

Heckington Fen Solar Park

EN010123

Consultation Report

Applicant: Ecotricity (Heck Fen Solar) Limited

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CONSULTATION REPORT

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1. Executive Summary

1. This Consultation Report details the consultation activities carried out by Ecotricity (Heck Fen Solar) Limited (the Applicant) for Heckington Fen Solar Park (the Project). The Applicant is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Ecotricity.
2. The report accompanies the Project's Development Consent Order (DCO) application, including the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Reports and associated documents submitted to the Planning Inspectorate in accordance with the requirements for a DCO under the Planning Act 2008 (the Act).
3. The Applicant carried out three rounds of public consultation. Which included over 100 days of consultation over three phases, more than 20,000 mail drops sent out and 10 events attended by over 340 people.
4. The first round ran from 22 October 2021 to 17 December 2021, introducing the Project to the local community and seeking their views on the proposals. It represented the informal (non-statutory) consultation.
5. The second round, which ran from 30 June 2022 to 1 September 2022, introduced a new site layout to the public, sought additional views and, where possible, addressed concerns. The project proposals put forward during this second round of consultation responded to, and helped to resolve, some of the issues that consultees raised previously (including on the fencing, culverts, permissive path, and size of the substations). This round represented the formal (statutory) public consultation on behalf of the Project ahead of the DCO application submission.
6. The third round ran from 11 November 2022 to 18 December 2022. It comprised a further stage of targeted consultation on localised (non-material) changes to the proposals that were made after the formal public consultation closed.
7. The Applicant considered the views raised during these consultation rounds throughout the development of the Project and addressed issues wherever possible.
8. In addition, the Applicant directly responded to feedback within these periods (and between them) to ensure key points of interest and concern were addressed.
9. The Applicant continued consultation and dialogue with statutory and non-statutory consultees throughout the development of the Project. For a timeline of the consultation process please see **Section 3.6**.

1.1 Responses to feedback

10. The Project has followed an EIA process that has been systematic, comprising a sequence of tasks defined by regulation and best practice.
11. The Applicant designed this process to be consultative – to engage with, and gain feedback from, local authorities and the local community, as well as other statutory and non-statutory consultees.
12. The Applicant considered all the responses that were received during the consultation rounds, as well as those received from interested parties between these periods. The Applicant's Project Manager has ensured that the relevant members of the Project's multi-disciplinary design team are aware of local feedback and were in attendance at public events.
13. Summaries of how the Applicant responded to consultees are provided in **Chapters 6, 7 and 8** of this Consultation Report.

2. Introduction

2.1 Purpose of the Consultation Report

14. This report shows how Ecotricity have complied with the Act and associated legislation in relation to pre-application consultation for the proposed project. It has been prepared to fulfil Section 37(3)(c) and Section 37(7) of the Act, and to show how they have complied with Sections 42, 47, 48, and 49 of the Act.
15. **Chapter 7** sets out the approach to Statutory Consultation, demonstrating compliance with Sections 42, 47, and 48 of the Act. By showing how the Applicant has taken consultation responses into account, this chapter also demonstrates compliance with Section 49 of the Act.
16. In addition, **Chapter 6** outlines Ecotricity's approach to Non-Statutory Consultation, which has also affected the development of the Project. This section of the Consultation Report shows how they have delivered effective early engagement per best practice outlined in the Planning Inspectorate's [Advice Note 8.1: Responding to the developer's pre-application consultation](#).

2.2 Ecotricity – the Applicant

17. Ecotricity was founded in 1995 as the world's first green energy company.
18. Their mission is to end the use of fossil fuels. The best way to do this is to give people an alternative – green energy.
19. Ecotricity currently supply affordable green electricity to over 200,000 homes and businesses across the UK, generated by their growing portfolio of solar and wind parks and green gas mills.
20. They are committed to minimising climate change through the development of renewable energy generation. Their work:
 - Helps reduce the UK's reliance on fossil fuels
 - Supports the Government's ambitions to become a net energy exporter by 2040
 - Prevents the release of carbon dioxide (CO₂) into the atmosphere
21. Starting out with one windmill in Gloucestershire, Ecotricity were the first energy company to offer green electricity to the British public. They've been building new sources of green energy ever since.
22. Whenever a customer switches to Ecotricity, they stop using fossil fuel to power their home and start using green energy instead.

23. **Other energy companies have followed Ecotricity's lead.**

24. Now, around a third of the energy used in the UK comes from green sources.

25. But there's still a long way to go...

3. Heckington Fen Solar Park

3.1 Background to the Project and previous planning application

26. In 2008, Ecotricity submitted a planning application to use land at Heckington Fen to develop a 66 MW wind park. They engaged with the local community and a wide range of statutory and non-statutory consultees throughout the development of that scheme.
27. The planning application (for that scheme) was approved by the then Secretary of State (SoS) for Energy and Climate Change in February 2013. Since then, Ecotricity has been unable to satisfy the Ministry of Defence's radar concerns, which means they haven't been able to start building the wind park.
28. The climate crisis needs fighting now, so the Applicant is keen to use Heckington Fen to create clean, renewable energy which contributes towards the UK's net zero targets. If the solar park is approved and constructed, Ecotricity will not build the wind turbines.
29. The proposed solar park will generate around three times more electricity than the wind turbines would, and with the addition of energy storage they'll be able to store excess green energy to use when demand on the national grid is high.

3.2 Need for the Project

30. The climate crisis needs fighting. Now.

31. Heckington Fen offers a significant opportunity to create and store clean, renewable energy – contributing towards the UK's net zero targets.
32. It will prevent more than 75,000 tonnes of CO₂ emissions per year.¹ That's equivalent to taking 30,000 cars off the road.
33. The Project will provide enough affordable green electricity to power over 100,000 homes, playing an important part in preventing the worst effects of climate change whilst supporting the Government's ambitions to become a net energy exporter by 2040, as well as the UK's energy security.
34. By including energy storage in the Proposed Development, the Project will be able to store excess green energy for later use, which will also help move Britain another step closer to net zero.
35. "The proposed solar park at Heckington Fen is an exciting opportunity to fight the climate emergency." Dale Vince, Founder of Ecotricity.

¹ Information on how the numbers are calculated is provided in **Appendix 1**.

3.3 Description of the Project

36. Located near the village of Heckington in North Kesteven, Lincolnshire, the Project is made up of a number of different components, including a large-scale solar park and energy storage facility.

37. The primary components of the Project comprise:

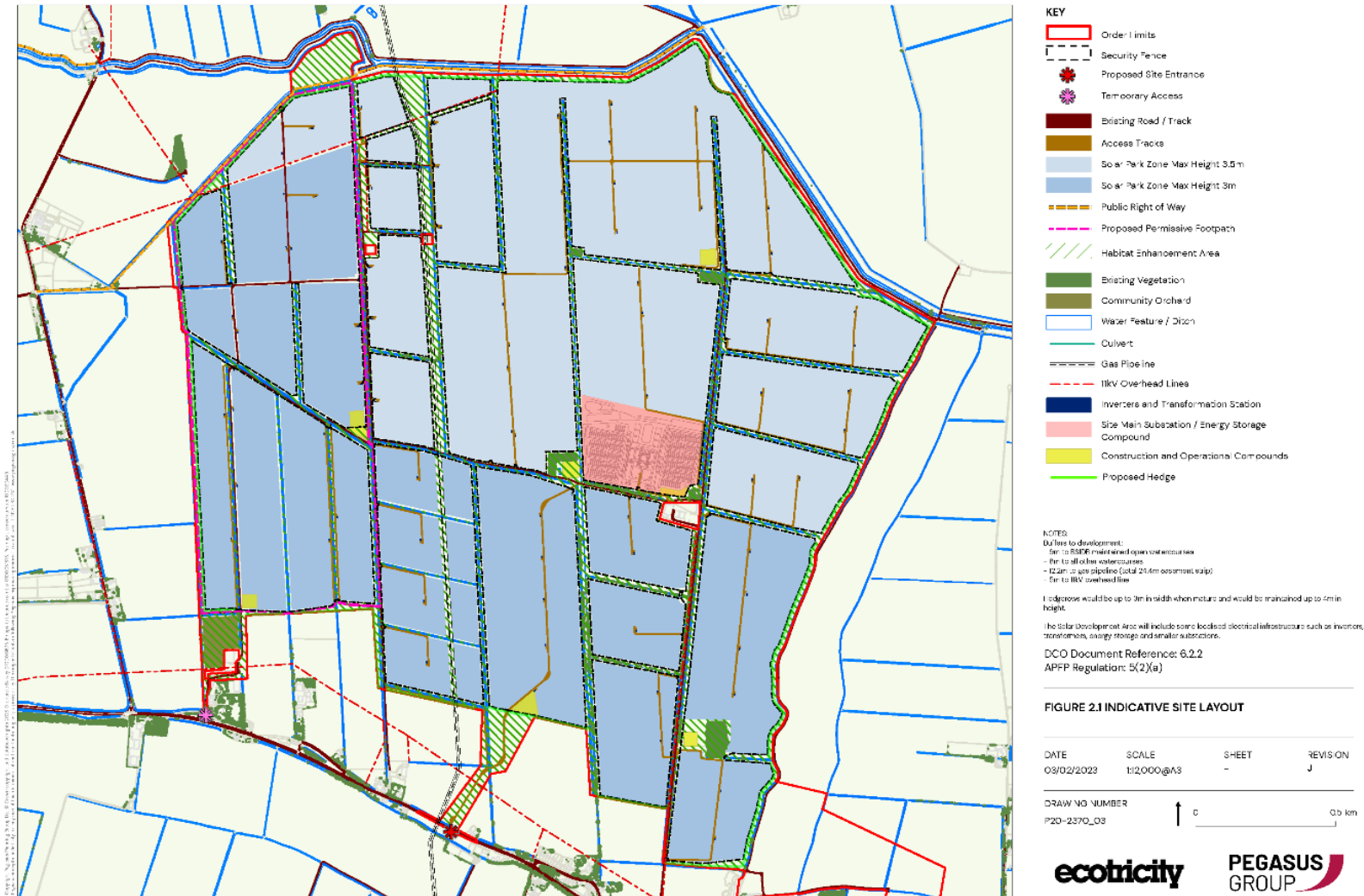
- Solar Photovoltaic (PV) Panels – these systems convert light into direct current (DC) electricity. Ecotricity has set the panels and associated equipment back from neighbouring properties, existing watercourses, and utilities.
- Inverters – these devices will convert the DC electricity generated by the PV panels into alternating current (AC), allowing the Applicant to export electricity to the National Grid.
- Transformers – these machines will control the voltage of the electricity generated across the solar park and efficiently transmit power to the onsite substation.
- Switchgear – this equipment will control, protect and isolate electrical equipment.
- Energy Storage – specialist containers which will sit next to the onsite substation will store electricity until it is needed. Further inverters, transformers and switchgear are associated with the Energy Storage.
- Onsite Cabling – these conductors will transfer the energy from the Project's solar panels to the onsite substation.
- Onsite Substation – a centrally located substation contains transformers, extra high voltage cabling, and other electrical equipment required to transfer the electricity via an underground cable to National Grid's Bicker Fen Substation.
- Security – a pole mounted closed circuit television (CCTV) system will cover the perimeter of the site, and a secure fence will enclose its operational areas.
- Lighting – required for security purposes, movement triggered or manually controlled for use when required.
- Site Access – a new point of access from the A17 will be constructed. For the very initial stages of construction (until the new access is built), the existing access point near Elm Grange will be used.
- Access Tracks – the access track from the new access point will continue northwards. Further internal access tracks will connect through the rest of the site.
- Offsite cabling – these conductors will transfer electricity from the onsite substation to the proposed connection point, the existing National Grid Bicker Fen Substation.
- Bicker Fen Substation Works – exporting electricity to this substation will require an extension to its existing structures, including new equipment in the south west corner.

38. The Project will also provide a new 4 km long circular permissive path and community orchard for use by community groups by arrangement.

39. Generous ditch offsets and biodiversity net gain areas will enhance connectivity through the site and help pollinators flourish.

40. The image on the following page shows the Site Layout.

Figure 3.1: Indicative site layout



3.4 Aims for the Project

41. Ecotricity's aim is to tackle the climate crisis through the development of renewable energy projects.

42. Heckington Fen Solar Park aims to:

43. Accelerate the UK's journey to net zero

- Prevent over 75,000 tonnes of CO₂ emissions each year.
- Generate enough affordable green electricity to power more than 100,000 homes.
- Deliver additional energy storage to store excess green energy, further supporting the growth of renewables.

44. Strengthen the local economy

- Create jobs and supply chain opportunities, using local suppliers where possible
- Protect the agricultural industry by giving farmer's an additional source of income
- Contribute more than £1 million per year towards the cost of local services in North Kesteven via payment of business rates.

45. The Applicant has been in discussions with a range of recruiters, as well as a recruitment advocacy group that specialises in driving recruitment and job progression for people who are disadvantaged in the labour market. They have already engaged with local firms on the provision of various services, including security. Ecotricity is compiling a list of businesses that have expressed interest in becoming part of the supply chain, ensuring their details are captured and they can be contacted at the appropriate time. This forms part of a wider list of potential suppliers and service providers, which covers everything from site preparation works, tunnelling, trenchless pipework, construction and groundworks to the provision of specialist equipment e.g. for the solar panels.

46. Enhance the environment

- Establish habitat corridors for local birds.
- Create new wildlife habitat.
- Plant and manage additional hedgerows.
- Provide a new permissive path linking to the existing footpath network.
- Reinforce boundary planting.
- Establish a community orchard for use by local groups by arrangement.

47. In addition, Ecotricity aims to support local communities by assisting local groups and organisations where possible. Community benefit is not a planning consideration. However, in addition to the new permissive path, community orchard and biodiversity enhancement, a community benefit fund is being explored and could be provided as part

of the development. Any community benefit fund would need to be in line with Ecotricity’s mission to end the use of fossil fuels and tackling the climate crisis. This focuses on three key areas of the economy that generate the most carbon emissions: energy, transport and food. The Applicant is keen to work alongside the local community and engage with all relevant stakeholders. They have already worked with a range of local organisations, including local contractors and the nearby Build-A-Future East Heckington at Elm Grange.

3.5 Next steps

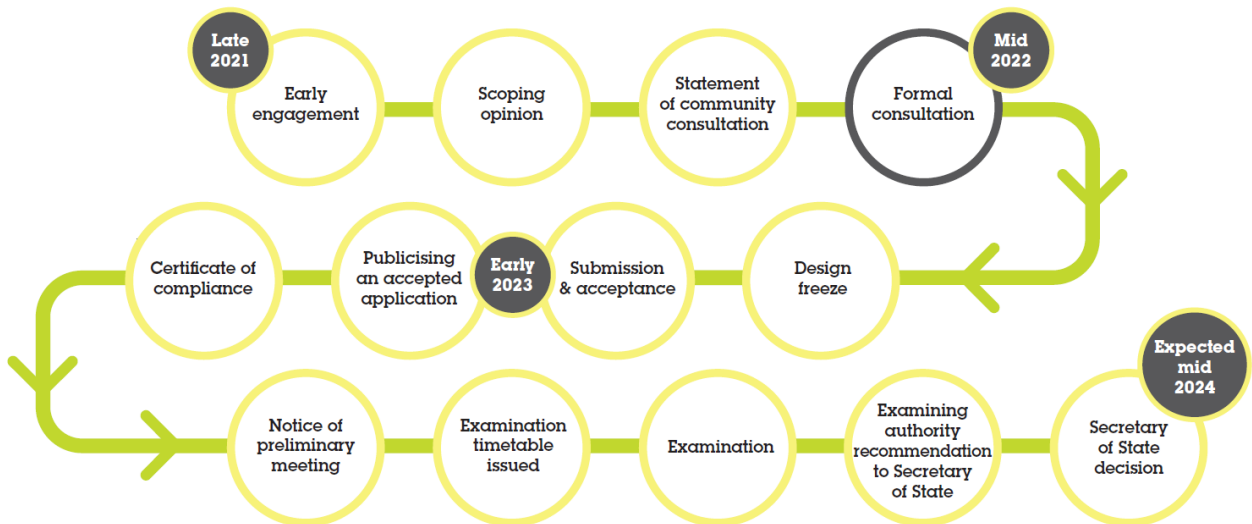
48. The Applicant has submitted this Consultation Report to the Planning Inspectorate, on behalf of the SoS, as part of the Project’s DCO application.

49. If granted consent, Heckington Fen Solar Park could begin generating affordable green energy by 2027, playing an important role in helping the UK achieve its ambition of generating up to 70 GW of solar by 2035.

3.6 Timeline

50. **Figure 3.2** below highlights key milestones for the Project, providing an indicative timeline for the next steps in the planning process.

Figure 3.2: Project timeline



- October 2021 – Early engagement work began
- October 2021 to December 2021 – Informal (non-statutory) consultation undertaken
- February 2022 – Scoping opinion published
- June 2022 – Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC) published
- July 2022 to September 2022 – Formal (statutory) consultation undertaken
- October 2022 – Design freeze
- November 2022 to December 2022 – Further (targeted) consultation

- February 2023 – Development Consent Order (DCO) application submitted
- March 2023 – DCO application accepted for examination
- April 2023 – Accepted application publicised
- June 2023 – Certificate of compliance issued
- Late Summer/Autumn 2023 – Notice of preliminary meeting published
- Autumn 2023 – Preliminary meeting and examination timetable issued
- Winter 2023 and Early 2024 – Examination of DCO application
- Spring 2024 – Examining authority recommendation issued to Secretary of State
- Mid-2024– Secretary of State decision published

51. This timeline is indicative and subject to change.

4. Legislative and Regulatory Context

4.1 Our commitment to engagement

52. Public consultation and stakeholder engagement are important aspects of the consenting regime for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs).

53. Legislation, regulations and guidance (e.g. in the form of the Planning Inspectorate's Advice Notes) aim to ensure that statutory and non-statutory consultees have opportunities to share their views and have them considered before an applicant submits their DCO application.

54. Ecotricity attaches great importance to the effect that its work may have on local communities, as well as the environment. Ecotricity is committed to responding to the needs, interests, and concerns of nearby residents, and has been working with communities for over twenty years to ensure its renewable energy projects work for the community in a way that is environmentally, socially, and economically responsible.

55. Ecotricity wants local people to be proud of Heckington Fen Solar Park.

56. To achieve this, they:

- Began the engagement process at an early stage of the Project's development;
- Have engaged with the local community and a wide range of stakeholders throughout all stages of its development; and
- Will continue engaging with them throughout the remaining stages.

4.2 Consultation requirements – the Consultation Report

57. As set out in Section 37(3)(c) of the Act, an application for a DCO must be accompanied by a Consultation Report.

58. To fulfil the requirements set out in Section 37(7) of the Act, the Consultation Report must give details of:

- What has been done in compliance with Sections 42², 47³, and 48⁴ of the Act in relation to the application;
- Any relevant responses received during the statutory consultation period; and
- The account taken of any relevant responses.

² Duty to consult, available here: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/29/section/42>

³ Duty to consult local community, available here: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/29/section/47>

⁴ Duty to publicise, available here: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/29/section/48>

59. A Consultation Report responds to one of the key statutory requirements set out in the Act, that is, to carry out a process of pre-application consultation (as outlined in Part 5, **Chapter 2** of the Act).⁵
60. In accordance with Sections 42 and 47 of the Act, this consultation must be undertaken with statutory or prescribed bodies and the local community.
61. To comply with Section 48 of the Act, the Applicant must publicise the proposed application in the prescribed manner.
62. In addition, Section 50 of the Act requires the Applicant to have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State (SoS). Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG, now the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities) guidance on the pre-application process for major infrastructure projects outlines what the Consultation Report should contain⁶. Where the Applicant has not been able to follow this guidance, they should provide an explanation for this in the report (see **Chapter 11**).

4.3 Relevant Legislation and Guidance

63. In developing their approach to consultation for the Project, Ecotricity has given careful consideration to the requirements set out in the following legislation:

- The Planning Act 2008;
- The Infrastructure Planning (Applications, Prescribed Forms and Procedures) Regulations 2009;
- The Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessments) Regulations 2017 (the 2017 EIA Regulations) (as amended);
- Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 (SI 2019/579) (“Habitat Regulations”); and
- The Town and Country Planning and Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Amendment) Regulations 2017

64. In preparing this Consultation Report, Ecotricity has also given attention to:

- DCLG guidance on the pre-application process (March 2015);
- The Planning Inspectorate’s Advice Note 6: Preparation and submission of application documents (October 2014);⁷ and

⁵ Pre-application procedure, available here:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/29/part/5/chapter/2>

⁶ Planning Act 2008: Guidance on the pre-application process, pp.20-22. Available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-the-pre-application-process-for-major-infrastructure-projects>

⁷ Available here: <https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/legislation-and-advice/advice-notes/advice-note-six-preparation-and-submission-of-application-documents/>

- The Planning Inspectorate’s Advice Note 14: Compiling the Consultation Report (April 2012).⁸

65. Further information on how the Applicant has had regard to the requirements of Sections 42, 47, and 48 of the Act is provided in **Chapter 7** of this report.

4.4 Consultation under the EIA Regulations

66. Ecotricity undertook non-statutory consultation on the Project from 22 October 2021 to 17 December 2021 (see **Chapter 6** of this report). It took place around and in conjunction with key consultation milestones under the 2017 EIA Regulations, including the Project’s request for Scoping and Transboundary Screening notifications. These key milestones are summarised below.

4.5 Scoping and Screening for the EIA

4.5.1 Scoping

67. On 7 January 2022, the Applicant notified the SoS of their intention to:

- Undertake an EIA; and
- Provide an Environmental Statement (ES) with the DCO application for the Project.

68. In accordance with Regulation 8(1)(b) of the 2017 EIA Regulations, the Applicant submitted an EIA Scoping Request to the Planning Inspectorate on behalf of the SoS on 7 January 2022. After reviewing the Scoping Report and consulting with the relevant bodies, the Planning Inspectorate published a Scoping Opinion on 17 February 2022⁹ (**document reference 6.3.1.2**). A response from Natural England dated 24 February 2022 was also considered.

69. The Applicant has outlined the comments raised in the Scoping Opinion in the relevant technical chapters of their ES. Within each of these chapters, they provide detail on where the comments have been addressed.

4.5.2 Transboundary Screening

70. Per Schedule 3 of the 2017 EIA Regulations, the Applicant considered the transboundary effects of the development, that is, the effects of the Project on the environment in European Economic Area (EEA) states.

⁸ Available here: <https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/legislation-and-advice/advice-notes/advice-note-fourteen-compiling-the-consultation-report/>

⁹ Available here: <https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/wp-content/ipc/uploads/projects/EN010123/EN010123-000030-Scoping%20Opinion.pdf>

71. Additionally, Schedule 4 of the 2017 EIA Regulations requires the Applicant to describe the likely significant effects of the development on the environment in the ES.

72. On 25 March 2022, the Planning Inspectorate issued a Transboundary Screening Opinion, concluding that the Project is unlikely to have a significant impact (alone or cumulatively) on the environment in a EEA state. It also said they consider that the likelihood of transboundary effects resulting from the Proposed Development is so low that it does not warrant the issue of a detailed transboundary screening.¹⁰

¹⁰ Available here:



5. Approach to Consultation

5.1 Consultation Strategy

73. The Applicant has sought to engage and consult with the local community and other key stakeholders from an early stage of the Project, giving them multiple opportunities to inform the Project's design.
74. They aimed to go above and beyond the requirements of the Act, undertaking early engagement work and a non-statutory consultation round ahead of statutory consultation. The Applicant also supplemented these efforts via ongoing engagement with a wide range of consultees, including various councils and local residents.
75. The non-statutory consultation period ran from 22 October 2021 to 17 December 2021.
76. Statutory consultation took place between 30 June 2022 and 1 September 2022.
77. After that consultation closed, the Applicant engaged in further exploratory work – to refine some of the Project elements and enhance its deliverability. This resulted in them making a few non-material localised changes to their proposals, mainly for engineering reasons and as part of the ongoing due diligence process. Although the changes were minor and reduced the overall size of the site, they also meant the Project would require a small amount of additional land. So, they held a 'further' (targeted) consultation to give people a chance to comment on the changes.
78. This further consultation period ran from 11 November 2022 to 18 December 2022.
79. All the materials used for these three consultation rounds are provided in appendices 4, 5, 15 and 22, respectively.

5.2 Mechanisms for asking questions, making comments and providing feedback

80. The Applicant has welcomed feedback and sought to make it as easy as possible for people to respond by including multiple methods for them to give their views and comments on, and ask questions about, the Project. To achieve this, they enabled consultees to provide their feedback in digital and hard copy form, through a variety of channels.
81. Within this, the Applicant set up a dedicated consultation email address (heckingtonfensolar@ecotricity.co.uk) to allow residents, stakeholders and interested parties to provide feedback and request further information. This inbox was monitored by members of the Project team. Where questions or requests for further information were of a technical nature, these were passed on to relevant members of the Project team to respond to.

82. Local residents, stakeholders, and other interested parties were also able to provide feedback and request further information via a dedicated freephone line (0800 151 0784), which was in operation from Monday to Friday between the hours of 8:30am and 5:30pm. People could leave voicemails outside of these hours, and were responded to at the earliest opportunity, ensuring information was readily available and queries or concerns addressed. Members of the Project team gave information to callers where possible and if questions were of a technical nature, these were passed on to relevant members of the Project team to respond to.
83. Stakeholders and communities were encouraged to provide feedback through the online feedback form on the Project website ([REDACTED]). The Applicant clearly signposted the link to this form in a range of consultation materials, as well as on the Project website and at events.
84. If individuals preferred to complete hard copies, they could request them by contacting the Project team via email heckingtonfensolar@ecotricity.co.uk, over the phone (0800 151 0784), or by post (FREEPOST ECOTRICITY SOLAR PARK).
85. In addition to allowing stakeholders and local residents to learn more about the Project, the in-person and online events sought to gather verbal and written feedback from participants. At these sessions, the Project team encouraged attendees to give their views on, and ask questions about, the proposals via direct conversations with them (at the public exhibitions) or the 'chat' box (during the webinars), as well as feedback forms. The Applicant made sure copies of these forms (provided in **Appendix 15**) were available at all the in-person events and online ([REDACTED]). At the webinars, they let attendees know they could complete it online or on paper (by requesting a hard copy). The Applicant advertised the freepost address on all consultation materials to allow attendees to complete the feedback form away from the event and send it back to the Project team, free of charge.

5.3 Processing responses and correspondence

86. The Applicant considered all consultation feedback received during each stage of the consultation, as well as comments received from the local community and other key stakeholders throughout the entirety of the pre-application process.
87. All of the responses that they received were carefully considered by members of the Project team and any specific design requests, or requests relating to land acquisition or interests, were passed to the relevant members of the Project team. Such requests were addressed or incorporated into the proposals where appropriate and feasible.
88. To ensure all feedback was treated appropriately, the Applicant created and maintained a correspondence log, containing various details from phone and email enquiries. The Applicant has sought to record and openly report on the feedback received and respond

to it to show how local views have helped shape the Project, thereby giving people a greater appreciation of their contribution to the NSIP process.

89. During the Statutory Consultation, the Applicant responded to consultees within two weeks, where practical.

5.4 Approach to Analysis

90. After each round of consultation closed, the Applicant analysed all the feedback that they received during that period and grouped them into key themes and issues. Individual pieces of feedback within each of these categories was then passed on to relevant members of the Project team (which includes environmental, planning, and engineering specialists) for consideration.

91. **Sections 6.2, 7.3 and 8.2** summarise the key themes and issues that arose within the feedback received during the three consultation periods, as well as the Applicant's responses to these issues and explanations of the regard had for them.

6. Non-statutory consultation

6.1 Overview

92. This chapter of the Consultation Report sets out the non-statutory "informal" consultation that the Applicant engaged in prior to undertaking formal consultation activities as prescribed by the Act.
93. During the non-statutory consultation, the Applicant sought to gather the views of a variety of stakeholders and communities that may be affected by the proposed works. The Applicant engaged with, and consulted, these groups early on to allow them to consider local knowledge and technical advice from an early stage of the Project's development. These stakeholders included local councils, elected representatives, local residents, hard-to-reach groups, and local interest groups.
94. The Applicant's strategy for this consultation round was based on going beyond the requirements of the Act. Accordingly, they engaged with a wide variety of stakeholders through a range of communication channels, including social media. This engagement work enabled the Applicant to develop various aspects of the Project with them in mind.
95. To introduce the Project and publicise the consultation, the Applicant issued an engagement newsletter (see **Appendix 2**) to just under 6,000 addresses (see **Appendix 24**), including all properties within 5km of the proposed solar park site and 2km of the proposed grid connection search area.
96. The Applicant advertised the consultation via social media, namely Ecotricity's Twitter and Facebook accounts. It issued a press release to local and regional news outlets, and included information within local magazine, Heckington Living (see **Appendix 3**). The Applicant engaged with local parish councils to ensure they received the engagement newsletter and to introduce them to the project. For a summary of this engagement see **Appendix 3**.
97. As coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions were in place throughout this consultation period (22 October 2021 to 17 December 2021), the Applicant undertook a digital first approach and held a series of events online, as opposed to in-person.
98. The Applicant held three webinars over the consultation period to introduce the Project and give the local community – including residents, landowners, and elected officials – the opportunity to meet the Project team and ask any questions they may have.
99. All these sessions used the same information slides (see **Appendix 4**) and were attended by several members of the Project team who could answer questions on a range of topics, including technical issues. A feedback form was also provided to capture comments on the proposals as part of this first phase of consultation – (see **Appendix 5**).

100. Consultees could register for the webinars via the Project website or by emailing heckingtonfensolar@ecotricity.co.uk. These sessions consisted of a short presentation followed by a Q&A. They provided:

- An introduction to the proposals;
- An opportunity to meet the Project team; and
- Opportunities for people to provide their views and feed into the Applicant’s early plans.

101. Please see the table below for more information on attendance rates.

Table 6.1: Non-statutory consultation webinar attendance rates

Date, time	Location	Registered	Attended
Thursday 4 November 2021, 10:00-11:30	Online	11	7
Saturday 13 November 2021, 11:00-12:30	Online	20	12
Monday 15 November 2021, 18:00-19:30	Online	19	10
Totals		50	29

102. Attendees consisted of local residents, landowners, representatives from local parish councils and community groups, and local businesses, as well as statutory consultees.

103. In addition to allowing the local community and other key stakeholders to learn more about the Project, the webinars sought to gather feedback from participants. Accordingly, during these sessions, the Project team encouraged them to give their views on, and ask questions about, the proposals via the platform’s ‘chat’ box or the feedback form, which was available on the Project website ([REDACTED]).

104. The Applicant also encouraged local residents, stakeholders, and other interested parties to provide any additional feedback and request further information:

- Via email – using the dedicated consultation email address (heckingtonfensolar@ecotricity.co.uk), which was monitored by members of the Project team;
- Over the phone – via a dedicated freephone line (0800 151 0784). This line was in operation from Monday to Friday between the hours of 8:30am and 5:30pm. People could leave voicemails outside of these hours, and were responded to at the earliest opportunity, ensuring information was readily available and queries or concerns addressed. Members of the Project team gave information to callers where possible and if questions were of a technical nature, these were passed on to relevant members of the Project team to respond to; or
- By post – using the freepost address (FREEPOST ECOTRICITY SOLAR PARK).

105. The Project team responded to all relevant enquiries, providing information where possible and passing questions or requests for further information of a technical nature on to relevant members of the Project team, who would then respond to them directly.

6.2 Feedback received & how Ecotricity responded

106. In addition to the verbal and written feedback given by participants during the webinars, consultees gave their views via feedback forms and over email. During the non-statutory consultation period, the Applicant received six feedback forms and 18 email enquiries. They also received four enquiries over email after the consultation closed.

107. This feedback was provided by a variety of key local stakeholders, including nearby residents, landowners, elected representatives, parish councils, community groups, statutory consultees, and renewable energy enthusiasts.

108. The table below contains a summary of key themes and issues that arose within the feedback received during the non-statutory consultation period, as well as the Applicant's responses to these issues and explanations of the regard had for them.

109. A full list of issues raised through feedback, and a description of the Applicant's response to each issue is provided in **Appendix 6** and in **Table 6.2** below.

Table 6.2: Summary of issues raised in non-statutory consultation feedback

Non-statutory consultation	
Summary Issue	Regard had by the Applicant
<p>Food security</p> <p>Respondents suggested that the Project could set aside land for agricultural use e.g. to grow soft fruit. They also expressed concern that it would change the classification of agricultural land and take it out of use, asking when it would be reinstated.</p> <p>They also questioned the production of "feed" wheat, saying some of the land on the site was marketed as Grade 1 and Grade 2 farmland in 1999/2000. They added that the land has previously been used to grow sprouts, broccoli, peas, beans, potatoes and bulbs.</p> <p>Respondents queried whether the land could be used for wheat production or animal feed.</p>	<p>Food security</p> <p>The Applicant is proposing to set aside 2.15 hectares for a community orchard – for nature conservation and growing soft fruit.</p> <p>The growing of soft fruit under the panels was considered but was not deemed suitable for the site.</p> <p>The land will still be classified as agricultural land. The area underneath and around the panels is proposed to be managed as a nature conservation pasture with grazing. Some areas would not allow grazing during spring until birds have finished nesting and flowers seeded. That period will be followed by a hay cut and aftermath grazing.</p>

<p>Respondents queried the suitability of Grade 1 agriculture for solar.</p>	<p>The land will be reinstated after the Project's lifetime (40 years operational life).</p>
<p>Respondents wanted to know if the Project was related to any other schemes being developed in Lincolnshire and asked for a plan of the site.</p>	<p>The southern and western parts of the site previously noted as 'potential biodiversity net gain areas' have been removed from the Order limits to allow that land to remain solely in agricultural use (some 62ha).</p> <p>The agricultural land classification of the site is based on survey data gathered from over 450 soil samples (taken by soil augers) from across the land holding (by an independent third party).</p> <p>The previous sale particulars are unlikely to have been based on this level of detailed analysis.</p> <p>The survey showed that some of the land is classified as 'best and most' versatile (grade 1 = 11.1%; grade 2 = 7.4% and grade 3a = 30.5%), mainly split between areas near the A17. Some portions are also scattered amongst tracts of poorer soils. It is worth noting that some of the better-quality land on Six Hundreds Farm has been left out of the site area altogether (some 62ha).</p> <p>The vast majority (80%) of the development land is grade 3, and suffers the usual constraints of heavy soils, notably blackgrass infestation and a general susceptibility to wetness, both of which constrain current farming activities. Savills have prepared a detailed note on the practical implications of farming (document reference 6.3.16.1).</p> <p>One of the Applicant's environmental specialists responded to the query regarding the site's suitability for wheat production directly, based on information from the farm manager, trusted traders and analysts. They let the respondent know that the site is not suitable for economically sustainable wheat</p>

	<p>production for large scale human consumption, but predominantly used for feed wheat. Further information was provided on the market including reference to big swings in crop quality and yield each year which play a big part in UK bread milling usage.</p> <p>The Applicant provided a plan of the site via email. They also informed the respondent that the Project is not related to any other schemes being developed in Lincolnshire.</p>
<p>Construction traffic Respondents enquired about construction traffic routes.</p>	<p>Construction traffic The Applicant will implement a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) during the construction phase of the Project. They have prepared a draft version of the CTMP as part of the PEIR and the ES, which is submitted with the DCO application (document reference 7.10).</p> <p>The aim of the CTMP is to minimise the impact of the construction phase on local residents, businesses and the highway network.</p> <p>The Triton Knoll access route will be used to access the cable route. A new access point from the A17 is noted in the box below.</p>
<p>Access People asked for more information on the proposed site access.</p>	<p>Access The Applicant will implement a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) during the construction phase of the Project. They have prepared a draft version of the CTMP as part of the PEIR and the ES, which is submitted with the Application (document reference 7.10).</p> <p>The aim of the CTMP is to minimise the impact of the construction phase on local residents, businesses and the highway network.</p> <p>The Triton Knoll access route will be used to access the cable route. A new access point from the A17 is noted below.</p>

<p>Visual impact People asked for more information on the proposed site access.</p>	<p>Visual impact The Applicant is proposing to use the existing access point near Elm Grange for the very initial stages of construction.</p> <p>The Applicant also intends to construct a new access point which will be used for the majority of the construction phase and will be retained for the operational phase. This new access point which will require the creation of a new T-junction of the southern boundary of the Energy Park site. The Applicant's plans for this work were previously approved as part of the wind farm application.</p>
<p>Biodiversity Residents asked whether the Applicant has consulted the RSPB.</p> <p>Additionally, they expressed interest in grazing on site.</p> <p>A consultee offered to provide advice on potential species for tree planting.</p>	<p>Biodiversity The Applicant has consulted the RSPB, amongst others, as part of the consultation process.</p> <p>The Applicant will ensure the right to graze under the panels is retained.</p> <p>The Applicant noted the consultee's offer and added the Forestry Commission's local team to their consultation database.</p>
<p>Flood risk Respondents asked how the Applicant will manage drains to avoid flooding adjacent land.</p>	<p>Flood risk The Applicant will be working closely with the Environment Agency (EA), Black Sluice Internal Drainage Board (BSIDB) and the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) to mitigate flood risk. As part of this work, they have completed specialist hydraulic modelling. A Flood Risk Assessment will accompany the ES (document reference 6.3.9.1).</p>
<p>Community benefits Members of the local community expressed interest in how the Project could benefit Heckington Parish, in particular, and those living near the Proposed Development.</p>	<p>Community benefits The Applicant is looking into incorporating a new permissive path, community orchard, and biodiversity enhancement areas into the Project.</p> <p>They are also considering the provision of a community benefit fund, which would be outside of the DCO application process. Any such fund would need to be aligned with</p>

	<p>Ecotricity's mission – to end the use of fossil fuels and tackle the climate crisis.</p>
<p>Supply chain</p> <p>People expressed concern over where the solar panels would be sourced from, and the potential implications for the environment.</p> <p>Respondents asked the Applicant to remain transparent about their supply chain processes and ensure the required technology is sourced ethically.</p>	<p>Supply chain</p> <p>The Applicant has not decided which supplier to use at this stage. They note that solar panels (as with most technology products in the modern economy) could end up being sourced from almost anywhere in the world, including China.</p> <p>The Applicant is firmly committed to maintaining the highest levels of transparency and sustainability throughout their supply chain. Ethical sourcing is a priority for the Applicant. They also support the solar industry's efforts to ensure imports are ethically sourced.</p>
<p>Wind farm</p> <p>Respondents wanted to know whether the Applicant could make use of much of the data that they collected for the previous wind farm application.</p> <p>People also wondered how the wind farm is connected to the Project.</p>	<p>Wind farm</p> <p>The Applicant is working with a team of environmental specialists to ensure the data that the eventual application is based on is of the highest quality. As the previous wind farm application was based on data collected over many years, the Project team has commissioned additional surveying work to ensure it is still accurate and updated accordingly. This previous data was considered as historical data and reference was made to it where applicable (e.g. in relation to noise levels).</p> <p>The planning application for Ecotricity's proposed wind farm was approved by the then Secretary of State (SoS) for Energy and Climate Change in February 2013. However, Ecotricity have been unable to begin constructing it due to difficulties satisfying concerns raised by the Ministry of Defence over that scheme's potential impact on local radar systems. The Applicant believes the climate crisis needs fighting now, which is why they are proposing this Project.</p>
<p>Alternative technologies</p>	<p>Alternative technologies</p> <p>The Applicant has noted this response.</p>

<p>Respondents noted wave and tidal power, albeit costing more, does not need the sun or the wind.</p>	
<p>Grid connection</p> <p>Respondents asked why the area is so big for the grid connection, expressing concern that it would be to expand the solar park in the future.</p> <p>They also enquired about where the cable route would be going.</p> <p>Respondents noted that they had struggled with the grid capacity locally.</p>	<p>Grid connection</p> <p>A larger area was initially included for the grid connection as surveys were ongoing. Following surveys and workshops with technical experts, the Applicant reduced the grid connection area, as shown in the PEIR, and subsequent ES. The DCO considers this area for a grid connection only (not for solar panels).</p> <p>The Proposed Development will connect into the 400kV network due to its size. Smaller schemes would connect at a lower voltage, which is understood to be constrained locally.</p>
<p>Historic England</p> <p>Confirmed attendance for online presentation and that the Applicant does not need to contact English Heritage.</p>	<p>Historic England</p> <p>Noted for consultation going forward.</p>
<p>Buglife</p> <p>Confirmed the Energy Park does not fall into any of the designated Important Invertebrate Areas or indeed the B-Lines so unlikely to hold much invertebrate interest at present. Provided links to Buglife Manual for pollinator friendly mixes and wildflower seeds.</p>	<p>Buglife</p> <p>Noted and thanked for the update.</p>
<p>Keys Group</p> <p>Confirmed receipt of the newsletter and commented 'sounds exciting' and 'potentially something the students could get involved in at some point'. Recommended property team may be another contact.</p>	<p>Keys Group</p> <p>Requested property team details (not received). However, a new contact was since provided and remains in contact with the Project Manager.</p>
<p>Bicker Buds</p> <p>The Bicker Buds expressed concern at the consultation zone not including all properties in Bicker and questioned how to engage in the application in future.</p>	<p>Bicker Buds</p> <p>The newsletter was posted in two batches, which covered all properties in Bicker as taken from a database purchased from Ordnance Survey using Royal Mail data. Following confirmation of the address Bicker Buds are on the consultation list.</p>
<p>NFU</p> <p>Expressed interest in receiving a more detailed map of the location in relation to the existing landscape. They further reported</p>	<p>NFU</p> <p>The applicant sent a larger scale plan on an aerial background to see the wider landscape.</p>

queries on how DCO size solar parks sit alongside food production in Lincolnshire.	The Applicants response to food production are detailed in 'Food Security' in table 6.2.
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6.3 Ongoing engagement

110. Following the non-statutory consultation, the Applicant remained committed to engaging with stakeholders, considering their feedback when developing the proposals and answering queries.

111. This group of stakeholders included a range of local authorities, MPs, the Environment Agency, Natural England and Historic England, as well as local interest groups, residents, and landowners. As well as speaking to stakeholders through regular phone calls where requested or helpful, the Applicant also offered meetings during the pre-application phase.

112. A summary of the meetings held with these stakeholders is provided below.

Table 6.3: Summary of meetings held around and following non-statutory consultation

Date	Stakeholder	Purpose	Detail	Outcome(s)
17 August 2021	North Kesteven District Council (NKDC) – planning officers	Project introduction	Introduction to the Project team; the Project; local plan; grid connection; and future engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Shared project timelines. - Requested AECOM to review the ecological components of the Project. - Confirmed consultation zone. - Discussed planning performance agreement.
8 September 2021	Boston Borough Council (BBC)	Project introduction	Proposals; outline and background; grid route and Bicker Fen; timeframe; water voles; Viking Link and Triton Knoll; draft NPS; archaeology; agricultural land classification; planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organised further meetings. - Gained feedback on scoping request.

Date	Stakeholder	Purpose	Detail	Outcome(s)
			performance agreement; and scoping request.	
13 October 2021	NKDC – planning officers	Project update	Design, landscaping and EIA scoping; ecology instruction and Biodiversity Net Gain; planned communications and Members Briefing; and cumulative schemes	- Sent scoping list to NKDC for confirmation of chapters -Shared engagement strategy (forerunner of the SoCC) and discussed the frequency of meetings going forward, as well as the pre-meeting (to run through requirements for Members Briefing).
13 October 2021	Lincolnshire County Council (LCC)	Project introduction	Other engagement completed; welcomed offer to present to Members; climate change policies; planning performance agreement; and energy storage requirements.	- Organised further meetings.
18 October 2021	Environment Agency	Project introduction	Proposals; outline and background; flood risk; design parameters; critical infrastructure; drilling; energy storage; and flood risk data.	- Agreed on design principles. -Agreed on formal engagement requirements.
3 November 2021	NKDC – Councillors	Update for Councillors	Newsletters posted; design and layout including initial ALC results	- Agreed scoping topic list. - Progressed planning performance agreement.

Date	Stakeholder	Purpose	Detail	Outcome(s)
				- Shared presentation for Members Briefing.
4 November 2021	NKDC – Councillors	Members Briefing – 26 Councillors in attendance	Tangible community benefit fund; turbines and / or solar; wildlife trusts consulted and biodiversity enhancements; CO2 payback; parallel agricultural use; noise; food security; efficiency; ongoing farming relationship; and height of panels. Question asked about whether there might be any biodiversity losses e.g. farmland birds.	- Project team answered questions raised. - Briefing recording posted on NKDC's website (available at: Agenda for Councillor Pre Application Planning Forum on Thursday, 4th November, 2021, 5.00 pm North Kesteven District Council (n-kesteven.gov.uk)).
5 November 2021	LCC	Members briefing – 3 councillors in attendance, as well as a Planning Officer and the council's Head of Infrastructure and Investment	Presentation; formal consultation; cumulative concerns; agricultural land; Food Valley Initiative; health; grassland; wind turbines; after decommissioning; economic drivers; and grid capacity.	- Project team answered questions raised.
5 November 2021	LCC	Briefing for topic leads, including Highways and Flooding; Archaeological and Historic Setting; and Sustainability	Presentation; LCC specialists discussed methodologies with their Project team counterparts.	- Organised further meetings with technical specialists.

Date	Stakeholder	Purpose	Detail	Outcome(s)
17 November 2021	BBC	Planning performance agreement	Discussed two options, updated one and shared it.	- Provided updated PPA for review and sign off.
23 November 2021	NKDC	Project introduction for Economic Development Manager and Director of Economy and Place	Project introduction; and potential for community benefit package.	- Agreed to hold another meeting following the scoping opinion.
23 November 2021	Lincolnshire Community Foundation (LCF)	Project introduction	LCF manage renewable energy funds locally and could manage a community benefit fund for Heckington Fen if required. They provided examples of other schemes and the benefits they had provided through them.	- Agreed to keep in contact as the Project develops.
24 November 2021	NKDC	Project update	Update re: PPA; consultation update; parameters and design; provision of Works Plans; and cumulative scheme update (similar timeframes)	- Agreed timing of next meeting. - Reviewed AECOM's response. - Consultants further developed their methodologies and agreed on them with their counterparts at the council.
25 November 2021	LCC	Specialist team update	Transport and access; sustainability meeting; heritage issues (covered in Chapter 10 of the ES; document reference 6.1.10); carbon savings;	- Gained feedback on pre-scoping topic list. - Agreed to review and return PPA. - Confirmed next meeting date.

Date	Stakeholder	Purpose	Detail	Outcome(s)
			grazing; PPA; and engagement strategy.	
1 December 2021	LCC – sustainability	Project introduction	Background; interest in tree planting; permissive path; would the Project be applicable for Contract for Difference: Local Nature Recovery Plan; Green Masterplan and grazing.	- Shared net gain calculations and parameter plans.
10 December 2021	NKDC	Inception meeting to agree format/style of their Statement of Common Ground (SoCG)	Considered other projects and the Planning Inspectorate's Guidance on SoCGs .	- Agreed to keep their Statement of Common Ground template under review and share it with them at an appropriate time.
18 January 2022	LCC	Scoping update	LCC circulated scoping request for comment internally; parameter plan; consultation; SoCG to be based on best practice guidance; and technical sub-groups update.	- Completed PPA. - Received scoping response. - Agreed to organise next meeting following scoping opinion.
19 January 2022	NKDC	Project update	Consultation including commissioning of specialist for SoCC; queries of Scoping Request; and cumulative schemes.	- NKDC agreed to respond to Scoping Request. -Planned site visit (subsequently cancelled due to Covid outbreak at NKDC).
30 March 2022	National Grid (NG)	Project update	Substation extension; Order limits; cumulative connections at Bicker; and division of works.	- NG team agreed to provide further details on maximum extents.

Date	Stakeholder	Purpose	Detail	Outcome(s)
22 April 2022	LCC	Project update	PEIR preparation; cumulative schemes on similar timeframe; agricultural land classification and layout; grazing; landscape and residential visual amenity; viewpoint confirmation; archaeology, including geophysical survey of site; update on draft construction traffic management plan; public right of way network and permissive path; and drainage and flood risk.	- Progressed the PEIR which included detailed chapters on Land Use and Agriculture; Landscape and Visual, Cultural Heritage including archaeology, Transport and Access, and Flood Risk.
27 April 2022	NKDC	Project update following Scoping Opinion	EIA Scoping opinion; draft SoCC; draft SoCG; design/layout, including agricultural land classification; flood risk – update from the Environment Agency; draft PPA; and cumulative schemes.	- Progressed the PEIR and discussed the proposed grazing strategy for the Energy Park. - LCC commissioned liaison with AAH. -Sent letters to nearest neighbours regarding residential visual amenity photography. - Explained that the initial drainage results enable the Applicant to reduced panel height.

Date	Stakeholder	Purpose	Detail	Outcome(s)
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Outlined survey work for archaeology. - Discussed the draft construction traffic management plan. - Arranged next meeting.
11 May 2022	NKDC	CBF-oriented meeting for Economic Development Manager and Director of Economy and Place	Initial plans for CBF (in line with company ethos, related to food, energy and transport), reiterating that it would not be part of the DCO application; Sleaford Renewable Energy Plant (SREP) and how that CBF is managed; and benefits which will be part of the DCO. Question asked about potentially providing a cycle route around the site.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sent public exhibitions details. - Described how funds would be determined and how they could be managed. - Explained that the planned route around the site will connect into local footpaths, precluding bicycle use.
11 May 2022	Natural England	Project update – surveys completed to date and next steps	Outline soil management plan; grazing on site – traditional farming regime; and potential auger locations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Undertook a detailed survey of areas of higher soil quality.
10 October 2022	BSIDB, LCC	Flood risk, drainage and hydrology	Hydraulic modelling; drainage; surface water; low key approach allowing run off to infiltrate; IDB infrastructure; 1 in 1000 year flood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provided maps - Confirmed minutes.

Date	Stakeholder	Purpose	Detail	Outcome(s)
			event and margin for climate change; maintenance schedule of IDB managed drains; culverts; and protective provisions and by-laws – 9m.	

113. The Applicant also provided documents to prescribed and non-prescribed bodies, as well as interested members of the local community.

Date	Stakeholder	Request	Outcome	Format
24 October 2021	Local resident	Requested all information by post or e-mail	Information was provided by post and over email where possible – elderly people without computers who could be disenfranchised	Post or email

114. In addition, the Applicant sent a postcard (**Appendix 7**) to everyone in the consultation mailing zone after the non-statutory consultation period closed, in January 2022 (**Appendix 24**). This provided an update on the Project, a summary of the consultation, and contact details for the Project team.

6.4 Draft Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC)

115. The Applicant developed a draft SoCC (**Appendix 8**) based on feedback received during the non-statutory consultation and submitted it to the Local Planning Authorities on 1 March 2022. It was requested that comments were submitted by 29 March 2022, allowing 28-day response time. Copies of the letters sent to each of the local authorities can be found in **Appendix 8**. The comments received are shown in **Table 6.4** below.

116. The Applicant had regard to all comments received from host LPA's and responded accordingly, as shown in the table below. The Applicant included feedback where possible in the final SoCC (**Appendix 15**).

Table 6.4: Comments on draft SoCC and the Applicant's response

Local planning authority	Comment	Applicant's response
LCC	The address cited for the County Council Office is wrong and refers to our former premises.	All references to that address were updated.
LCC	Confirmation about which documents will be available at the Public Information Points (PIPs) – and how long for.	The SoCC was updated to reflect these comments.
LCC	Some of the events online and in person are in the evening – this is good, but they are running over what may be evening meal time for many. The Council suggested extending these so they end at 20:30.	Where possible the events were extended, including the events in Bicker Village Hall and Heckington, which lasted until 20:30 and 20:00, respectively. The evening online event on 3 August was shifted to run from 19:00 to 20:30 (previously 18:00 to 19:30).
LCC	The document refers to a call back offer to speak to the Project team – the proposed hours of between 9am and 5:30pm could be extended on some days to ensure access for those who cannot call during working hours.	Alternative times could be arranged for those who work during these hours, the Applicant asked that a message is left with a convenient time to call back so a member of the team can arrange this. Confirmation of this was added to the SoCC.
Lincolnshire County Council	Seldom heard groups and community groups serving particular demographics – some of these seem to be listed in the stakeholder list and, if this has not happened already, should be contacted as soon as possible.	Groups were contacted during the first phase of engagement, from 22 October 2021 to 17 December 2021. Further groups were added after this time following consultation with the Councils, and were sent a postcard in January 2022. All groups were contacted again in May 2022 in advance of the Statutory Consultation.
LCC	Table 6 Hard to Reach Groups - mention is given to providing British Sign Language (BSL) for those people of limited mobility – BSL would not benefit this group. It should be aimed at the deaf and hard of hearing and so this should be reflected in the table.	Table 6 was updated to reflect this comment.

Local planning authority	Comment	Applicant's response
LCC	People with limited mobility – it is assumed the venues chosen for face to face events have all been checked to ensure they are accessible for those with limited mobility (e.g. ramps for wheelchair users etc)? If not then this should be confirmed before venues are referenced.	Full risk and accessibility assessments were carried out for the chosen venues.
LCC	Has an Equality Impact Assessment (to consider people from specific protected characteristics) been carried out and if so then this could be mentioned and evidenced in this document.	An Equality Impact Assessment was carried out and can be found in Appendix 9 .
NKDC	Concern that the last 3.5 weeks of this corresponds with the first part of the School Summer Holidays in Lincolnshire. We would therefore suggest either the consultation period be extended for 2 further weeks or begins 2 weeks earlier.	The consultation period was extended by two weeks to 1 September 2022 to reflect these comments.
NKDC	Suggest that consideration be given to using the Heckington Village Show (Heckington Show - The Largest Village Show in England) - it is considered that this represents a significant opportunity for the Applicant to engage.	A request to the organisers of the Heckington Show was made and a stand made available for the Project team. The team attended both days.
NKDC	Public Information Points: As we continue to emerge from the pandemic the opening hours of the Council Offices may change but the Customer Engagement Manager has suggested Monday to Wednesday 9am to 5pm, by appointment.	The SoCC was updated to reflect these times and the 'by appointment' request.
NKDC	Please ensure that Lincolnshire Live and Lincolnshire World include both the websites and newspapers. For Lincolnshire Live this would give the Sleaford, Boston and Spalding Target Newspapers and for Lincolnshire World the Sleaford, Boston and Spalding Standard Newspapers. We would also suggest Local Lincs Magazine and Heckington Living	Added further detail to the table to include these. Heckington Living was included in the list for press releases, rather than specific adverts as the timing of 6 editions per year did not align with the 'two rounds of advertisement' before and during the consultation.

Local planning authority	Comment	Applicant's response
	Magazine be used to ensure full coverage.	
NKDC	Emails and letters should be sent to the elected representatives of NKDC within the consultation area and those on the Executive Board.	These representatives and executives were added to the consultation list.
NKDC	Information posters: It is suggested that locations include Parish Notice boards as well as other used public sites, such as village halls, playing fields, schools, shops and village greens.	The SoCC was updated to include: Posters including details of the consultation, how to access Project information, and how to get involved, will be displayed at well-used public locations (this could include parish notice boards, local shops and village halls) within the core and wider consultation zone, subject to permission.
NKDC	Hard to Reach Groups: We are happy that the list reflects those previously shared with yourself (Appendix 10).	Noted.
BBC	BBC has only just reopened its offices, and we are not actively encouraging customers back in, so hosting documents may not be useful but we can of course accommodate.	The Applicant checked with all councils on current Covid protocols prior to publishing the SoCC.
BBC	BBC would like a link off our websites to the Project.	Noted, website link shared in advance of the Statutory Consultation.
BBC	The newspapers quoted for press releases and adverts are: Lincolnshire live, Lincolnshire World, The Lincolnite, Spalding Today. These do not include Boston Standard or Target and to me these publications are not particularly local. Please revisit local press publications to ensure a more local presence.	Lincolnshire World is the collective website which includes the Boston Standard. Lincolnshire Live includes the Boston Target. Both were included in the SoCC.

7. Statutory consultation

7.1 Overview

117. This chapter sets out the statutory "formal" consultation activities that the Applicant engaged in prior to both the further (targeted) consultation and the submission of their DCO application under the Act.
118. During the statutory consultation period (30 June 2022 to 1 September 2022), the Applicant sought to gather additional views and feedback on their proposals from a range of stakeholders and communities, particularly those who may be affected by the Project and/or its associated works. The Applicant consulted these groups at an early stage, enabling them to consider and factor in technical advice and local knowledge throughout the development of the Project. Stakeholders included local planning authorities, 17 parish councils, local residents, hard-to-reach groups, and local interest groups. A full list of consultees (excluding residents) is provided in **Appendix 11**.
119. The Applicant's consultation strategy was based on going above and beyond the requirements of the Act, engaging with a wide range of local stakeholders through various print and digital communication channels, such as social media. This allowed the Applicant to enhance the Project in a variety of ways.
120. The Applicant issued the consultation newsletter (see **Appendix 12**) to just under 6,000 addresses (see **Appendix 24**) including all properties within 5km of the proposed energy park and 2km of the proposed grid connections to provide information on the Project and publicise the consultation.
121. The Applicant also publicised the consultation in the local newspapers and on notice boards, as well as across social media, via Ecotricity's Twitter and Facebook accounts (see **Appendix 13**).
122. Within the consultation period, the Applicant ran a series of events, consisting of two public exhibitions (in-person), three webinars (online) and a stall for two days at The Heckington Show. These sessions gave residents, landowners, elected officials, and other key stakeholders additional opportunities to find out more about the Applicant's plans and give their views on them, as well as to meet the Project team and ask any questions they may have.
123. The in-person events were held in accessible venues and attendees were not required to register in advance. All these sessions featured the same range of materials (see **Appendix 15**) and were attended by several members of the Project team who could answer questions on a range of topics, including technical issues.

124. Consultees could register for the webinars themselves via dedicated webpages or by emailing heckingtonfensolar@ecotricity.co.uk. These online sessions consisted of an interactive presentation, followed by a Q&A. They provided:

- An introduction to the proposals, Project timeline, and Ecotricity;
- An overview of the need for the Project and Ecotricity’s vision for it;
- Information on the new site layout, cable route options and EIA;
- An opportunity to meet the Project team; and
- Opportunities for people to provide their views.

125. Please see the below table for more information on attendance.

Table 7.1: Attendance at statutory consultation events

Date, time	Location	Registered	Attended
Tuesday 5 July 2022, 12:00-13:30	Online	0	0
Thursday 7 July 2022, 13:00-20:00	Heckington Village Hall	N/A	48
Friday 8 July 2022, 12:30-20:30	Bicker Village Hall	N/A	23
Saturday 23 July 2022, 11:00-12:30	Online	1	1
Saturday 30 31 July 2022, 09:00-17:00	Heckington Show Hall Grounds	N/A	123
Sunday 31 July 2022, 09:00-17:00	Heckington Show Hall Grounds	N/A	119
Wednesday 3 August 2022, 19:00-20:30	Online	5	1
Totals		6	315

126. These events were attended by a wide range of people from the local community, including nearby residents, potentially affected landowners, parish councillors, members of community groups, local business owners, and statutory consultees.

127. As well as enabling the local community and other key stakeholders to learn more about the Project, the in-person and online events sought to gather feedback from participants. At the public exhibitions, the Project team encouraged people to give their views on, and ask questions about, the proposals via direct conversations with them and the comprehensive feedback form. Copies of the form were made available at all these sessions and online ([REDACTED]). During the webinars, the Applicant encouraged them to do likewise via the platform’s ‘chat’ box and the feedback form, which they could either complete online or on paper (by requesting a hard copy).

128. The Applicant also encouraged local residents, stakeholders, and other interested parties to provide any additional feedback and request further information:

- Via email – using the dedicated consultation email address (heckingtonfensolar@ecotricity.co.uk). This inbox was monitored by members of the Project team;
- Over the phone – via a dedicated freephone line (0800 151 0784), which was in operation from Monday to Friday between the hours of 8:30am and 5:30pm. People could leave voicemails outside of these hours, and were responded to at the earliest opportunity, ensuring information was readily available and queries or concerns addressed. Members of the Project team gave information to callers where possible and if questions were of a technical nature, these were passed on to relevant members of the Project team to respond to; or
- By post – using the freepost address (FREEPOST ECOTRICITY SOLAR PARK).

129. The Project team responded to all relevant enquiries, providing information where possible and passing questions or requests for further information of a technical nature on to relevant members of the Project team, who would then respond to them directly.

7.2 Consultation under the Planning Act 2008

7.2.1 Consultees

130. The Applicant conducted consultation under Sections 42 to 44, and 46 to 48 of the Act. They have detailed what each of these Sections means in terms of consultees below.

- **Section 42** – prescribed bodies, including landowners, those with an interest in the land, and those who would or might be entitled to make a relevant claim (per Sections 42 and 44), as well as relevant local authorities (per Section 43).
- **Section 43** – local authorities.
- **Section 44** – landowners, lessees, tenants or occupiers, those with an interest in the land or certain powers with respect to the land, and those who the Applicant thinks would or might be entitled to make a relevant claim.
- **Section 46** – the Planning Inspectorate (on behalf of the SoS). The Applicant hand-delivered the Section 46 notification to the Planning Inspectorate on 27 June 2022. A hard copy of the Section 48 Notice and a USB device containing the following information was enclosed with the letter:
 - Section 46 letter (signed)
 - Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR) – Volume 1 (main text and figures) and Volume 2 (appendices);
 - Non-Technical Summary of the PEIR;
 - Consultation Booklet;
 - Consultation Feedback Form;

- Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC); and
 - Section 48 Notice.
- A copy of the notification letter and acknowledgement of receipt from the Planning Inspectorate is included in **Appendix 14**.
 - **Section 47** – the local community, including people living in the vicinity of the Proposed Development, as well as relevant community organisations and other relevant bodies in the vicinity of the Proposed Development.
 - **Section 48** – the local community and wider public.

7.2.2 How Ecotricity identified their consultees

131. The Applicant has detailed how they identified consultees, under Sections 42, 44, 47, and 48, below.

Section 42

132. Section 42(1)(a) – the Applicant deferred to the list of prescribed consultees provided in Schedule 1 of the APFP Regulations, conducting a ‘circumstances’ test to determine whether or not they were required to consult specific parties. The full list of bodies consulted is contained at **Appendix 11**.

133. Section 42(1)(b) – they deferred to the categories of local authorities provided in Section 43 of the Act, completing desk research (stakeholder mapping) to identify those that they needed to consult (as outlined further below).

134. A letter was issued to all identified section 42 consultees on 28 June 2022 informing them of the consultation process, the process for providing feedback and setting out the timetable for responses to be received by. Details about how to obtain further information was included, as well as a copy of the section 48 notice. An example of a section 42 letter is included in **Appendix 13**.

Section 43

135. Local authorities are identified as consultation bodies under The Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 as each local authority that is within s43 of the PA 2008 (Planning Act 2008 Section 43 (3)). The categories of prescribed local authorities are based on administrative boundaries and neighbouring local authorities, not the distance to the proposed site.

136. Local authorities that are prescribed consultees are set out in **Table 7.2** below, broken down as follows:

- A is a neighbouring local authority (s43(3)) that shares a boundary with a unitary council or lower-tier district council within whose area development is situated.

- B is either a unitary council or a lower-tier district council in which the development is situated – a host authority.
- C is an upper-tier county council in which the development is situated – a host authority.
- D is either a unitary council or an upper tier county council which shares a boundary with a host ‘C’ authority – a neighbouring authority (s43(3))

Table 7.2: Local authorities listed as prescribed consultees

A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – West Lindsey District Council; – East Lindsey District Council; – City of Lincoln Council; – South Holland District Council; – South Kesteven District Council; – Newark & Sherwood District Council.
B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – North Kesteven District Council; – Boston Borough Council.
C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Lincolnshire County Council.
D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – North Lincolnshire Council; – Cambridgeshire County Council; – Norfolk County Council; – Leicestershire County Council; – Nottinghamshire County Council; – Peterborough City Council – North East Lincolnshire Council; – North Northamptonshire; – Rutland County Council.

Section 44

137. Under S42(1)(d) of the Planning Act 2008 the Applicant was required to consult each person within one or more of the categories set out in s44 of the Planning Act 2008 in respect to the Order Limits. This requires the Applicant to consult with landowners, lessees, tenants or occupiers (Category 1 persons, as per s44(1)); those with an interest in the land or certain powers with respect to the land (Category 2 persons, s44(2)); and those who the Applicant thinks would or might be entitled to make a relevant claim under s44(4) (Category 3 persons). Therefore, all land interests identified within the Book of Reference (at the time) were consulted.

138. The Category 1 persons were identified via a diligent inquiry process including reviewing land registry title information, enquires with landowners, landowner questionnaires, Companies House searches, site investigations, and internet-based research. Category 2 were identified via reviewing land registry title information, enquiries with landowners, landowner questionnaires, Companies House searches, site investigations, internet-based research, and utility infrastructure location data. This process subsequently produced the Book of Reference (**document reference 4.3**).

139. Category 3 persons were identified as persons: who may be able to make a claim pursuant to Part 1 of the Land Compensation Act 1973 (that is, people who live outside the Order limits but whose property may be sufficiently close to be depreciated in value

due to noise, vibration, smells, fumes, smoke, artificial lighting or discharge onto land caused by the use of the authorised project once it is in operation); persons who may be able to make a claim for injurious affection under s10 of the Compulsory Purchase Act 1965 or s152(3) of the Planning Act 2008.

140. Through diligent inquiry, the Applicant considers that there are no persons who might be entitled to make a relevant claim as a Category 3 interest pursuant to Part 1 of the Land Compensation Act 1973. Part 1 of the Land Compensation Act 1973 relates to people who live outside of the Order limits but whose property may be sufficiently close to be depreciated in value due to noise, vibration, smells, fumes, smoke, artificial lighting or discharge onto land, caused by the use of the Project once it is in operation.

141. The Applicant considers that there are no interests that have a relevant claim under Part 1 of the Land Compensation Act 1973 in relation to each of the following factors:

- Noise
- Vibration
- Fumes
- Smoke
- Light emissions
- Discharge of solid or liquid substances

142. These matters are considered further in the Statement in respect of Statutory Nuisances (**document reference 5.3**).

143. All relevant interests identified with the potential to make a claim under Section 10 (s10) of the Compulsory Purchase Act 1965 or Planning Act 2008 because they are in benefit of a restrictive right or covenant over land within the Order Limits, were also included within the Book of Reference (**document reference 4.3**).

144. All consultees identified under s.42(1)(d) of the Planning Act 2008 in the Book of Reference (at the time), were written to by recorded delivery on 28 June 2022. The letter set out the background to the Proposed Development, the intention to submit a DCO application, the fact that they had been identified as a consultee due to them having an interest in the potentially affected land, and how to respond to the consultation.

145. Enclosed with the letter was a plan identifying the Order Limits as they were drafted at the time and the formal notice of the proposal in accordance with section 48 of the Planning Act 2008. The letter also signposted the consultees to the project website where they could find out more information about the project including the Preliminary Environmental Information Report. An example of the letter is included in **Appendix 13**.

146. Where the land ownership could not be identified through the diligent enquiry process outlined above, site notices were erected on the land requesting anyone with a legal interest in the parcel of land get in touch with the project team via the signposted contact details provided. These notices were left in place for a minimum of five weeks unless the land interest was confirmed. A total of 11 site notices were erected on 4 July 2022, with a

further 17 notices erected on the 6 January 2023 following the identification of further small plots of land with unknown ownership, primarily due to the plotting of the full extent of the adopted highway. Copies of the site notices erected are included in **Appendix 13** together with plan of the locations in which they were erected.

Section 46

147. The Applicant hand-delivered the Section 46 notification to the Planning Inspectorate on 27 June 2022. A hard copy of the Section 48 Notice and a USB device containing the consultation materials was enclosed with the letter. The Applicant also send the materials via an online download link. A copy of the notification letter and acknowledgement of receipt from the Planning Inspectorate is included in **Appendix 14**.

Section 47

148. The Applicant conducted desk research (stakeholder mapping) and then engaged with relevant local authorities through consultation on the draft SoCC. The Applicant also identified **additional** consultees through early engagement activities and the non-statutory consultation. See **Section 6.4** for details on how the Applicant gave regard to comments received by local authorities on the draft SoCC.

149. The Applicant produced a finalised version of the SoCC (**Appendix 15**) which was published on the project website, made available for inspection for those in the vicinity of the land, and published in local newspapers over two consecutive weeks (see **Appendix 13** for details).

150. The Applicant issued the consultation newsletter (see **Appendix 12**) to just under 6,000 addresses (see **Appendix 24**) including all properties within 5km of the proposed energy park and 2km of the proposed grid connections to provide information on the Project and publicise the consultation.

Section 48

151. The Applicant identified the most appropriate local publications to publicise the consultation in by conducting desk research and engaging with relevant local authorities and other stakeholders.

152. A section 48 notice was prepared and publicity under section 48 occurred in parallel to formal consultation under section 42 and 47 (Stage 2) of the Act. The Applicant published a notice of the proposed application for two successive weeks in two local newspapers circulating in the vicinity in which the proposed development would be situated; once in a national newspaper and once in the London Gazette.

153. The publications, dates that notifications were published, and copies of published notifications are set out in **Appendix 13**.

7.3 Feedback received & how Ecotricity responded

154. During the consultation period, the Applicant received verbal and written feedback at the events and via the feedback forms (online and hard copies), as well as via email, over the phone, and by post. The Applicant has summarised this feedback below in accordance with Sections 42, 47, and 48 of the Act.

7.3.1 Summary of Responses under Section 42 of the Act

155. Over 39 individuals or representatives from various organisations provided a response to the Section 42 consultation. A list of all respondents, their feedback, and the Applicant's responses is provided in **Appendix 16**. A summary is provided below (**Section 7.3.2**) with the responses categorised according to the most relevant chapters of the ES.

156. Although five of these responses were provided shortly after the statutory consultation period closed – one on 2 September 2022, three on 6 September 2022, and one on 22 September 2022 – the Applicant has decided to include them in this section of the Consultation Report and has had regard to their content.

157. It is worth noting that a number of non-prescribed bodies have been included in this section of the Consultation Report. This is due to the nature of the feedback provided and the technical assessment undertaken on information submitted in relation to sensitive issues. These respondents include:

- British Horse Society
- CA Telecom
- Grid Transfer Capability
- Historic Railways Estate
- Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust
- The Ministry of Defence
- National Air Traffic Services
- Office for Health Improvement and Disparities
- Royal Mail
- UK Health Security Agency
- Verizon

158. **7.3.1.1 EIA methodology**
Lincolnshire County Council
North Kesteven District Council

159. **7.3.1.2 Site description, site selection and iterative design process**
Historic England

- Lincolnshire County Council
North Kesteven District Council
160. **7.3.1.3 Proposed development**
Lincolnshire County Council
North Kesteven District Council
161. **7.3.1.4 Planning policy**
Network Rail
North Kesteven District Council
The Environment Agency
162. **7.3.1.5 Landscape and visual**
Historic England
Lincolnshire County Council
Lincolnshire Police
National Grid Electricity Transmission
Natural England
North Kesteven District Council
South Kesteven District Council
163. **7.3.1.6 Residential visual amenity**
Boston Borough Council
Lincolnshire County Council
North Kesteven District Council
164. **7.3.1.7 Ecology and ornithology**
Boston Borough Council
Lincolnshire County Council
Lincolnshire Police
Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust
Natural England
North Kesteven District Council
The Environment Agency
165. **7.3.1.8 Hydrology, hydrogeology, flood risk and drainage**
Boston Borough Council
Lincolnshire County Council
Network Rail
North Kesteven District Council
South Kesteven District Council
The Environment Agency
166. **7.3.1.9 Cultural heritage**
Boston Borough Council
British Horse Society

- Historic England
Lincolnshire County Council
North Kesteven District Council
167. **7.3.1.10 Socio-economics**
British Horse Society
Lincolnshire County Council
North Kesteven District Council
168. **7.3.1.11 Noise and vibration**
Boston Borough Council
British Horse Society
Lincolnshire County Council
North Kesteven District Council
169. **7.3.1.12 Climate change**
Lincolnshire County Council
North Kesteven District Council
170. **7.3.1.13 Transport and access**
Boston Borough Council
British Horse Society
Lincolnshire County Council
National Highways
Network Rail
North Kesteven District Council
Royal Mail
171. **7.3.1.14 Air quality**
Boston Borough Council
Lincolnshire County Council
North Kesteven District Council
UK Health Security Agency
172. **7.3.1.15 Land use and agriculture**
Amber Hill Parish Council
Lincolnshire County Council
Natural England
North Kesteven District Council
South Kesteven District Council
173. **7.3.1.16 Glint and glare**
Boston Borough Council
Lincolnshire County Council
Network Rail

North Kesteven District Council

174. **7.3.1.17 Miscellaneous issues**

Lincolnshire County Council
Lincolnshire Police
Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust
National Grid Electricity Transmission
Network Rail
North Kesteven District Council
The Health and Safety Executive
UK Health Security Agency

175. **7.3.1.18 Summary**

North Kesteven District Council

176. **7.3.1.19 Consultation**

Canal and River Trust
CA Telecom
City of Lincoln Council
East Lindsey District Council
Grid Transfer Capability
Historic Railways Estate
Ministry of Defence
National Air Traffic Services
National Grid Electricity Transmission
Newark and Sherwood District Council
NHS Lincolnshire CCG
Norfolk County Council
North East Lincolnshire Council
The Coal Authority
UK Power Networks
Verizon
Vodafone

7.3.2 Summary of Responses under Section 47 of the Act

177. **Table 7.3** contains a summary of key issues that arose within the feedback received during the statutory consultation period, as well as the Applicant's responses to these issues and explanations of the regard had for them.

178. A full list of issues raised through feedback provided, and a description of the Applicant's response to each issue is included in **Appendix 18**.

Table 7.3: Summary of key issues from statutory consultation feedback

Summary Issue	Regard had by the Applicant
<p>Climate change</p> <p>Many consultees said climate change is an important issue that requires organisations to act quickly to provide more sustainable energy, noting more solar projects make sense.</p> <p>Respondent also said the climate and energy crises warrant fast-tracking planning for the scheme.</p>	<p>Climate change</p> <p>The Applicant agrees that climate change is important and believes it needs fighting now. It is their mission to give people an alternative to fossil fuels – green energy. They are building new energy projects (including the Project) to that end.</p> <p>The Applicant also agrees that the climate crisis is an urgent existential threat and that this could be used to justify fast-tracking planning.</p>
<p>Bicker Fen Substation</p> <p>Respondents noted that most renewable energy projects in Lincolnshire seem to join the National Grid at Bicker Fen Substation.</p> <p>They asked if solar farms agree to mitigate any increase in the site's carbon footprint that occurs as a result of connecting there.</p>	<p>Bicker Fen Substation</p> <p>The Applicant has engaged with key stakeholders, including National Grid, throughout the development of the Project to mitigate potential impacts.</p> <p>They have also worked with a team of environmental specialists to ascertain, and reduce, the carbon footprint of the Project and associated infrastructure. The Applicant is confident that the Project will deliver substantial carbon savings over its lifetime – further details can be found in the Climate Change chapter of the ES (document reference 6.1.13)</p>
<p>Green energy</p> <p>Respondents said the UK needs to produce more green energy, noting the need to fulfil the demands of electric transport and heating.</p>	<p>Green energy</p> <p>The Applicant agrees that the UK needs to produce more energy. The Project would power the equivalent of over 100,000 homes with green electricity and provide energy storage to help balance supply and demand.</p>
<p>Energy security</p> <p>Respondents said the war in Ukraine has highlighted the need for energy security.</p>	<p>Energy security</p> <p>By delivering additional renewable energy generation capacity and energy storage, the Project will help provide long-term energy security for Britain.</p>
<p>Energy storage</p> <p>A consultee said the UK needs to improve its energy storage capacity to account for</p>	<p>Energy storage</p> <p>The Applicant agrees that Britain needs to improve its energy storage capacity. They</p>

<p>fluctuations in renewable energy generation.</p>	<p>have incorporated energy storage into the design of the Project with that in mind.</p>
<p>Food security Respondents expressed concern over the Project using agricultural land that food can be grown on, saying that it could take the land out of the growing cycle for 40 years.</p> <p>One consultee added that solar panels must go on buildings and reclaimed land that is unsuitable for agriculture, as opposed to grades 1, 2 and 3a land.</p>	<p>Food security The Applicant has reduced the Order Limits to allow more land to remain in agricultural use. The 2.15 hectares that they set aside for a community orchard will also be used to grow soft fruit, as well as helping pollinators.</p> <p>The land will still be classified as agricultural land. The area underneath and around the panels is proposed to be managed as a nature conservation pasture with sheep grazing.</p> <p>Over 80% of the land is grade 3 land, and suffers the usual constraints of heavy soils, notable blackgrass infestation and a general susceptibility to wetness, both of which constrain farming activities.</p>
<p>Site layout People expressed support for the proposed site layout.</p> <p>They noted that it has a low visual impact, encourages rewilding, and could encourage people to walk, cycle, and engage with nature.</p>	<p>Site layout The Applicant is grateful to receive this positive feedback regarding the site layout.</p>
<p>Safety In light of recent extreme weather in the UK (droughts) and climate change, a consultee expressed fire safety concerns.</p> <p>They asked how the Applicant will mitigate the risk of tinder grass catching alight around and beneath the solar infrastructure, noting that there are no fire breaks around the site.</p>	<p>Safety The Applicant has engaged with key stakeholders, including emergency service providers, throughout the development of the Project to mitigate potential risks.</p> <p>They have also worked with a team of specialists on this issue. The Applicant is confident in the safety of the technology they will use.</p> <p>An Outline Energy Storage Safety Management Plan will be submitted alongside the DCO application (document reference 7.12).</p>
<p>Cultural heritage</p>	<p>Cultural heritage</p>

<p>Respondents said they were pleased to see the upstanding building of Six Hundreds Farms, the wall to the west of Elm Grange, and the drainage pump at Head Dyke will be retained and protected.</p> <p>They also said vegetation planting can have an impact on the setting of heritage assets, so this should be included in any assessment, and the additional Cultural Heritage works identified in the PEIR should inform the final site layout.</p>	<p>The Applicant is grateful to receive this positive feedback regarding the cultural heritage aspects of their plan. Their assessments and final site layout will cover a range of factors, including proposed planting.</p>
<p>Cable route A consultee suggested building a pedestrian bridge over the Forty Foot to allow easy access to the site.</p>	<p>Cable route The cable will need to go underneath the South Forty Foot Drain, but the area expected to be preferable for a crossing is closer to Bicker. The community benefit fund (outside of the DCO process) could be used to look into the feasibility of such a crossing, but it is not considered possible to incorporate the crossing itself into this Proposed Development.</p>
<p>Construction traffic A respondent also said speeding and dangerous driving is rife in the area, which has caused problems for nearby residents.</p>	<p>Construction traffic The Applicant has produced an Outline Construction Traffic Management Plan (OCTMP) (document reference 7.10), which will be submitted as part of the DCO application. This plan will be implemented during the construction phase of the Project and will include updates to the local community closest to the works underway and a point of contact should the issue arise again. The OCTMP aims to minimise the impact of the construction phase on local residents, businesses and the highways network. A draft version of the CTMP was provided as part of the PEIR.</p>
<p>Access Respondents said access points should be as unobtrusive as possible, avoiding disturbance wherever reasonable.</p>	<p>Access The Applicant will factor this in when developing their construction management plan.</p>
<p>Visual impact People expressed support for the creation of habitats and walking routes.</p>	<p>Visual impact The Applicant is grateful to receive this positive feedback regarding their plans to create habitats and walking routes. They</p>

<p>They also suggested planting native trees and considering working with wildlife trusts/rewilding initiatives.</p>	<p>will protect and enhance existing hedgerows and lines of trees within the Energy Park with gapping-up using appropriate species. Additionally, they will establish new hedgerows along the southern and western edges of the solar modules, and within the Energy Park.</p> <p>They will factor these suggestions in when deciding which vegetation to plant.</p>
<p>Biodiversity Respondents said this was an important aspect of the Project, adding that Lincolnshire needs more biodiversity. Another added that wildflowers would aid this.</p> <p>However, other consultees questioned whether the planned planting would fit in with its surroundings, and said sheep grazing would dilute biodiversity gains.</p> <p>People also said more trees would be appreciated, noting they could be integrated into the hedgerows, which would create additional nesting sites for birds.</p> <p>Another added that an area of natural woodland would boost biodiversity in ways grassland would not.</p> <p>An additional respondent said increasing the width of the dyke's buffer zones would further enhance biodiversity.</p>	<p>Biodiversity The Applicant agrees that biodiversity is an important part of the Project. They have set aside some of the site to allow wildflowers to thrive. A significant amount of other biodiversity enhancements are also planned as part of the design.</p> <p>Per the DCO application process, the Applicant has engaged with a wide variety of stakeholders on a range of environmental issues, including the planned planting. They will continue working with these bodies to ensure it fits in with the surroundings. While sheep grazing may not enhance the site in terms of biodiversity, it will allow much of the site to remain in agricultural use, which was a key concern for the local community.</p> <p>The Applicant will continue working with a team of environmental specialists to determine how best to integrate new trees into the site design, noting this would benefit local birds. Much of the site will be seeded with nature conservation grass seed mixes to provide nesting areas and foraging habitat for birds.</p> <p>They will continue to consider how best to incorporate natural woodland into the site design, but have set aside some of the site for grassland to allow it to remain in agricultural use.</p>

	<p>The Applicant will determine the final size of the dyke's buffer zones in collaboration with local stakeholders, based on a range of factors, including biodiversity enhancement.</p>
<p>Community orchard</p> <p>People expressed support for this idea, but questioned whether a Fen is the right place for it, and whether it would be used by Bicker residents.</p> <p>One said they hope it will be organic and another said there should be someone in charge of managing it, noting that people often give away apples due to lack of demand.</p> <p>A respondent suggested setting aside some land for 'community woodland'.</p>	<p>Community orchard</p> <p>The orchard would be planted with local varieties of tree and the Applicant will work with a range of stakeholders to make sure it fits in with the local landscape. It would be available for use by the new school at Elm Grange, parish councils and community groups by arrangement.</p> <p>The Applicant notes this interest in it being organic and concern over food waste. They will consider how best to manage the orchard in due course.</p> <p>The Applicant will consider the idea of a community woodland in collaboration with a team of environmental specialists.</p>
<p>Permissive path</p> <p>Respondents were generally supportive of the proposed path, saying that it should accommodate cycling and engagement with nature. But some expressed concerns over accessibility, noting the lack of an associated car park, they said Bicker residents may only be able to access it via car.</p> <p>In addition, one consultee asked if the route will have wheelchair access, and another suggested that the Project could also support improvements to the footpath to Sleaford.</p>	<p>Permissive path</p> <p>The Applicant is grateful to receive this positive feedback regarding the proposed permissive path and has considered how cycling could be accommodated, however, due to the permissive path connecting to a public right of way bicycles would be prohibited. Land rights to enable this would be required, which are not currently available.</p> <p>They note the concerns around accessibility, and will look into how this can be addressed to better encourage active travel.</p> <p>Per the DCO application process, the Applicant has engaged with a wide variety of stakeholders on a range of issues, including accessibility and local connectivity. They will continue working with these bodies to develop a path that is responsive to local needs.</p>
<p>Environmental impact</p>	<p>Environmental impact</p>

Feedback on this issue was mixed, with different consultees saying the Project could both provide benefits and cause damage.	The Applicant has had regard to these comments and the Applicant is confident that the Project will enhance the local environment and have a significant, beneficial impact at the national level. The Applicant is working with a team of environmental specialists and a range of stakeholders to ascertain, and mitigate, potential impacts.
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7.3.3 Summary of Responses under Section 48 of the Act

179. The Applicant did not receive any responses specifically in relation to the Section 48 Notice and associated publicity.

7.4 Ongoing engagement

180. The online feedback form (hosted on Survey Monkey) was open for a courtesy week after the formal close of consultation. One online feedback form was completed in this time and has been considered by the Applicant.

181. Following, and during, the statutory consultation, the Applicant held meetings with a range of organisations and individuals to discuss their responses and agree, where possible, how their views can influence the development of the Project. These are summarised in **Table 7.4**.

Table 7.4: Summary of meetings during and following the statutory consultation

Date	Stakeholder	Purpose	Detail	Outcome(s)
30 June 2022	Black Sluice Internal Drainage Board (BSIDB)	Site visit	Project Team discussed drainage, fencing and crossings on the solar park site.	- BSIDB provided a response to the Statutory Consultation.
30 June 2022	Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust (LWT)	Site visit	Project Team showed Local Officer around the site and discussed biodiversity enhancements, as well as minks and water voles.	- LWT provided a response to the Statutory Consultation. - Provided local orchard details.
30 June 2022	Lincolnshire County Council (LCC)	Site visit	Project Team showed Officers around the site.	- LCC provided a response to the Statutory Consultation.

Date	Stakeholder	Purpose	Detail	Outcome(s)
7 July 2022	North Kesteven District Council (NKDC) and Boston Borough Council (BBC)	Site visit	Project Team showed Officers around the site.	- NKDC and BBC provided responses to the Statutory Consultation.
8 July 2022	Lincolnshire Community Foundation (LCF)	Visited public exhibition to see display and offer assistance	Discussed how LCF manages schemes.	- Agreed to keep in contact. - Explained that the community benefit fund is being kept separate to the DCO application.
25 July 2022	LCC	Members Briefing - 17 Councillors in attendance (in person and online)	Presentation followed by questions: energy storage; countrywide strategy for energy; climate change; agriculture; underground cables; fire and rescue; community benefit fund and food security.	- Project team answered questions.
16 August 2022	National Grid (NG)	Design meeting	Order limits to be reduced from the PEIR in proximity to the NG substation; programme; construction phase assumptions for traffic; and boundary vegetation.	- Provided an estimate of vehicle numbers for the construction of the extension. - Reduced Order limits. - Organised next meeting.
5 October 2022	NKDC	Post-PEIR update	Reservoir location at Swaton; cumulative sites; protective provisions; flood risk and sequential test; alternatives; agricultural land classification including note on practical implications of farming;	Organised further meetings

Date	Stakeholder	Purpose	Detail	Outcome(s)
			latest layout; policy; LVIA and RVAA; ecology; heritage; socio-economics; noise; transport and access; miscellaneous; and outline energy storage safety management plan.	
29 November 2022	Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue	Project update	Incorporation of LFR comments as far as practical at this stage. Shared outline energy storage safety management plan.	- Agreed to provide reference to the plan in the Miscellaneous chapter (document reference 6.1.18), and secure it within the DCO, and update to 'outline energy storage safety management plan' (document reference 7.11)
13 December 2022	BSIDB	Protective provisions and project update	Project update; cumulative schemes including those in construction and how the Applicant works around those, as well as precedent for protective provisions; legal team shared draft protective provisions; enhancements BSIDB involved in and opportunities onsite; proposed drainage solutions discussed; Statement of Common Ground for Examination, and Performance Agreement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assume 2m plus safety distance under all drains/ditches in case they come to fall under the jurisdiction of the IDB in the future. - Agreed to provide further details on cable markers. - Checked in with landowner regarding security fencing and new culverts (no concern from IDB unless impacting IDB-maintained drains).

Date	Stakeholder	Purpose	Detail	Outcome(s)
			requirement post-consent.	- Agreed to continue liaising over protective provisions.
23 December 2022	National Grid	Protective provisions and project update	Project update; legal and planning colleagues on the call. Further details on Cadent likely to be shared. Follow lands process.	- Request to share documents in advance of submission.
11 January 2023	NKDC	Project update following further targeted information	Project update, including further targeted consultation; discussed chapters of the environmental statement; requirement for Statement of Common Ground from PINS; draft DCO update; and cumulative site north of Sleaford (800MW EDF scheme).	- Provided SoCG draft for review. - Confirmed cut off for cumulative sites is 31 December 2022. - Confirmed plans for grazing in the OLEMP (document reference 7.8).
24 January 2023	Black Sluice IDB	Bicker Fen interactions with Black Sluice drainage	Design meeting about the two routes options into Bicker Fen and interactions with Black Sluice drainage.	- BSIDB suggested a culvert solution due to proximity of drain to substation extension. Further details to be explored.
8 February 2023	NKDC	Statement of Common Ground	Subject to NKDC review of the ES, DCO and other documentation a draft SOCG was discussed.	Draft SOCG to be submitted with DCO (document reference 7.6)

182. In addition, the Applicant made sure that relevant materials were available to prescribed and non-prescribed bodies, as well as interested members of the local community, offering to send hard copies on request.

8. Further consultation

8.1 Overview

183. This Chapter sets out the further (targeted) consultation that the Applicant held between 11 November 2022 and 18 December 2022, prior to submitting their DCO application under the Act.
184. Based on further assessment and feedback received during the Statutory Consultation, the Applicant reduced their Order Limits, meaning the cable route for the Project is now wholly within Boston Borough (with the Energy Park Site within North Kesteven District Council's wards). They also made a few localised changes to their proposals – they now cover a small number of additional areas. Following a review with the Project team (including on the environmental and land implications), and having regard to the Planning Act 2008: Guidance on the pre-application process,¹¹ it was determined that the changes were non-material in nature and only required a targeted consultation.
185. The Applicant held this consultation to give anyone who may be directly impacted by their plans the opportunity to comment on these changes. The letters were grouped into three categories: (1) a letter to relevant prescribed consultees (**Appendix 19**), (2) a Section 44 letter to newly affected landowners (**Appendix 20**); and a Section 44 letter to landowners already consulted but now with a change in the amount of land included in the proposed Order Limits (**Appendix 21**). A copy was also sent to host local authorities and surrounding parish councils.
186. Where further interested parties were identified as a result of the further targeted consultation, the Applicant provided them with full information on the Project and gave them opportunities to discuss the proposals with the Project team and put forward comments in relation to the proposals. These interested parties were given a minimum of 30 days to respond from the date after they received the letter, which is over the 28 day statutory minimum.
187. Accordingly, the targeted consultation was undertaken, so far as relevant and proportionate, in accordance with the principles and methods set out in their Statement of Community Consultation dated June 2022, with the additional consultees under s.42(1)(d) identified using the same techniques as outlined for the Statutory Consultation.
188. The Applicant adopted a digital led-approach, ensuring the proposals could be viewed on the Project website, and feedback could be provided via email. They made sure it was inclusive by providing multiple ways to engage, enabling consultees to

¹¹ Available here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/418009/150326_Pre-Application_Guidance.pdf

provide feedback verbally and in writing. The Applicant also provided hard copies of materials on request (free of charge).

189. The Applicant notified all 27 relevant landowners (or those with an interest in the land) of the start of the consultation via letter (example provided in **Appendix 20**). The information leaflet that was made available during the consultation is provided in **Appendix 22**.

190. Throughout the consultation period, Ecotricity encouraged those who may be directly impacted by their plans to provide feedback and request further information:

- Via email – using the dedicated consultation email address (heckingtonfensolar@ecotricity.co.uk). This inbox was monitored by members of the Project team;
- Over the phone – via a dedicated freephone line (0800 151 0784), which was in operation from Monday to Friday between the hours of 8:30am and 5:30pm. People could leave voicemails outside of these hours, and were responded to at the earliest opportunity, ensuring information was readily available and queries or concerns addressed. Members of the Project team gave information to callers where possible and if questions were of a technical nature, these were passed on to relevant members of the Project team to respond to; or
- By post – using the freepost address (FREEPOST ECOTRICITY SOLAR PARK).

191. The Project team responded to all relevant enquiries, providing information where possible and passing questions or requests for further information of a technical nature on to relevant members of the Project team, who would then respond to them directly.

8.2 Feedback received & how Ecotricity responded

192. During the consultation, Ecotricity received nine pieces of feedback from a range of local stakeholders.

193. **Table 8.1** contains a summary of key issues that arose within this feedback, as well as the Applicant's responses to these issues and explanations of the regard had for them.

194. A full list of issues raised through feedback provided, and a description of the Applicant's response to each issue is included in **Appendix 23**.

Table 8.1: Summary of key issues from further (targeted) consultation feedback

Summary Issue	Regard had by the Applicant
<p>Privacy Access Respondent was concerned about access to their property and vehicles turning around in their driveway.</p>	<p>Privacy Access The Applicant notes this comment. If cabling works go across their existing access, road plates can be used to ensure the landowner can still access their property. These covers enable pedestrians and vehicles to pass over trenches and other holes. An outline Construction Traffic Management Plan will outline routing for traffic to avoid the need to turn in private driveways. The Construction Traffic Management Plan will also make it clear that contracts with contractors will stipulate no turning in private driveways. Contractors details can also be provided to the landowner prior to construction so they can discuss any concerns.</p>
<p>Access Respondent recently purchased property and wanted to understand requirement for access across their landholding.</p>	<p>Access The Applicant organised a site visit for the respondent. Due to poor weather conditions this was postponed.</p>
<p>Footpath Residents questioned whether the Project could incorporate a bridleway, asked for further details about bridleways around the South Forty Foot Drain and the provision of additional areas for horse riding in proximity to the cable route.</p>	<p>Footpath Due to access agreements, it is not possible to offer a bridleway onsite. The cable route offsite is not joining the bridleway along the South Forty Foot Drain and access would be required to facilitate the cable installation.</p>
<p>Grid connection A resident requested further information on the grid connection.</p>	<p>Grid connection The Applicant discussed the connection with the resident’s representative during the consultation. They have also continued these discussions since it closed.</p>
<p>Food security A respondent said the site contains grade 1 and 2 land, according to Natural England’s provisional maps. They added that it was marketed as higher-grade land in 1999/2000.</p>	<p>Food security Based on survey data comprising over 450 soil augers, collected by an independent third party, the grading is over 80% grade 3. Further details on the practical implications of farming the site (including alternatives to wheat) are presented in Appendix 16.1 to Chapter 16 of the ES (document reference 6.3.16.1)</p>

9. How Ecotricity took account of views raised

Table 9.1: How Ecotricity took account of views raised during pre-application period

You said	We did
<p>Climate change This is an important issue. It requires us to act quickly to provide more sustainable energy, so more solar makes sense.</p> <p>The climate and energy crises warrant fast-tracking planning.</p>	<p>Climate change Although Heckington Fen Solar Park was developed to fight the climate crisis, the Applicant is still keen to ensure it does the maximum amount of good it can. To that end, they are working to identify local supply chain partners for the construction and operation phases of the Project, reducing its carbon footprint.</p>
<p>Bicker Fen Substation Most renewable energy projects in Lincolnshire seem to join the National Grid at this substation.</p> <p>Will solar developers agree to mitigate any increase in the site's carbon footprint that occurs as a result of connecting there?</p>	<p>Bicker Fen Substation The Applicant has engaged with key stakeholders, including National Grid, throughout the development of the Project to mitigate potential impacts.</p> <p>They have also worked with a team of environmental specialists to ascertain, and reduce, the carbon footprint of the Project and associated infrastructure. The Applicant is confident that the Project will deliver substantial carbon savings over its lifetime – further details can be found in the Climate Change chapter of the ES (document reference 6.1.13).</p>
<p>Energy security The war in Ukraine has highlighted the need for energy security.</p>	<p>Energy security The Applicant is continuing to work on renewable projects, including green gas, as an alternative to fossil fuel gas. They let residents know that the Project could power over 100,000 homes with solar energy and that its energy storage can be used to store excess green energy, further supporting the growth of renewables and thus, energy security.</p>
<p>Energy storage The UK needs to improve its energy storage capacity to account for fluctuations in renewable energy generation.</p>	<p>Energy storage The Applicant has incorporated energy storage into the Proposed Development to this end, helping the grid network better manage peaks and troughs of energy demand.</p>

Food security

The Project will take agricultural land out of the growing cycle. When will it be reinstated?

Solar panels must go on buildings and reclaimed land that is unsuitable for agriculture, not grades 1, 2 and 3a land.

The Project could set aside land to grow soft fruit.

Food security

The project team let people know that, in parallel with the energy production on site, the land will be grazed, retaining an element of agriculture on site. The Applicant proposes to graze sheep on the Energy Park Site. They added that the land could be reinstated after the 40-year operational life of the site.

The Applicant agreed that solar panels should also be installed on buildings, but noted that the UK will also require ground-mounted solar panels to achieve its net zero targets and avoid the worst effects of climate change.

They informed respondents that the vast majority of the site suffers the usual constraints of heavy soils, notable blackgrass infestation and a general susceptibility to wetness, both of which constrain farming activities.

Additionally, the Applicant has removed the outer-most fields of higher-grade land from their proposals, allowing it to remain solely in agricultural use (some 62ha). They added that utilising the site for solar and grazing will provide the landowner with a guaranteed source of income, providing additional security for their other landholdings, which will remain in agriculture use. Furthermore, the reduction in pesticides, fertilisers and other chemicals will improve the biodiversity on the site over the operational life of the Project. The additional hedgerow planting will further improve biodiversity.

Ecotricity incorporated the growing of soft fruit into the design via the community orchard, which will also significant increase the biodiversity net gain of the site. They also considered alternative layouts that set aside more land to grow soft fruit, however

	<p>this was not progressed due to the quality of the soil and difficulties of harvesting amongst the panels.</p>
<p>Site layout It could also encourage people to walk and engage with nature.</p>	<p>Site layout The Applicant has incorporated a community orchard and a permissive path into their proposals, enhancing the existing public right of way network.</p>
<p>Safety How will you mitigate the risk of tinder grass catching alight around and beneath your solar infrastructure? There are no fire breaks around the site.</p>	<p>Safety The Applicant has engaged with Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue Service and will provide an information box onsite to assist firefighters, as well as details of an Emergency Plan in advance of the construction of the Project. While specific fire breaks are not included, a large number of ditches break up the site and sections of solar panels. These ditches could be used by emergency vehicles if required.</p>
<p>Cultural heritage Vegetation planting can have an impact on the setting of heritage assets. This should be included in any assessment. The additional Cultural Heritage works identified in the PEIR should inform the final site layout.</p>	<p>Cultural heritage The Applicant has further considered heritage assets, including the impact on vegetation planting, within the cultural heritage chapter of the ES and associated appendices (document reference 6.1.10). They have ensured that the additional works informed the final site layout.</p>
<p>Construction traffic Speeding and dangerous driving is rife in the area. This has caused problems for nearby residents. What routes will construction traffic use?</p>	<p>Construction traffic The Applicant has relocated the proposed new access from the A17 further away from existing properties. They let residents know that the route for construction traffic associated with the cable construction would use the existing Triton Knoll access track.</p>
<p>Access Where is the proposed site access? Access points should be as unobtrusive as possible. They should also avoid disturbance wherever reasonable.</p>	<p>Access The Applicant noted these comments and is seeking to use existing accesses for the Project as far as practicable. They let respondents know that the main site access for the Energy Park is a new entrance (previously approved as part of Ecotricity's wind park application) on the</p>

	<p>A17 which is further away from third party properties than existing site accesses at Elm Grange, Rectory Lane and Six Hundreds Drove.</p> <p>Whilst the access is new, the panels and other infrastructure are set back from the road and aim to be as unobtrusive as possible, especially with planting proposed around the perimeter fence.</p>
<p>Visual impact People support the creation of habitats and walking routes.</p> <p>You should plant native trees and consider working with wildlife trusts/rewilding initiatives.</p> <p>What visual impact will the Project and associated infrastructure have?</p> <p>What screening options are being considered?</p>	<p>Visual impact The Applicant let them know that they will submit an Outline Landscape and Environmental Management Plan (document reference 7.8) with the DCO application to provide details on these measures.</p> <p>They have engaged with Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust throughout the process and offered suggestions, which are considered further in the Ecology Chapter of the ES (document reference 6.1.8), and the Outline Landscape and Environmental Management Plan (document reference 7.8).</p> <p>The Applicant undertook a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment. It is included in the ES (document reference 6.1.7).</p> <p>The Applicant is proposing screening in the form of hedgerows around the perimeter and gapping up internal hedgerows.</p>
<p>Biodiversity Lincolnshire needs more biodiversity, so this is an important aspect of the Project. Wildflowers would help.</p> <p>Will the planting fit in with its surroundings?</p> <p>Sheep grazing will dilute biodiversity gains.</p>	<p>Biodiversity The Project has been designed to deliver a net gain in biodiversity of at least 10%.</p> <p>They decided to orient the planting so it will follow the boundaries of the solar park, aiding screening. Relatedly, the Applicant has opted to leave the existing drainage ditches onsite, which are characteristic of this part of Lincolnshire.</p>

<p>More trees would be appreciated. Integrating them into the hedgerows would create additional nesting sites for birds.</p> <p>An area of natural woodland would boost biodiversity in ways grassland would not.</p> <p>Increasing the width of the dyke's buffer zones would further enhance biodiversity.</p> <p>How will the Project affect wildlife habitat and the local food chain?</p>	<p>Sheep grazing will help control (unwanted) vegetation growth beneath the solar panels. Alternative ways to control this can include other animals, but anything larger than sheep would not be possible due to potential damage to the panels (without increasing their height). Containment would also be an issue, posing risks to nesting birds. Manually cutting the grass is possible, however this could increase the carbon footprint of the Proposed Development. Furthermore, the use of sheep for grazing will help improve site soils, which will be of benefit when the land is returned to agricultural use after the operational life of the Project. This change in land use will also increase the number of labour hours required to service the site, creating new jobs for local people.</p> <p>The Applicant integrated over 90 additional trees into the design via the community orchard, since the statutory consultation.</p> <p>They have incorporated a proportionate amount of natural woodland into the proposals, in keeping with the local landscape.</p>
<p>Community orchard</p> <p>Is a Fen the right place for this?</p> <p>Will it be organic?</p> <p>Will it be used by Bicker residents?</p> <p>There should be someone in charge of managing it.</p> <p>You should set aside some land for community woodland.</p>	<p>Community orchard</p> <p>The Project team let residents know that the community orchard could include a variety of trees, consulting local groups like Trees for Heckington and Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust.</p> <p>The Applicant committed to ensuring the orchard is organic where practical.</p> <p>It will be able to be used by Bicker residents by arrangement. This is due to access requirements close to Elm Grange.</p> <p>The Applicant has integrated a community woodland into the design and will consider long-term management.</p>

<p>Permissive path</p> <p>It should accommodate cycling and engagement with nature.</p> <p>It lacks an associated car park, so it may be difficult for some people to access. It also has no bin.</p> <p>Will the route have wheelchair access?</p> <p>The Project could also support improvements to the footpath to Sleaford.</p>	<p>Permissive path</p> <p>The Applicant informed respondents that the permissive path would connect into the existing network, accommodating engagement with nature. They also let people know that cycling cannot be accommodated, however, due to the permissive path connecting to a public right of way bicycles would be prohibited. Land rights to enable this would be required, which are not currently available.</p> <p>In addition, they told respondents that they do not plan to provide a car park as they do not want to encourage car use to undertake physical activities. Furthermore, research has shown that providing a bin leads to people leaving more litter, whereby a lack of bins causes more visitors to take their rubbish home with them.</p> <p>The Project team told an attendee that the route will utilise field boundaries, which are grassy and may be considered unsuitable for some wheelchair users. They offered to work with interested wheelchair users on this issue.</p> <p>Ecotricity let people know that they could discuss further network enhancements outside the DCO process, informing respondents that this is something the community benefit fund could likely be used for.</p>
<p>Environmental impact</p> <p>The Project could both provide benefits and cause damage.</p>	<p>Environmental impact</p> <p>The Applicant has completed a comprehensive EIA, which will be provided alongside the DCO application (document reference 6.1)</p>
<p>Flood risk</p> <p>How will you manage drains to avoid flooding adjacent land?</p>	<p>Flood risk</p> <p>The Applicant has completed a flood risk assessment as part of the DCO application (document reference 6.3.9.1). They have included a drainage strategy within this, which incorporate swales.</p>
<p>Community benefits</p>	<p>Community benefits</p>

<p>How could the Project benefit Heckington Parish and those living near the Proposed Development?</p>	<p>The Project team let people know that the community benefit fund is separate to the DCO process. They added that it could support projects which look to reduce the impact on the environment, and reduce carbon emissions via three core topics: energy, food and transport.</p>
<p>Supply chain Where will the solar panels be sourced from? What are the potential implications of this for the environment?</p> <p>You should remain transparent about your supply chain processes and ensure the required technology is sourced ethically.</p>	<p>Supply chain The Applicant informed respondents that they have not decided which supplier to use at this stage. They noted that solar panels (as with most technology products in the modern economy) could end up being sourced from almost anywhere in the world.</p> <p>The Project team let people know that Ecotricity is firmly committed to maintaining the highest levels of transparency and sustainability throughout their supply chain. Ethical sourcing is a priority for them.</p>
<p>Wind farm Can you use much of the data you collected for the previous wind farm application?</p> <p>How is the wind farm connected to the Project?</p>	<p>Wind farm The Applicant informed respondents that the previous wind farm application was based on data collected over many years and so they commissioned additional surveying work to ensure it is still accurate. They considered the data from the previous application as historical data and made reference to it where applicable (e.g., noise).</p> <p>They also let people know that the planning application for the wind farm was approved by the then Secretary of State (SoS) for Energy and Climate Change in February 2013. However, Ecotricity have been unable to begin constructing it due to difficulties satisfying concerns raised by the Ministry of Defence over that scheme's potential impact on local radar systems. Ecotricity believes the climate crisis needs fighting now, which is why they developed this Project.</p>

10. Ongoing engagement post consultation

195. Following the targeted non-statutory consultation the Applicant produced a newsletter to summarise the Project changes that had been made (**Appendix 25**). This also included next steps in the DCO process and summarised how to get involved during the pre-examination and examination phases.
196. The Applicant posted the newsletter on 6 February 2023 to just under 6,000 addresses included within the project mailing zone (**Appendix 24**). A summary of the information was also uploaded onto the project webpages.
197. The Applicant also provided an update for a local magazine, Heckington Living, which can also be found in **Appendix 25**.

11. Conclusion


198. The Applicant carried out three rounds of pre-application consultation on Heckington Fen Solar Park and maintained ongoing stakeholder engagement over an 18-month period prior to submitting their DCO application to the Planning Inspectorate.
199. The Applicant considered views raised during consultation throughout the development of the Project, and addressed issues accordingly. The Applicant has had regard to all relevant responses and directly responded to feedback, ensuring the second (formal) round of consultation addressed key points of interest and concern raised in the first (informal) consultation round.
200. The third (further, targeted) consultation gave anyone directly impacted by the localised non-material changes – made since their second consultation closed on 1 September 2022 – the chance comment on them.
201. Within this report, the Applicant has demonstrated how views raised during the consultation process have influenced the development of the Project. The Applicant considers that the consultation described in this report satisfies the requirements associated with the DCO application process.

12. Statement of compliance

12.1 Compliance with the Planning Act 2008

Table 12.1: Statement of compliance with the Planning Act 2008

Ref	Requirement	Compliance
Section 42	Duty to consult The applicant must consult the following about the proposed application:	
	(a) such persons as may be prescribed;	The Applicant consulted all relevant persons prescribed under the APFP Regulations 2009. A full list of consultees is provided in Appendix 11 .
	(aa) the Marine Management Organisation (MMO);	The Applicant determined they were not required to consult the Marine Management Organisation (based on the results of a 'circumstances' test), however included them for completeness.
	(b) each local authority that is within Section 43;	The Applicant consulted all relevant local authorities, per Section 43. A full list of consultees is provided in Appendix 11 . This list includes all the local authorities that the Applicant consulted. Section 7.2.2 of this Report also outlines each 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D' authority.
	(c) the Greater London Authority if the land is in Greater London; and	Not applicable.
(d) each person who is within one or more of the categories set out in Section 44.	The Applicant consulted all landowners, lessees, tenants or occupiers, those with an interest in the land or certain powers with respect to the land, and those who the Applicant thinks would or might be entitled to make a relevant claim, per Section 44. The full list is provided in the Book of Reference (document reference 4.3).	
Section 46	Duty to notify Secretary of State of proposed application (1) The applicant must supply the Secretary of State with such information in relation to the proposed application as the applicant would supply to the Secretary of State for the purpose of complying with Section 42 if the applicant were required by that Section to consult the Secretary of State about the proposed application.	The Applicant notified the Planning Inspectorate of the proposed application and provided the consultation materials on 27 June 2022 by way of a formal cover letter and package including the consultation documents (Appendix 14).

	(2) The applicant must comply with subsection (1) on or before commencing consultation under Section 42.	The package was delivered to the Planning Inspectorate on 27 June 2022 via an online download, before the statutory consultation commenced (on 30 June 2022).
Section 47	Duty to consult local community (1) The applicant must prepare a statement setting out how the applicant proposes to consult, about the proposed application, people living in the vicinity of the land.	The Applicant prepared a draft Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC) which set out how they proposed to consult the local community. Further details on the process for preparing the SoCC can be found in Section 6.4 of this Consultation Report. The SoCC is provided in Appendix 15 .
	(2) Before preparing the statement, the applicant must consult each local authority that is within Section 43(1) about what is to be in the statement.	The Applicant consulted the following Section 43(1) local authorities on the draft SoCC: -Boston Borough Council -Lincolnshire County Council -North Kesteven District Council
	(3) The deadline for the receipt by the applicant of a local authority's response to consultation under subsection (2) is the end of the period of 28 days that begins with the day after the day on which the local authority receives the consultation documents.	The relevant host authorities were sent the draft SoCC on 1 March 2022 and given 28 days to respond. The Applicant outlines the comments and responses at Section 6.4 of this Consultation Report.
	(4) In subsection (3) "the consultation documents" means the documents supplied to the local authority by the applicant for the purpose of consulting the local authority under subsection (2).	The consultation documents comprised a cover letter (email) and draft SoCC (see Appendix 8).
	(5) In preparing the statement, the applicant must have regard to any response to consultation under subsection (2) that is received by the applicant before the deadline imposed by subsection (3).	The Applicant considered all relevant comments received on the draft SoCC. Their responses to these comments are provided in Section 6.4 of this Consultation Report.
(6) Once the applicant has prepared the statement, the applicant must— (a) make the statement available for inspection by the public in a way that is reasonably convenient for people living in the vicinity of the land, (b) publish, in a newspaper circulating in the vicinity of the land, a notice stating	Notice of the SoCC was published in the Lincolnshire Free Press on 21 June 2022 and 28 June 2022 and in the Boston Standard on 22 June 2022 and 29 June 2022. The SoCC was also made available on the Applicant's website, 	

	<p>where and when the statement can be inspected, and</p> <p>(c) publish the statement in such manner as may be prescribed.</p>	
	(7) The applicant must carry out consultation in accordance with the proposals set out in the statement.	The Applicant's consultation process was carried out in accordance with the SoCC (see Section 12 of this Consultation Report for more detail).
Section 48	<p>Duty to publicise</p> <p>(1) The applicant must publicise the proposed application in the prescribed manner.</p>	The Applicant prepared and published a Section 48 Notice in the manner prescribed under the APFP Regulations 2009 (see Section 12 of this Consultation Report for more detail). The published Notice is provided at Appendix 13 .
	(2) Regulations made for the purposes of subsection (1) must, in particular, make provision for publicity under subsection (1) to include a deadline for receipt by the applicant of responses to the publicity.	The deadline was included in the Section 48 Notice as 1 September 2022.

12.2 Compliance with the APFP Regulations 2009

Table 12.2: Compliance with the APFP Regulations

Ref	Requirement	Compliance
Reg 3	<p>Prescribed consultees</p> <p>The persons prescribed for the purposes of Section 42(a) (duty to consult) are those listed in column 1 of the table in Schedule 1 to these Regulations, who must be consulted in the circumstances specified in relation to each such person in column 2 of that table.</p>	The Applicant consulted all relevant persons prescribed under the APFP Regulations 2009 who were deemed to be relevant to this current application by the descriptions set out in column 2 of that table. A full list of consultees is provided in Appendix 11 .
Reg 4	<p>(2) The applicant must publish a notice, which must include the matters prescribed by paragraph (3) of this regulation, of the proposed application—</p> <p>(a) for at least two successive weeks in one or more local newspapers circulating in the vicinity in which the proposed development would be situated;</p> <p>(b) once in a national newspaper;</p>	<p>The Applicant published the Section 48 Notice as follows:</p> <p>(a) For two successive weeks in the Lincolnshire Free Press and Boston Standard during the weeks commencing 20 June 2022 and 27 June 2022;</p> <p>(b) Once in The Guardian on 25 June 2022;</p> <p>(c) Once in the London Gazette on 28 June 2022. The Application does not affect land in Scotland, so the Edinburgh Gazette is not applicable.</p>

<p>(c) once in the London Gazette and, if land in Scotland is affected, the Edinburgh Gazette; and (d) where the proposed application relates to offshore development— (i) once in Lloyd’s List; and (ii) once in an appropriate fishing trade journal.</p>	<p>(d) The Application does not relate to offshore development, so this is not applicable. A copy of the Section 48 Notice is provided in Appendix 13.</p>
<p>(3) The matters which the notice must include are:</p>	<p>The Section 48 Notice included all of the elements listed under Regulation 4(3), as outlined below.</p>
<p>(a) the name and address of the applicant;</p>	<p>The name and address of the Applicant is included in the Section 48 Notice, as per the below extract: ‘1. Notice is hereby given that Ecotricity (Heck Fen Solar) Limited of Lion House, Rowcroft, Stroud, England, GL5 3BY (the Applicant) proposes to apply to the Secretary of State for a DCO under Section 37 of the Planning Act 2008 for the Heckington Fen Solar Park Project (the Application).’ A copy of the Section 48 Notice is provided in Appendix 13.</p>
<p>(b) a statement that the applicant intends to make an application for development consent to the Secretary of State;</p>	<p>The Section 48 Notice states that the Applicant proposes to apply to the SoS under Section 37 (of the Act) for the DCO. It included the following wording: ‘1. Notice is hereby given that Ecotricity (Heck Fen Solar) Limited of Lion House, Rowcroft, Stroud, England, GL5 3BY (the Applicant) proposes to apply to the Secretary of State for a DCO under Section 37 of the Planning Act 2008 for the Heckington Fen Solar Park Project (the Application).’</p>
<p>(c) a statement as to whether the application is EIA development;</p>	<p>The Section 48 Notice states that the Application is EIA development: ‘4. The Application is considered “EIA development” for the purposes of The Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017. This means that the proposed works constitute development for which an Environmental Impact Assessment is required and the proposed application for a DCO will therefore be accompanied by an Environmental Statement (ES).’</p>
<p>(d) a summary of the main proposals, specifying the</p>	<p>The Section 48 Notice states that the proposed DCO would, amongst other things, authorise components including:</p>

	location or route of the proposed development;	<p>'a. Construction, operation, maintenance, and decommissioning of a ground mounted solar photovoltaic (PV) facility with an export capacity of over 50MW together with a battery energy storage system;</p> <p>b. Associated and/or ancillary works including electricity inverters, transformers, onsite substations, the potential for above ground cabling across the Solar Park, underground cables connecting the Solar Park with the Bicker Fen Substation, an extension to the existing Bicker Fen Substation, landscaping, biodiversity areas, access tracks, construction compounds, control buildings, and welfare facilities;</p> <p>c. The permanent and/or temporary compulsory acquisition of land and/or rights (if required) and the potential for overriding of easements and other rights over or affecting land;</p> <p>d. The application and/or disapplication of legislation relating to the Heckington Fen Solar Park Project; and</p> <p>e. Such ancillary, incidental and consequential provisions, licences, property rights, permits and consents as are necessary and/or convenient.'</p>								
	(e) a statement that the documents, plans and maps showing the nature and location of the proposed development are available for inspection free of charge at the places (including at least one address in the vicinity of the proposed development) and times set out in the notice;	<p>The Section 48 Notice states that the project information brochures can be accessed free of charge from 30 June 2022 until 1 September 2022 at the places and times set out below:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="831 1370 1369 1977"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="831 1370 1082 1406">Venue</th> <th data-bbox="1082 1370 1369 1406">Opening hours</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="831 1406 1082 1608"> North Kesteven District Council Kesteven Street, Sleaford, Lincolnshire NG34 7EF </td> <td data-bbox="1082 1406 1369 1608"> 09:00 – 17:00 Monday to Wednesday by appointment (01529 414155) </td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="831 1608 1082 1778"> Lincolnshire County Council County Offices, Newland, Lincoln LN1 1YL </td> <td data-bbox="1082 1608 1369 1778"> 08:30 – 17:00 Monday to Thursday 08:30 – 16:30 Friday </td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="831 1778 1082 1977"> Boston Borough Council Municipal Buildings, West Street, Boston, </td> <td data-bbox="1082 1778 1369 1977"> 08:45 – 17:15 Monday to Thursday 08:45 – 16:45 Friday </td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Venue	Opening hours	North Kesteven District Council Kesteven Street, Sleaford, Lincolnshire NG34 7EF	09:00 – 17:00 Monday to Wednesday by appointment (01529 414155)	Lincolnshire County Council County Offices, Newland, Lincoln LN1 1YL	08:30 – 17:00 Monday to Thursday 08:30 – 16:30 Friday	Boston Borough Council Municipal Buildings, West Street, Boston,	08:45 – 17:15 Monday to Thursday 08:45 – 16:45 Friday
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		Lincolnshire PE21 8QR	
		Heckington Community Hub Council Chambers, St Andrew's Street, Heckington, Sleaford, Lincolnshire NG34 9RE	10:00 – 12:00 Monday to Saturday
		Boston Library County Hall, Boston, Lincolnshire PE21 6DY	09:00 – 17:00 Monday to Wednesday 09:00 – 18:00 Thursday 09:00 – 17:00 Friday 09:00 – 16:00 Saturday
		Sleaford Library 13 – 16 Market Place, Sleaford NG34 7SR	09:00 – 17:00 Monday to Wednesday 09:00 – 18:00 Thursday 09:00 – 17:00 Friday 09:00 – 13:00 Saturday
		Copies of documents, plans and maps are also stated to be available on the Applicant's website at [REDACTED], and it is confirmed that they can be provided on a USB free of charge on request. Additionally, it states that paper copies of all statutory consultation materials can be provided free of charge on request (except the PEIR, a hard copy of which could be requested for a charge of £0.35 per page to cover printing and posting costs).	
	(f) the latest date on which those documents, plans and maps will be available for inspection (being a date not earlier than the deadline in sub-paragraph (i));	The Section 48 Notice states that the project information brochures (which include plans and maps) are available for inspection from 30 June 2022 until 1 September 2022. The Notice states that: 'Project information brochures and feedback forms for Heckington Fen Solar Park can be accessed free of charge during Statutory Consultation	

		from 30 June 2022 until 1 September 2022'
	(g) whether a charge will be made for copies of any of the documents, plans or maps and the amount of any charge;	<p>The Section 48 Notice states that a hard copy of the PEIR can be requested for a charge of £0.35 per page to cover printing and posting costs. There was no charge for paper copies of the other consultation materials or an electronic copy of the consultation materials on USB. All documents could also be downloaded from the Project website.</p> <p>The Notice states that: 'Further details in relation to Heckington Fen Solar Park and the aforementioned documents can be found on the project website ([REDACTED]) [REDACTED] _or requested via email (heckingtonfensolar@ecotricity.co.uk), over the phone (0800 151 0784), or by post (FREEPOST ECOTRICITY SOLAR PARK – no stamp needed). A USB of the consultation materials can be supplied free of charge on request. Paper copies of all statutory consultation materials are also available in hard copy at no extra charge (except the PEIR, a hard copy of which can be requested for a charge of £0.35 per page to cover printing and posting costs).'</p>
	(h) details of how to respond to the publicity; and	<p>The Section 48 Notice states that: '11. Any responses to, or other representations in respect of, Heckington Fen Solar Park should be sent to the Applicant, care of Ecotricity, by email to heckingtonfensolar@ecotricity.co.uk or by post to FREEPOST ECOTRICITY SOLAR PARK.</p> <p>12. Any response or representation in respect of the proposed DCO must (i) be received by the Applicant no later than 1 September 2022, (ii) be made in writing (email or letter format), (iii) state the grounds of the response or representation, (iv) indicate who is making the response or representation, and (v) give an address to which correspondence relating to the response or representation may be sent.'</p>

	(i) a deadline for receipt of those responses by the applicant, being not less than 28 days following the date when the notice is last published.	The deadline for receipt of responses by the developer was given as: 'no later than 1 September 2022 '. The Notice was last published on 29 June 2022, which therefore gave a period of 64 days to respond.
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12.3 Compliance with DCLG guidance on the pre-application process (March 2015)

Table 12.3: Compliance with DCLG guidance on the pre-application process (March 2015)

Para	Requirement	Compliance
17	When circulating consultation documents, developers should be clear about their status, for example ensuring it is clear to the public if a document is purely for purposes of consultation.	Documents produced as part of the consultation clearly stated their status as materials produced for the purposes of the consultation (see Appendix 15). Letters issued to consultees as part of the statutory consultation did likewise (see Appendix 12 and Appendices 19, 20, and 21). The consultation booklet clearly stated that the PEIR had been prepared to report the preliminary EIA findings (see Appendix 15).
18	Early involvement of local communities, local authorities and statutory consultees can bring about significant benefits for all parties.	The Applicant began engaging with local communities, local authorities, and statutory consultees at an early stage of the Project's development, including via a round of non-statutory consultation, which ran from 22 October 2021 to 17 December 2021.
19	The pre-application consultation process is crucial to the effectiveness of the major infrastructure consenting regime. A thorough process can give the Secretary of State confidence that issues that will arise during the 6 months examination period have been identified, considered, and – as far as possible – that applicants have sought to reach agreement on those issues.	<p>The Applicant has conducted a thorough consultation process which has enabled them to identify, consider and, as far as possible, seek to reach agreement on issues likely to arise during the examination. The early engagement work and non-statutory consultation (Chapter 6 of this Consultation Report) provided opportunities to do so at an early stage of the Project's development. The Applicant has summarised the regard had to key issues raised during the non-statutory consultation in Section 6.2 of this Consultation Report. A full list of issues raised through feedback, and a description of the Applicant's response to each issue is provided in Appendix 6.</p> <p>The statutory consultation set out in Chapter 7 of this Consultation Report built on this understanding, identifying and considering additional issues likely to arise during the examination. The</p>

		<p>Applicant has summarised the regard had to key issues raised by Section 47 consultees during this consultation in Section 7.3.2. A full list of issues raised through feedback provided, and a description of the Applicant's response to each issue is included in Appendix 18. A list of all Section 42 respondents, their feedback, and the Applicant's responses is provided in Appendix 16.</p> <p>As recommended by the Planning Inspectorate's Advice note fourteen: Compiling the Consultation Report, in preparing this section the Applicant grouped the responses under the three strands of consultation – Sections 42, 47 and 48 of the Act. A summary of responses from prescribed consultees and local authorities, consulted under Section 42, is provided in Section 7.3.1 of this consultation report. A summary of responses from the local community, consulted under Section 47, is provided in Section 7.3.2. None of the consultees who responded identified themselves as specifically responding to the Section 48 Notice.</p> <p>Appendices 6, 16, and 18 detail how the Applicant has considered issues raised through the non-statutory and statutory consultations.</p>
20	<p>Experience suggests that, to be of most value, consultation should be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Based on accurate information that gives consultees a clear view of what is proposed including any options; - Shared at an early enough stage so that the proposal can still be influenced, while being sufficiently developed to provide some detail on what is being proposed; and, - Engaging and accessible in style, encouraging consultees to react and offer their views. 	<p>For both the non-statutory and statutory consultations, the Applicant shared information at an early enough stage to allow the proposals to be influenced, while being sufficiently developed to provide some detail on what is being proposed. In each consultation, the Applicant developed a clear scope for what could be influenced by consultees. For the non-statutory consultation, this was to support design development and the process of environmental impact assessment by gathering feedback from consultees on the initial proposals. This included options on cable route search area; areas set aside for biodiversity net gain; and locations of key infrastructure.</p> <p>For the statutory consultation, this was to provide feedback on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The Site Layout -Cable route options

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Access routes -Their approach to mitigating visual impacts -Their approach to ecological enhancement -A community orchard -A permissive path -The PEIR; and -The consultation. <p>Each phase of consultation activity was timed to ensure that the Applicant could consider feedback in developing the proposals. The Applicant has summarised the regard had to key issues raised during the non-statutory and statutory consultations (Section 47 consultees) in Sections 6.2, 7.3 and 7.3.2 of this Consultation Report. A full list of issues raised through feedback, and a description of the Applicant's response to each issue is provided in Appendices 6, 16, and 18.</p> <p>For each consultation, the Applicant published a newsletter or booklet written in an engaging and accessible style, setting out what it was possible to influence at that stage, providing accurate information that gave consultees a clear view of what was proposed, and encouraging them to react and offer their views. The newsletters and booklets produced for the non-statutory and statutory consultations are provided in Appendices 2, 12 and 15.</p>
25	<p>Consultation should be thorough, effective and proportionate. Some applicants may have their own distinct approaches to consultation, perhaps drawing on their own or relevant sector experience, for example if there are industry protocols that can be adapted. Larger, more complex applications are likely to need to go beyond the statutory minimum timescales laid down in the Planning Act to ensure enough time for consultees to understand project proposals and formulate a response. Many proposals will require detailed technical input, especially</p>	<p>The Applicant has conducted a thorough, effective and proportionate consultation. At 64 days, the period provided to comment for consultation under Sections 42, 47, and 48 of the Act was significantly longer than the 28 calendar days required (per Section 45(2)). As set out in Section 6.4 of this Consultation Report, this included a two week extension in response to North Kesteven District Council's comment regarding its corresponding with the first part of the School Summer Holidays in Lincolnshire.</p> <p>The Applicant has also been conscious of the need to be sufficiently flexible to respond to the needs and requirements of consultees. As set out in Section 5.2 of this Consultation Report, they provided a</p>

	<p>regarding impacts, so sufficient time will need to be allowed for this. Consultation should also be sufficiently flexible to respond to the needs and requirements of consultees, for example where a consultee has indicated that they would prefer to be consulted via email only, this should be accommodated as far as possible.</p>	<p>variety of means to respond to the statutory consultation, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Completing an online feedback form; -Completing and returning a hard copy of the feedback form; and -Providing feedback via email, over the phone, or by post. <p>The Applicant also provided a variety of means to find out more about the proposal, including face-to-face exhibitions and webinars. In addition, they accepted enquiries by Freephone, email or Freepost. Furthermore, they sent a newsletter (Appendix 12) to all addresses in the consultation zone (Appendix 24).</p>
26	<p>The Planning Act requires certain bodies and groups of people to be consulted at the pre-application stage, but allows for flexibility in the precise form that consultation may take depending on local circumstances and the needs of the project itself. Sections 42 – 44 of the Planning Act and Regulations set out details of who should be consulted, including local authorities, the Marine Management Organisation (where appropriate), other statutory bodies, and persons having an interest in the land to be developed. Section 47 in the Planning Act sets out the applicant’s statutory duty to consult local communities. In addition, applicants may also wish to strengthen their case by seeking the views of other people who are not statutory consultees, but who may be significantly affected by the project.</p>	<p>The Applicant has identified and consulted with parties prescribed by Sections 42, 43, 44, and 47 of the Act. Details of how the Applicant consulted these consultees are provided in Chapter 7 of this Consultation Report. In addition, the Applicant sought the views of a range of groups which were not statutory consultees but were deemed to have a potential interest. A full list of consultees is provided in Appendix 11.</p>
27	<p>The Planning Act and Regulations set out the statutory consultees and prescribed people who must be consulted during the pre-application process. Many statutory consultees are responsible for consent regimes where, under section 120 of the Planning Act, decisions on those consents can</p>	<p>The Applicant engaged with statutory consultees such as the host local authorities Environment Agency, Natural England and Historic England, at an early stage of the Project’s development, prior to the non-statutory consultation.</p> <p>The Applicant continued to engage with these bodies between the non-statutory and statutory consultations as set out in</p>

	<p>be included within the decision on a Development Consent Order. Where an applicant proposes to include non-planning consents within their Development Consent Order, the bodies that would normally be responsible for granting these consents should make every effort to facilitate this. They should only object to the inclusion of such non-planning consents with good reason, and after careful consideration of reasonable alternatives. It is therefore important that such bodies are consulted at an early stage. In addition, there will be a range of national and other interest groups who could be make an important contribution during consultation. Applicants are therefore encouraged to consult widely on project proposals.</p>	<p>Section 6.4 of this Consultation Report. They then consulted these bodies under Section 42 of the Act (see Appendix 16). The Explanatory Memorandum (document reference 3.3) gives more specific detail on the consents proposed to be included in the DCO, and the provisions proposed to be disapplied by the DCO. Detailed discussions are ongoing between the Applicant and consultees such as the Environment Agency, and the Black Sluice Internal Drainage Board regarding the disapplication of consents and appropriate protective provisions.</p> <p>In addition, the Applicant sought the views of a range of groups which were not statutory consultees but were deemed to have a potential interest. A full list of consultees is provided in Appendix 11.</p>
29	<p>Applicants will often need detailed technical input from expert bodies to assist with identifying and mitigating the social, environmental, design and economic impacts of projects, and other important matters. Technical expert input will often be needed in advance of formal compliance with the pre-application requirements. Early engagement with these bodies can help avoid unnecessary delays and the costs of having to make changes at later stages of the process. It is equally important that statutory consultees respond to a request for technical input in a timely manner. Applicants are therefore advised to discuss and agree a timetable with consultees for the provision of such inputs.</p>	<p>The Applicant sought technical input from relevant expert bodies at every stage of the Project's development. This included through the non-statutory consultation set out in Chapter 6 of this Consultation Report and the ongoing engagement set out in Sections 6.3 and 7.4, as well as during the statutory consultation set out in Chapter 7. Technical engagement has been particularly relevant in relation to impacts of the Project, the approach to mitigation, DCO requirements and the EIA. This has involved such consultees as Natural England, the Environment Agency, and the host local authorities including the relevant departments within those authorities, such as highways and heritage.</p>
34	<p>Local authorities have considerable expertise in consulting local people. They will be able to draw on this expertise to provide advice to</p>	<p>The Applicant engaged with host local authorities at an early stage of the Project's development to seek their expertise on these issues. This included ongoing engagement as set out in</p>

	<p>applicants on the makeup of the community and on how consultation might best be undertaken. In addition, many authorities will already have a register of local interest groups and should be able to readily provide applicants with an appropriate list of such groups for the purposes of consultation.</p>	<p>Sections 6.3 and 7.4 of this Consultation Report, as well as engagement on community consultation methods. The Applicant shared a draft Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC) with the host local authorities before formally consulting them on it. As prescribed by Section 47 of the Act, they prepared a SoCC setting out how they proposed to consult the people living in the vicinity of the land on the proposed application and consulted each local authority that fell under Section 43(1) of the Act on it. The regard that the Applicant had to responses received as part of this consultation is provided in Section 6.4 of this Consultation Report. The Applicant sought advice on local interest groups as part of this engagement.</p>
35	<p>The applicant has a duty under section 47 of the Planning Act to prepare a Statement of Community Consultation, and then to conduct its consultation in line with that statement. Before doing so, the applicant must consult on their Statement of Community Consultation with each local authority in whose area the proposed development is situated. This may require consultation with a number of different local authorities, particularly for long, linear projects. In this situation, the local authorities in question should, as far as practicable, co-ordinate their responses. This will ensure that the consultation proposals set out in the Statement are coherent, effective, and work across local authority boundaries.</p>	<p>The Applicant engaged with host local authorities at an early stage of the Project's development to seek their expertise on these issues. This included ongoing engagement as set out in Sections 6.3 and 7.4 of this Consultation Report, as well as engagement on community consultation methods. The Applicant shared a draft Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC) with the host local authorities before formally consulting them on it. As prescribed by Section 47 of the Act, they prepared a SoCC setting out how they proposed to consult the people living in the vicinity of the land on the proposed application and consulted each local authority that fell under Section 43(1) on it. The regard that the Applicant had to responses received as part of this consultation is provided in Section 6.4 of this Consultation Report.</p>
36	<p>Even where it is intended that a development would take place within a single local authority area, it is possible that its impacts could be significantly wider than just that local authority's area - for example if the development was located close to a neighbouring authority. Where an applicant decides to consult people living in a wider area who could be</p>	<p>For the purposes of community consultation, the Applicant defined a zone of consultation. This consultation zone comprised 5km from the energy park and 2km from the grid connection area. This recognised potential wider interest in the Project and is based on experience of similar consultation zones from other projects but recognising the specific characteristics of the rural setting for the Proposed Development.</p>

	affected by the project (e.g. through visual or environmental impacts, or through increased traffic flow), that intention should be reflected in the Statement of Community Consultation.	
41	Where a local authority raises an issue or concern on the Statement of Community Consultation which the applicant feels unable to address, the applicant is advised to explain in their consultation report their course of action to the Secretary of State when they submit their application.	<p>The regard that the Applicant had to comments received as part of this consultation is set out in Section 6.4 of this Consultation Report. Among other things, the local authorities requested or suggested:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Providing more information on which documents will be available at the Public Information Points (PIPs) and how long for; -Changing the time of the online events, to factor in evening meal times; -Extending the consultation period; and -Attending the Heckington Village Show. <p>The Applicant updated the SoCC to reflect these comments, moved the webinars back by an hour, extended the consultation period by two weeks, and ran a stand at the Heckington Show.</p>
50	It is the applicant's responsibility to demonstrate at submission of the application that due diligence has been undertaken in identifying all land interests and applicants should make every reasonable effort to ensure that the Book of Reference (which records and categories those land interests) is up-to-date at the time of submission.	The Applicant has diligently sought to identify all land interests and ensure that the Book of Reference (document reference 4.3) remains up to date. Details of the diligent inquiry process undertaken in identifying land interest are set out in Section 7.2.2 of this Consultation Report.
54	In consulting on project proposals, an inclusive approach is needed to ensure that different groups have the opportunity to participate and are not disadvantaged in the process. Applicants should use a range of methods and techniques to ensure that they access all sections of the community in question. Local authorities will be able to provide advice on what works best in terms of consulting their local communities given their	The Applicant has adopted an inclusive approach to consultation to ensure that different groups have the opportunity to participate and are not disadvantaged by the process. The SoCC included proposals to support the participation of hard to reach groups in the consultation, and the Applicant incorporated feedback from local authorities on this subject into the SoCC. Details of compliance with the approach set out in the SoCC are included in Section 11 of this Consultation Report. Details of the regard the Applicant had to local authority comments on this area are included in Section 6.4 of this Consultation Report.

	<p>experience of carrying out consultation in their area.</p>	<p>The Applicant also recognised the fact that consultees may not be able to access, or be comfortable accessing, consultation materials online. They provided a range of ways for consultees to find out more about the proposals and respond without having to use the internet, including face-to-face exhibitions and webinars. They also accepted enquiries by Freephone, email or Freepost. Additionally, they sent a newsletter (Appendix 12) to all addresses in the consultation zone (Appendix 24).</p>
55	<p>Applicants must set out clearly what is being consulted on. They must be careful to make it clear to local communities what is settled and why, and what remains to be decided, so that expectations of local communities are properly managed. Applicants could prepare a short document specifically for local communities, summarising the project proposals and outlining the matters on which the view of the local community is sought. This can describe core elements of the project and explain what the potential benefits and impacts may be. Such documents should be written in clear, accessible, and non-technical language. Applicants should consider making it available in formats appropriate to the needs of people with disabilities if requested. There may be cases where documents may need to be bilingual (for example, Welsh and English in some areas), but it is not the policy of the Government to encourage documents to be translated into nonnative languages.</p>	<p>For both the non-statutory and statutory consultations, the Applicant shared information at an early enough stage to allow the proposals to be influenced, while being sufficiently developed to provide some detail on what is being proposed. In each consultation, the Applicant developed a clear scope for what could be influenced by consultees. For the non-statutory consultation, this was to support design development and the process of environmental impact assessment by gathering feedback from consultees on the initial proposals.</p> <p>For the statutory consultation, this was to provide feedback on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The Site Layout -Cable route options -Access routes -Their approach to mitigating visual impacts -Their approach to ecological enhancement -A community orchard -A permissive path -The PEIR; and -The consultation. <p>Each phase of consultation activity was timed to ensure that the Applicant could consider feedback in developing the proposals. The Applicant has summarised the regard had to key issues raised during the non-statutory and statutory consultations (Section 47 consultees) in Sections 6.2 and 7.3.2 of this Consultation Report. A full list of issues raised through feedback, and a description of the Applicant's response to</p>

		<p>each issue is provided in Appendices 6, 16 and 18.</p> <p>For each consultation, the Applicant published information written in an engaging and accessible style, setting out what it was possible to influence at that stage, providing accurate information that gave consultees a clear view of what was proposed, and encouraging them to react and offer their views. The newsletters and booklets produced for the non-statutory and statutory consultations are provided in Appendices 2, 13 and 15. These were supplemented by consultation materials designed to present consultation information in other engaging, accessible formats. At the statutory consultation, this included face-to-face exhibitions and webinars. Per the SoCC (provided in Appendix 15), copies of consultation materials were available in alternative accessible formats, such as braille, speaking test and alternative languages, on request.</p>
57	<p>The Statement of Community Consultation should act as a framework for the community consultation generally, for example, setting out where details and dates of any events will be published. The Statement of Community Consultation should be made available online, at any exhibitions or other events held by applicants. It should be placed at appropriate local deposit points (e.g. libraries, council offices) and sent to local community groups as appropriate.</p>	<p>The SoCC acted as a framework for community consultation, setting out the details and dates of events. It was made available on the Project website, from 20 June 2022. This was in line with the Government's confirmation that placing materials online meets the requirement to place the document at deposit points set out in the Infrastructure Planning (Publication and Notification of Applications etc.) (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 (the 2020 Regulations).</p>
58	<p>Applicants are required to publicise their proposed application under section 48 of the Planning Act and the Regulations and set out the detail of what this publicity must entail. This publicity is an integral part of the public consultation process. Where possible, the first of the 2 required local newspaper advertisements should coincide approximately with the beginning of the consultation</p>	<p>The Applicant publicised the proposed application under Section 48 (Appendix 13). The dates of these insertions coincided as closely as possible with the start of consultation given the publication schedules of the relevant local newspapers.</p> <p>The section 48 statutory notice was placed in the following publications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Guardian – 25/06/2022 • London Gazette – 28/06/2022

	<p>with communities. However, given the detailed information required for the publicity in the Regulations, aligning publicity with consultation may not always be possible, especially where a multi-stage consultation is intended.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lincolnshire Free Press – 21/06/2022 and 28/06/2022 • Boston Standard – 22/06/2022 and 29/06/2022
68	<p>To realise the benefits of consultation on a project, it must take place at a sufficiently early stage to allow consultees a real opportunity to influence the proposals. At the same time consultees will need sufficient information on a project to be able to recognise and understand the impacts.</p>	<p>For both the non-statutory and statutory consultations, the Applicant shared information at an early enough stage to allow the proposals to be influenced, while being sufficiently developed to provide some detail on what is being proposed. In each consultation, the Applicant developed a clear scope for what could be influenced by consultees. For the non-statutory consultation, this was to support design development and the process of environmental impact assessment by gathering feedback from consultees on the initial proposals.</p> <p>For the statutory consultation, this was to provide feedback on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The Site Layout -Cable route options -Access routes -Their approach to mitigating visual impacts -Their approach to ecological enhancement -A community orchard -A permissive path -The PEIR; and -The consultation. <p>Each phase of consultation activity was timed to ensure that the Applicant could consider feedback in developing the proposals. The Applicant has summarised the regard had to key issues raised during the non-statutory and statutory consultations (Section 47 consultees) in Sections 6.2, 7.3, and 7.3.2 of this Consultation Report. A full list of issues raised through feedback, and a description of the Applicant's response to each issue is provided in Appendices 6, 16 and 18.</p> <p>For each consultation, the Applicant published a newsletter or booklet written in an engaging and accessible style, setting out what it was possible to</p>

		influence at that stage, providing accurate information that gave consultees a clear view of what was proposed, and encouraging them to react and offer their views. The newsletters and booklets produced for the non-statutory and statutory consultations are provided in Appendices 2, 13 and 15.
72	The timing and duration of consultation will be likely to vary from project to project, depending on size and complexity, and the range and scale of the impacts. The Planning Act requires a consultation period of a minimum of 28 days from the day after receipt of the consultation documents. It is expected that this may be sufficient for projects which are straightforward and uncontroversial in nature. But many projects, particularly larger or more controversial ones, may require longer consultation periods than this. Applicants should therefore set consultation deadlines that are realistic and proportionate to the proposed project. It is also important that consultees do not withhold information that might affect a project, and that they respond in good time to applicants. Where responses are not received by the deadline, the applicant is not obliged to take those responses into account.	At 64 days, the period provided to comment for consultation under Sections 42, 47, and 48 of the Act was significantly greater than the 28 calendar days required to be provided for comments as prescribed by Section 45(2). This includes the two week extension to the consultation period set out in Section 6.4 of this Consultation Report. The Applicant treated all responses received as relevant responses. Responses that were received following the consultation deadline of 1 September 2022 with a postmark dated prior to the consultation deadline were accepted up to 30 September 2022. The Applicant accepted five Section 42 responses that were received after the consultation period closed (one on 2 September, three on 6 September, and one on 22 September). In addition, the Applicant accepted one Section 47 response that was received after the consultation period closed (on 5 September 2022).
73	Applicants are not expected to repeat consultation rounds set out in their Statement of Community Consultation unless the project proposals have changed very substantially. However, where proposals change to such a large degree that what is being taken forward is fundamentally different from what was consulted on, further consultation may well be needed. This may be necessary if, for example, new information arises which renders all previous options unworkable or	None of the changes made in response to feedback from either round of consultation have been to a sufficiently large degree to justify an additional community-wide consultation. Where minor changes were made, directly affected landowners were consulted (see Chapter 8 of this Consultation Report, for example). When considering the needs for additional consultation, the Applicant used the degree of change, the effect on the local community and the level of public interest as guiding factors. In regards to the changes made after the statutory consultation closed, they determined that these did not warrant consulting beyond

	invalid for some reason. When considering the need for additional consultation, applicants should use the degree of change, the effect on the local community and the level of public interest as guiding factors.	those who may be directly impacted by them. The materials used for further consultation are provided in Appendix 22 . The summary of responses received and the Applicant's regard to them can be found in Appendix 23 .
77	Consultation should also be fair and reasonable for applicants as well as communities. To ensure that consultations is fair to all parties, applicants should be able to demonstrate that the consultation process is proportionate to the impacts of the project in the area that it affects, takes account of the anticipated level of local interest, and takes account of the views of the relevant local authorities.	The Applicant has sought to ensure that the consultation process is proportionate to the impacts of the Project in the area that it affects, takes account of the anticipated level of local interest, and takes account of the views of the relevant local authorities. Prior to the statutory consultation, they engaged with relevant local authorities to seek their views on whether its proposals for consultation were proportionate and took into account the likely level of local interest. The Applicant's responses to the local authorities' comments are provided in Section 6.4 of this Consultation Report.
f84	A response to points raised by consultees with technical information is likely to need to focus on the specific impacts for which the body has expertise. The applicant should make a judgement as to whether the consultation report provides sufficient detail on the relevant impacts, or whether a targeted response would be more appropriate. Applicants are also likely to have identified a number of key additional bodies for consultation and may need to continue engagement with these bodies on an individual basis.	Details of the regard that the Applicant has had to consultation responses is set out in Appendices 6, 16 and 18 . As set out in Sections 6.3 and 7.4 of this Consultation Report, the Applicant continued to engage with a range of stakeholders.

12.4 Compliance with the Planning Inspectorate’s Advice Note 14: Compiling the Consultation Report (April 2012)

Table 12.4: Compliance with the Planning Inspectorate’s Advice Note 14

Advice	Compliance
Explanatory text should set the scene and provide an overview and narrative of the whole pre-application stage as it relates to a particular project. It would assist if a quick reference guide in bullet point form, summarising all the consultation activity in chronological order, is included near the start of the report.	This explanatory text is provided in Chapter 3 of this Consultation Report. A timeline of consultation activity is provided in Section 3.6 of this Consultation Report.
The applicant should include a full list of the prescribed consultees as part of the consultation report.	A full list of consultees is provided in Appendix 11 .
A short description of how s43 of the Act has been applied in order to identify the relevant local authorities should be included. This could be supported by a map showing the site and identifying the boundaries of the relevant local authorities.	This short description is provided in Section 7.2.2 of this Consultation Report. A map of the site is provided in Section 3.3 of this Consultation Report.
Where compulsory acquisition forms part of the draft DCO the consultees who are also included in the book of reference for compulsory acquisition purposes should be highlighted in the consolidated list of prescribed consultees.	The Applicant outlines the approach to identifying section 44 consultees at Section 7.2.2 of this Consultation Report; these parties are included in the Book of Reference (document 4.3) .
It would be helpful to provide a summary of the rationale behind the SoCC methodology to assist the Secretary of State’s understanding of the community consultation and provide a context for considering how consultation was undertaken.	This is set out in Chapter 5 of this Consultation Report.
Any consultation not carried out under the provisions of the Act should be clearly indicated and identified separately in the report from the statutory consultation. This does not necessarily mean that informal consultation has less weight than consultation carried out under the Act, but identifying statutory and non-statutory consultation separately will assist when it comes to determining compliance with statutory requirements.	The non-statutory consultation (Chapter 6) is clearly indicated and identified separately in this Consultation Report from the statutory consultation (Chapter 7).
The summary of responses, if done well, can save a significant amount of explanatory text. We advise that applicants group responses under the three strands of consultation as follows: - S42 prescribed consultees (including s43 and s44); - S47 community consultees; and - S48 responses to statutory publicity. This list should also make a further	In preparing Section 7.3 of this Consultation Report, the Applicant grouped the responses under the three strands of consultation – Sections 42, 47 and 48. A summary of responses from prescribed consultees and local authorities, consulted under Section 42, is provided in Section 7.3.1 of this

<p>distinction within those categories by sorting responses according to whether they contain comments which have led to changes to matters such as siting, route, design, form or scale of the scheme itself, or to mitigation or compensatory measures proposed, or have led to no change.</p>	<p>consultation report. A summary of responses from the local community, consulted under Section 47, is provided in Section 7.3.2 of this Consultation Report. None of the consultees who responded identified themselves as specifically responding to the Section 48 Notice. A full list of issues raised through feedback provided, and a description of the Applicant's response to each issue is included in Appendices 16 and 18.</p>
<p>A summary of responses by appropriate category together with a clear explanation of the reason why responses have led to no change should also be included, including where responses have been received after deadlines set by the applicant.</p>	<p>This summary is provided in Sections 7.3.1, 7.3.2, and 7.3.3 of this Consultation Report. A full list of issues raised through feedback provided, and a description of the Applicant's response to each issue is included in Appendices 16 and 18.</p>

202. The Applicant considers that they have met the statutory requirements of the pre-application process. As set out in **Section 3.6** of this Consultation Report, the Applicant has undertaken a programme of non-statutory and statutory consultation activities.

203. At each stage, the Applicant has considered and complied with relevant guidance and advice. The information included in **Sections 12.3 and 12.4** of this Consultation Report supports this through direct reference to DCLG's guidance on the pre-application process and the Planning Inspectorate's advice on compiling the Consultation Report.

204. As well as preparing this Consultation Report, the Applicant has set out how they have complied with guidance and advice on consultation in the Section 55 checklist (**document reference 1.2**), which they have submitted as part of the DCO application.