

**Application by RWE Renewables UK Solar and Storage Limited for an Order Granting Development Consent for the Byers Gill Solar Project**

**Agenda for Issue Specific Hearing 6 (ISH6) on Environmental Matters:**

<b>Hearing</b>	<b>Date and Time</b>	<b>Location</b>
<b>Issue Specific Hearing 6 (ISH6) on Environmental Matters</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Land Use and Socioeconomics</b></li> </ul>	<b>Wednesday</b> <b>27 November 2024</b> Registration and seating available at venue from: <b>09:00</b> Virtual Registration Process from: <b>09:30</b> <b>Event starts: 10.00</b>	<b>Dolphin Centre Horse Market Darlington, DL1 5RP</b> and <b>By virtual means using Microsoft Teams</b> Full instructions on how to join online or by telephone will be provided in advance to those who have pre-registered

**Agenda**

**1. Welcome, introductions, arrangements for the Hearing**

**2. Purpose of the Issue Specific Hearing**

The main purpose of the ISH6 is to undertake an oral examination of Environmental Matters in relation to Land Use and Socioeconomics together with compliance with relevant planning policies.

**3. Land Use and Socioeconomics**

The purpose of this item is to examine issues relating to Land Use and Socioeconomics [APP-032] with particular focus on the methodology used to select the land within the Order Limits of the Proposed Development, including the steps taken to avoid the occupation of Best and Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land. The potential impacts of the Proposed Development and associated necessary mitigation, monitoring, management and compensatory measures and their effectiveness will also be explored.

This discussion will be informed by written submissions received up to this point of the Examination, concentrating on, but not limited to:

- ES Chapter 2 The Proposed Development [APP-025];

- ES Chapter 3 Alternatives and Design Iteration [APP-026];
- ES Chapter 9 Land Use and Socioeconomics [APP-032];
- ES Appendix 2.6 Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan [APP-110];
- ES Appendix 2.10 - Outline Materials Management Plan [APP-114];
- ES Appendix 2.12 - Outline Soil Resources Management Plan [APP-116];
- ES Appendix 9.1 Agricultural Land Classification and Soil Resources [APP-150];
- ES Appendix 9.2 Agricultural Land Assessment Criteria [APP-151];
- Design Approach Document [AS-004];
- Grid Connection Statement [APP-168];
- Community Benefit Fund [REP2-011];
- Darlington Borough Council (DBC) Local Impact Report [REP1-023];
- Durham County Council (DCC) Local Impact Report [REP1-025];
- Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) Local Impact Report [REP1-026]
- Bishopton Villages Action Group (BVAG) Written Representations [REP2-042];
- Applicant's response to ExQ1 [REP2-007];
- Applicant's response to DBC, DCC and SBC Local Impact Reports [REP2-008];
- Applicant's Statement of Common Ground with Redmarshall Parish Council D5 submission;
- Applicant's Statement of Common Ground with DBC D5 submission;
- DBC response to ExQ1 [REP2-031];
- SBC response to ExQ1 [REP2-058];
- ExQ2 [PD-011];
- RWE's responses to ExQ2 D5 submission;
- Post-hearing submissions from several IPs;
- Written Representations submitted at Deadline 2 by several IPs and APs.

Although the ExA has made every effort to review all the documents received at Deadline 5 prior to the publication of this Agenda, please note that the list above may not fully reflect documents received on that Deadline. However, these will be reviewed by the ExA prior to the Hearing. The Applicant and all IPs should be aware that additional questions relating to submissions made at Deadline 5 may be posed by the ExA, as far as these relate to Land Use and Socioeconomics.

The ExA will then ask the Applicant to describe the methodology used to categorise the Agricultural Land in the Order Limits of the Proposed Development and what each class of land represents and, justify the credibility of the adopted technique.

The ExA will then ask the Applicant to present the Agricultural Land Classifications within each of the Panel Areas and the pertinent proportions.

The ExA will then ask the Applicant to explain the effects of the Proposed Development on agricultural land and farming including sheep grazing, mineral resources and food security.

The ExA will then ask the Applicant to illustrate the effects of the Proposed Development on the adjacent community and recreational facilities including horse riding and PRoW.

The ExA will then ask the Applicant to explain how it has minimised the use of BMV lands in the siting of the proposed built structures that require soil stripping and disturbance such as access tracks, substations and compounds.

The ExA will then ask the Applicant to describe the appropriate mitigations, monitoring, management and compensatory measures against the impacts of the Proposed Development and their effectiveness.

The ExA will then ask the Applicant to describe the proposed on-road and off-road cable routes and associated cabling methods and the extent of the affected land area where each practice would be applied.

The ExA will then ask the Applicant to demonstrate how the Proposed Development would safeguard the continuity of operation of the existing recreational assets and community facilities in this locality without hindrance and, support job creation and businesses in the local area.

The ExA will then ask the Applicant to confirm the projected employment number during the construction of the Proposed Development and substantiate the validity of the defunct Homes & Communities Agency's (HCA's) Additionality Guide used, given that it was withdrawn in May 2022 by its replacement body Homes England.

The ExA will then ask the Applicant to set out its approach to the Community Benefit Fund [REP2-011], explaining whether it has taken into consideration the economic activities in the local area alongside comments previously made in relation to its adequacy and reiterate the flexibility in the amount of contribution as confirmed in ISH3 that was conducted on 15 October 2024.

The ExA will give the Local Host Authorities (LHAs) the opportunity to comment. The ExA will particularly be looking for comments from DBC, DCC and SBC.

The ExA will then give an opportunity for other IPs to comments on any issues raised under this point of the agenda.

#### **4. Review of issues and actions arising**

#### **5. Any other business**

#### **6. Closure of the Hearing**

#### **Attendees**

The ExA would find it helpful if the following parties could attend this Hearing:

- the Applicant;
- Darlington Borough Council (DBC);
- Durham County Council (DCC);
- Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC);
- Bishopton Villages Action Group (BVAG);

- IPs who submitted comments on any of the topics proposed to be covered at this Hearing.

All IPs are invited to attend the ISH and make oral representations. However, this is subject to the ExA's power to control the Hearing. Participants may be legally represented if they wish, but the Hearing will be conducted to ensure that legal representation is not required.

The ExA has sought to provide sufficient detail to assist the parties to prepare for the Hearing. The details set out above are indicative and the ExA may find it necessary to include additional Agenda items or to amend the order in which the items are dealt with.

Anyone wishing to attend the Hearing in person, who has not already advised the Case Team of this, should do so as soon as possible by completing the [Event Participation Form](#).

The event will be livestreamed and a link for watching the livestream will be posted on the [project webpage of the National Infrastructure Planning website](#) closer to the Hearing date. IPs and members of the public who wish to observe the Hearing can therefore view and listen to the Hearing using the livestream, or view and listen to the recording, after it has concluded.

### **Arrangements Conference**

Parties who have registered to attend virtually, and Invitees, will receive an email shortly before the Hearing containing a joining link and telephone number to enable participation virtually as necessary. Please join the Arrangements Conference promptly. The Case Team will admit you from the virtual Lobby and register your attendance. The Arrangements Conference allows procedures to be explained and will enable the Hearing to start promptly.

### **Procedure at ISH**

Guidance under the Planning Act 2008 and the Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010 provides that it is for the ExA to probe, test and assess the evidence through direct questions of persons making oral representations at Hearings. Questioning at the Hearing will be led by the ExA. Cross questioning of a person giving evidence by another person will only be permitted if the ExA decides it is necessary to ensure representations are adequately tested or that an IP has had a fair chance to put its case.

Every effort will be made to ensure that the issues will be discussed on the day that they are scheduled for. The hearing will finish as soon as the ExA deems that all those present have had their say and that all matters have been covered. If there are additional matters to be dealt with or there are submissions that take a considerable amount of time at any hearing, it may be necessary to prioritise matters and defer others to written questions.

The agenda is for guidance only. It is not designed to be exclusive or exhaustive. The ExA may add other issues for consideration, may alter the order in which issues are considered and will seek to allocate sufficient time to each issue to allow proper consideration of them. Any lack of discussion of a particular issue at a hearing does not preclude further examination of this issue, including the asking of further written questions.

Please contact the Case Team if you have any questions regarding the arrangements for the hearing or how to participate:

Email: [byersgillsolar@planninginspectorate.gov.uk](mailto:byersgillsolar@planninginspectorate.gov.uk)

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