

Interested Party Reference Number – 20031251

Dear Sirs,

### **SUNNICA ENERGY FARM PROPOSAL**

I have worked for a large farming estate which is within the SSSI / Breckland SPA for nine years; there are a number of Stone Curlew nests each year, the business monitors and registers birds annually, going to enormous steps to protect them.

From the knowledge gained by the Estate, I can report that Stone Curlew nest on open ground including heathland and frequently on arable fields, in particular, sugar beet, onion and potato fields. The reason for those three crops being favoured is that the canopies of the plants appear in the early summer, this affords the birds bare open ground to successfully nest on during the spring months.

Stone Curlew require bare ground or very short grassland which enables them to see uninterrupted, long distances; this is their only form of defence. If a predator is seen, the adults abandon their young and hide in plain sight by hunkering down, they are soil coloured, so their ability to blend in, is uncanny.

Sugar beet, onions and potatoes are grown on the areas proposed by Sunnica and Stone Curlew frequently nest on those fields as well as locally outside the Sunnica area, I see a pair each year on fields surrounding Church Lane, Worlington, where I live.

Stone Curlew have been nesting for ten or more years outside the SSSI / Breckland SPA area. Given the level of protection afforded to them and their needs in terms of uninterrupted large spaces with next to no vegetation or other obstacles, it is beyond doubt that they will not nest amongst solar panel arrays or other built environments.

A single mitigation plot for one pair needs to be 2.5 hectares of open ground, however, if this mitigation plot is surrounded by hedges, trees, solar panels or the like, Stone Curlew are highly unlikely to use it, as their need to see predators approaching from afar exceeds the visibility such a plot allows.

To conclude, this scheme is a disaster for the Stone Curlew population.

Kind regards

Lisa Bowman, BA(Hons), MBS, FCA.