

John Wheadon
Head of Energy Infrastructure Planning Delivery
Department for Energy Security and Net Zero

11 September 2024

By Email

Dear Mr. Wheadon,

Further to our correspondence on 5 August 2024, and the letter received on 9 August 2024, we respectfully request a revised deadline of Monday, 6 January 2025, for deciding on the application for the Heckington Fen Solar Park Order.

We believe that this additional time is necessary to resolve outstanding matters with the Crown Estate and landowners along the grid route. While we acknowledge this request involves a short extension of a few months, it is a modest period compared to the many years already invested in the project. The extension is essential to conclude the remaining negotiations and ensure the project's successful delivery in support of the UK's net zero objectives.

To date, we have not yet reached an agreement on land areas involving the Crown Estate, though we remain confident that a resolution is achievable. We continue to negotiate terms based on values informed by professional advice. Site reports confirm there are no commercially viable minerals, and we would be happy to share these findings with the Secretary of State if required. While this is a complex and commercially sensitive issue, we remain optimistic that a reasonable settlement will be reached within the extended timeframe. In any case, the Crown Estate will regain access to the minerals after approximately 40 years, meaning they are not sterilised indefinitely. The value of the associated rights is nominal.

Moreover, we are eager to ensure that landowner agreements continue to progress, minimising the need for significant use of compulsory purchase rights. Securing voluntary agreements with landowners is, in our view, critical to ensuring they do not feel the development is being imposed upon them. To date, our community engagement with affected landowners has exceeded statutory requirements, and we are keen to maintain this positive and cooperative relationship. Granting this short extension will enable key agreements to be finalised and promote a collaborative process rather than an adversarial one.

The reasoning behind our request stems from the fact that commercial legal agreements often take time to finalise, even after the agreement of terms. While we are not yet at that stage with the Crown Estate, we are hopeful that key terms can be agreed within the next month. We anticipate that finalising legal documents could be accomplished by the end of 2024, with a few additional days in the new year to secure signatures. During this period, we will also continue to engage with landowner representatives to reach mutually acceptable agreements.

We greatly appreciate your support in helping bring this important project to fruition.

Yours sincerely,



Asif Rehmanwala
Chief Executive Officer
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