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19 January 2023

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Dear Mr Raywood

**Planning Act 2008 (as amended) – Section 55**

**Adequacy of Consultation Request – Application by Cottam Solar Project Ltd for a Development Consent Order for Cottam Solar Project**

Thank you for your letter dated 13 January 2023. In response to your request for a view from Lincolnshire County Council on the adequacy of consultation and having had regard to Section 42 (Duty to consult), 47 (Duty to consult the local community) and 48 (Duty to publicise) of the Planning Act 2008 (as amended) I can confirm that Lincolnshire County Council is of the view that Cottam Solar project Ltd has carried out adequate pre-application consultation in accordance with the provisions as set out in Sections 42,47 and 48 of the Act.

The applicant commenced early engagement with Lincolnshire County Council from September 2021. Regular meetings with the Planning Lead together with technical meetings with landscape, highways, minerals and waste, fire and rescue and heritage officers have taken place throughout the majority of the pre-application process up until the submission of the Development Consent Order (DCO) application.

Two member engagement briefings have been held with Lincolnshire County Councillors. The first prior to non-statutory consultation with local councillors affected by the project and the portfolio holder for Planning. A second face to face briefing took place with local councillors and members of the Planning and Regulation Committee at the start of the statutory consultation phase.

The applicant conducted a period of non-statutory engagement in Autumn 2021. The County Council responded to the EIA Scoping Opinion request from the Planning Inspectorate and raised a number of issues including heritage, flood risk and economic and growth.

Cottam Solar consulted the Council on the draft Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC) on 19 April 2022. The points raised in response to the draft SoCC were:

“Consider also including “raising awareness” of the project as one of the aims.

Also consider an aim to be showing how the proposals have taken account of consultation.

Presumably as the proposed sites are on the border of different areas, there may be more than the Wildlife Trust to include.

This phrase can cause offence, as groups may be seldom heard rather than hard to reach. Consider using the phrase “seldom heard groups” instead.

Consider offering a call back service / out of working hours time to call for those working / with other commitments during these times.

Consider also requesting that other bodies share the information on their social media channels and other media platforms. This may help in increasing the reach of the communications.

#### **Other feedback on what is missing**

Times and dates of events.

Reference should be made to the times of day these events will be held on / that they will be held at venues which have suitable access arrangements (e.g. ramps / other facilities) to accommodate those with limited mobility.

Lists of seldom heard groups that they plan to reach out to.

Consideration should be made to publishing the “seldom heard groups” as this demonstrates that these stakeholders are fully included in the SOCC process. This also shows that appropriate effort has been made to find out who these groups are and how they will be contacted.

Webinar.

Reference should be made to the time of day for this event to ensure there is availability to those who can only attend after standard working hours. “

The applicant addressed these matters in the final version of SoCC as set out in the applicant’s Consultation Report dated January 2023.

The applicant undertook their Section 42 consultation between 15 June 2022 and 27 July 2022 and allowed six weeks for consultation responses rather than the 28 days minimum period. Lincolnshire County Council made a number of points which are contained in the applicant Consultation Report, Appendix C.5.11 Section Applicant Response dated January 2023.

The applicant's Consultation Report sets out the consultation programme has been reviewed and I am satisfied that Cottam solar projects has undertaken an extensive and inclusive consultation programme in support of their scheme.

I can therefore confirm that Lincolnshire County Council considers that Cottam Solar Project has carried out adequate pre-application consultation in line with Sections 42,47 and 48 of the 2008 Planning Act.

Notwithstanding the above, Lincolnshire County Council has been contacted by 7000 Acres who have raised specific concerns about the adequacy of consultation undertaken and question if Island Green Power has adequately completed its obligations pursuant to section 44 of the 2008 Planning Act. A copy of 7000 Acres comments are attached to this response for information purposes only and whilst Lincolnshire County Council does not wish to make any comment on this, the Planning Inspectorate are invited to consider 7000 Acres comments when deciding to accept the application or not.

Yours sincerely

Neil McBride  
Head of Planning