main route for construction traffic (Broughton Wood SSSI), which was highlighted by NE at an early stage. The remaining four SSSIs are considered to be beyond the zone of influence due to the distances, nature of the scheme and intervening landscapes.</p> <p>Parts of the woodland to the east of the Site represent the Priority Habitat 'Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites' (PAWS).</p>	<p>Natural England is satisfied with the baseline information in so far as our strategic environmental interests are concerned.</p>	<p>Agreed</p>

² CIEEM (2018) Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine. CIEEM, Winchester.

<p><i>Habitats and Species</i></p> <p>Several habitats and species present on or adjacent to the Site, which are described in section 7.4 of the ES chapter, were classified as Important Ecological Features and were taken forward within the assessment. The baseline evaluation of species and habitats was agreed with North Lincolnshire Council.</p> <p>Natural England highlighted an area of grassland measuring circa 3.5ha which was managed under the Higher Tier Countryside Stewardship Agreement (HTCSA) Option 'Management of grassland for target features'. Details of the current Higher Tier Countryside Stewardship agreement were subsequently reviewed.</p>	<p>As above. However please note that the stewardship agreement in itself should have no bearing on the value ascribed to this area in the assessment or decision making.</p>	<p>Agreed</p>
<p><i>Impact Assessment and Mitigation</i></p>		
<p>As described in section 7.6 of the ES Chapter, key sources of impacts during construction were identified to be habitat loss, fragmentation, disturbance of species through noise and vibration, degradation of habitats by pollution or dust deposition and the incidental mortality of species during construction.</p> <p>The key mitigation measure to minimise construction related effects will be the implementation of a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), a draft of which is provided as a technical Appendix (7.7).</p> <p>Natural England were satisfied with the conclusions reached within the Environmental Statement that proposals would not have an effect on nearby statutorily designated sites.</p> <p>Nevertheless, the CEMP outlines good practice measures to be adopted during</p>	<p>Natural England is satisfied with the conclusions reached and mitigation and enhancement measures proposed in so far as they concern our remit.</p>	<p>Agreed</p>

<p>construction, including measures designed to avoid minor impacts on the Broughton Wood SSSI as a result on construction traffic passing adjacent to it.</p> <p>Measures have been put in place to protect the neighbouring PAWS. Natural England indicated that they were satisfied with the proposed measures.</p>		
<p>Fewer operational phase effects were noted as post construction activity at the site would be minimal.</p> <p>A draft Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP) has been prepared which sets out how the site will be managed post construction in order to maximise its ecological value and ensure the operational mitigation measures are implemented.</p> <p>NE requested that consideration was given to retaining the circa 3ha of HTCSA grassland under the current management agreement.</p> <p>Following the installation of the array this area will be ineligible for HTSCA and the management regime will deviate from that practiced under the current agreement. However, measures set out within the LEMP for the operational management of this area have sought to ensure provision of suitable conditions for target lowland acid grassland species to continue to persist within the sward.</p> <p>The LEMP also outlines how the sward in this area will be monitored. It prescribes a review of the management of this area based on the results of monitoring, to assess whether it may need to be modified to provide the requisite conditions for the lifespan of the scheme</p>	<p>As above</p>	<p>Agreed</p>
<p>Enhancements</p>		

<p>A number of ecological enhancements are proposed which deliver additional ecological benefits beyond those expected to occur as a result of the mitigation measures described above. These are described in section 7.9 of the ES chapter. Management prescriptions designed to ensure delivery of the proposed enhancements are set out within the LEMP.</p> <p>Natural England indicated that the proposed enhancement measures outlined in the Environmental Statement were acceptable.</p>	<p>Natural England welcomes the proposed enhancement measures.</p>	<p>Agreed</p>
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4.2

Table 4.2 Ecology and Biodiversity Consultee Responses

NE comments	Applicant comments	Status e.g Agreed / not agreed N/A
<p>Merlin Ash - Natural England (NE). Yorkshire and Northern Lincolnshire Team (MA)</p> <p>09/02/2018 via email (DAS request)</p> <p>Preliminary advice was requested in February 2018 from Natural England officers on the proposals via their Discretionary Advice Service (DAS), particularly the potential of the proposals to result in impacts on nearby protected sites for nature conservation.</p> <p>Merlin Ash (MA) from the Natural England Yorkshire and Northern Lincolnshire Team advised that Natural England were unable to currently provide advice due to resource constraints, but indicated that they</p>	<p>Re-consulted in May.</p>	

<p>were likely to be in a position to provide advice by the following April.</p>		
<p>Natural England’s opinion on the potential of the proposals to impact the Humber Estuary composite protected sites was requested via a DAS request. Clarkson and Woods were of the opinion that it was highly unlikely that the proposals would result in a significant impact on the interest features of the Humber Estuary SAC, SPA or Ramsar site.</p> <p>NE agreed with the conclusions that it was highly unlikely that the proposals would result in a significant impact on the interest features of the Humber Estuary SPA or Ramsar site. DAS was not considered necessary.</p>	<p>Agreed with determination of no significant effect (No HRA needed)</p>	
<p>Hannah Gooch (HG) provided Natural England’s response following a DAS request sent in August 2018 for advice on the scope of biological survey methodologies undertaken, the scope of ecological mitigation, and advice on delivery of ecological enhancement including priority habitat delivery.</p> <p>Natural England were satisfied that the survey effort and methods were appropriate to inform the Environmental Statement, and were also satisfied with the conclusions reached within the Environmental Statement that the proposals would not have an effect on nearby statutorily designated sites or PAWS.</p> <p>The proposed enhancement measures outlined in the Environmental Statement were welcomed by NE, who stated that the preparation of a Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP) would help provide confidence that the measures outlined will continue to be managed post-construction. . NE highlighted an area of grassland currently under Higher</p>	<p>Proposed to incorporate enhancement measures within a LEMP.</p> <p>Details of the current Higher Tier Countryside Stewardship agreement were reviewed, and proposed management and monitoring prescriptions sympathetic to the existing grassland management and target indicator species were incorporated into the LEMP.</p>	

<p>Tier Countryside Stewardship and requested that the possibility of retaining the current management of this area was explored</p>		
<p>MA provided Natural England’s response following a DAS request sent in October 2010for advice on the LEMP and Landscape and Visual Impact Scoping document (prepared by Pegasus Group).</p> <p>NE had no detailed comments to make, and recommended that NLC was consulted on local landscape and biodiversity issues addressed in these documents, which had already been undertaken.</p>	<p>None</p>	

5. DECLARATIONS

5.1

5.2

