



Little Crow

Solar Park

Little Crow Solar Park, Scunthorpe

STATEMENT OF COMMON GROUND WITH NATURAL ENGLAND (AGREED) DEADLINE 4

Revision:
Regulation No:
PINS Reference:

Submission
APFP Reg: 5(2)(q)
EN010101

Author:
Date:

Clarkson & Woods
July2021

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

**STATEMENT OF COMMON GROUND
(SOCG)**

AGREED DOCUMENT - JUNE 2021

BETWEEN:

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

ON BEHALF OF INRG SOLAR (LITTLE CROW) LTD

Pegasus Group

First Floor | South Wing | Equinox North | Great Park Road | Almondsbury | Bristol | BS32 4QL

T 01454 625945 | **F** 01454 618074 | **W** www.pegasusgroup.co.uk

Birmingham | Bracknell | Bristol | Cambridge | Cirencester | East Midlands | Leeds | Liverpool | London | Manchester

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

CONTENTS:

Page No:

1.	INTRODUCTION	1
2.	DEVELOPMENT OVERVIEW	3
3.	ECOLOGY AND BIODIVERSITY	4
4.	MATTERS SUBJECT TO FURTHER NEGOTIATIONS	11
5.	MATTERS NOT AGREED	12
6.	AGREEMENT ON THIS STATEMENT OF COMMON GROUND	13

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This 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 document has been prepared jointly between Clarkson and Woods Ecological Consultants, on behalf of 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.

INRG Solar (Little Crow) Ltd

- 1.4 Founded in 2009, INRG Solar Ltd has established itself as one of the largest developers of solar parks in the UK. As an independent developer, INRG Solar have experience of a variety of energy projects including solar, batteries and peaking plants. INRG Solar have a proven track record in delivering projects and have developed and sold numerous ground mounted solar schemes ranging between 5MW to 50MW.

Purpose of Document

- 1.5 The document has been structured to reflect the matters and topic relevant between the Applicant and NE. This document is intended to summarise clearly the agreements reached between the parties on matters relevant to the examination of the Application and assist the Examining Authority.

Status of this Version

- 1.6 The Statement of Common Ground was originally prepared in March 2020 and subsequently modified and updated.
- 1.7 The Statement of Common Ground was agreed in June 2021 and submitted to the Examining Authority to assist in the examination of the Application.
- 1.8 The remainder of this document is split into the following sections:

Section 2: Development Overview

Section 3: Ecology and Biodiversity

Section 4: Matters Raised in Rule 6 Letter

Section 5: Matters Not Agreed

Section 6: Agreements

2. DEVELOPMENT OVERVIEW

- 2.1 The Applicant has applied for an order granting development consent for the construction, operation, maintenance and decommissioning of Little Crow Solar Park, a ground mounted solar park with an intended design capacity over 50MWp (megawatts peak) with associated development. The application was made on 4 December 2020 and was accepted for examination on 23 December 2020.
- 2.2 An operational lifespan of 35 years would be sought linked to the first export date from the development. The development will progress in accordance with a phasing plan. A single substation compound will serve the development, and this will be required for the duration of the development and retained thereafter. The substation compound would be located near the northern boundary of the application site and to the east of the existing double row of 132kV overhead electricity pylons which traverse the site.
- 2.3 The proposal comprises seven land use zones or works zones, these are: -
- Work No. 1: Arrays of Ground Mounted Solar Panels
 - Work No. 2A: Battery Energy Storage System
 - Work No. 2B: Battery Energy Storage System (alternative location)
 - Work No. 3: Formation of Ecological Corridors
 - Work No. 4: Substation Building and Compound
 - Work No. 5: Upgrade to Main Access Track
 - Work No. 6: Perimeter Development Buffer
 - Work No. 7: Temporary Construction and Decommissioning Compound
- 2.4 These work zones are presented on the drawing "Works Plan" (Document Ref 2.8 LC DRW). The general arrangement for the overall layout is presented on drawing "Works Detail – Whole Site Plan" (Document Ref 2.10 LC DRW).

3. ECOLOGY AND BIODIVERSITY

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

Table 3.1 Ecology & Biodiversity Common Ground

<i>Applicant comments</i>	<i>NE comments</i>	<i>Status e.g Agreed / not agreed N/A</i>
<i>Methodology</i>		
<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>	<i>Agreed</i>
<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>	<i>Agreed</i>
<p><i>Assessment Methodology</i></p> <p>The standard approach applied in the UK to Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA) is that developed by the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) in 2016 and revised</p>	<p>Natural England is satisfied with the assessment methodology in so far as our strategic</p>	<i>Agreed</i>

<p>in 2018¹. 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>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>
<p><i>Habitats and Species</i></p> <p>Several habitats and species present on or adjacent to the Site, which are</p>	<p>As above. However please note that the stewardship</p>	<p>Agreed</p>

¹ CIEEM (2018) Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine. CIEEM, Winchester.

<p>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>agreement in itself should have no bearing on the value ascribed to this area in the assessment or decision making.</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 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>Natural England is satisfied with the conclusions reached and mitigation and enhancement measures proposed in so far as they concern our remit.</p>	<p><i>Agreed</i></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 HTCSA 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</p>	<p>Natural England welcomes the proposed</p>	<p>Agreed</p>

<p>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>enhancement measures.</p>	
---	------------------------------	--

3.2 A summary of all consultation between Clarkson and Woods and Natural England is provided in Table 3.2 below.

Table 3.2 Ecology and Biodiversity Consultee Responses

<i>NE comments</i>	<i>Applicant comments</i>	<i>Status e.g Agreed / not agreed N/A</i>
<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 were likely to be in a position to provide advice by the following April.</p>	<p>Re-consulted in May.</p>	
<p>Natural England's opinion on the potential of the proposals to impact the Humber Estuary composite</p>	<p>Agreed with determination of no</p>	

<p>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>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 Tier Countryside Stewardship and requested that the possibility of retaining the current management of this area was explored</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>MA provided Natural England's response following a DAS request sent in October 2010 for 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>	
--	-------------	--

4. MATTERS RAISED IN RULE 6 LETTER

4.1 The Examining Authority has made a request through their Rule 6 letter requesting that the applicant seek to include the following matters within the SoCG with the Environment Agency. Where these matters have already been agreed within the SoCG, this is highlighted within the relevant reponse

<i>Matter</i>	<i>Natural England Response</i>
Survey areas, assessment of baseline data and data collection methodologies	The survey approach, methodologies and assessment of baseline information has already been agreed within section 3 of the SoCG
Analysis of data and the presentation of results, including the use of expert judgements and assumptions	NE are satisfied with the analysis and presentation of results
Methodology for EIA, including assessment of cumulative and in-combination effects	NE agree with the assessment methodology used to date, as stated in the SoCG
Likely effects on any protected species and on special interest features of sites designated for nature conservation purposes	NE are satisfied with the assessment of impacts and residual effects on ecological features, which is already covered in section 3 of the SoCG
Mitigation and enhancement measures, including likely effectiveness, monitoring procedures and method for securing such measures within the dDCO	NE are in agreement with the mitigation and enhancement measures as already covered in section 3 of the SoCG The preparation and implementation of a CEMP and LEMP, will be secured under requirements 8 and 10 of the

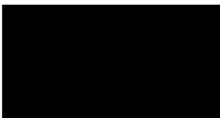
	dDCO respectively. These are considered appropriate as drafted.
Drafting of the dDCO, including the Articles and Requirements	NE consider the dDCO is appropriate as drafted.


5. MATTERS NOT AGREED

5.1 There are no outstanding matters between the applicant and Natural England

6. AGREEMENT ON THIS STATEMENT OF COMMON GROUND

6.1 This Statement of Common Ground has been jointly prepared and agreed by:

FOR NATURAL ENGLAND	
NAME	Lauren Foreast
SIGNATURE	
POSITION	Team Leader
DATE	21.06.21

FOR THE APPLICANT	
NAME:	Peter Timms
SIGNATURE:	
POSITION:	Senior Ecologist, Clarkson & Woods
ON BEHALF OF:	INRG Solar (Little Crow) Ltd
DATE:	21/06/2021

