

Evidence presented orally at ISH4 by Dr Geoffrey Radley MCIEEM (Retd.) OBE. Interested Party No. 20036053

Agenda item 5c

Both mechanical cutting and grazing of grassland have the potential to compact soils and increase run-off. Studies by the Pontbren Project in Mid Wales have shown this very clearly in relation to commercial levels of sheep grazing. It follows that the cutting and/or grazing regimes need to take soil permeability into account, as well as biodiversity considerations.

Downstream of the Order Limits, Parts of Greatford have long suffered periods of flooding from the West Glen River during times of peak flow so, despite the results of the study reported in updated outline Surface Water Drainage Strategy ((REP5-053), I would suggest that there is a case for adopting a precautionary approach in relation to the risk of increased surface run-off, especially given that the project is now expected to have a 60-year life. There are well established techniques for increasing flood storage in previously canalised rivers, such as the West Glen, whilst also benefitting biodiversity. These include channel diversification and the creation of washlands.

I note that the Environment Agency has plans to undertake catchment management works in this area, but there is no timescale for these. I think that the developers should be asked to contribute to these works, both to ensure a coordinated approach to biodiversity net gain and increased flood storage in the valley of the West Glen and to ensure a precautionary approach to tackling the risk of increased flooding in Greatford.

Agenda item 9b

I note that, in the statement of Common Ground between the applicant and Natural England (REP5-009), it is agreed in line NE022 of Table 4 that there will be no net gain in relation to the biodiversity of the West Glen River. I suggested under agenda item 5 that the developers should be asked to contribute to combined habitat creation and flood storage works in the West Glen valley. Doing so would ensure that there would be net gain and would help ensure that when Biodiversity Net Gain becomes mandatory, it will be possible to deliver the necessary 10% net gain in each of the three areas (habitat, hedgerow and river).

Agenda item 9c

I would like to reinforce the importance of what Dr Williams has said about the importance of ecological monitoring for this development, where a large area of solar panels is being introduced to what was a predominantly arable landscape, both in relation to this development and others like it in the future.

In my written submissions I expressed grave concerns about the adequacy of the mitigation measures proposed for skylarks, and the absence of measures for ground-feeding wintering birds. I accept that there are some uncertainties about how these birds will react to the changes in land use, but proper monitoring would allow the adequacy of the applicant's proposed mitigation measures to be tested and remedial measures to be put in place if, as I fear, they prove to be inadequate.

Agenda item 9d

In relation to the risk of damage to the verges within the Ryhall Pastures and Little Warren verges SSSI, I use that road fairly regularly and I note that the Highways Authority has recently placed stone at the edge of the carriageway in a number of locations where erosion of the verge is already a problem. This indicates that the verges are very vulnerable to increases in traffic. I note that there are some additional protective measures in the revised travel plan (REP5-074), but this is another area where monitoring will be very important, along with a commitment to take remedial action if necessary.