



## Meeting note

<b>Project name</b>	<b>Steeple Renewables Project</b>
<b>File reference</b>	<b>EN010163</b>
<b>Status</b>	<b>Final</b>
<b>Author</b>	<b>The Planning Inspectorate</b>
<b>Date</b>	<b>10 January 2024</b>
<b>Meeting with</b>	<b>Renewable Energy Solutions (RES)</b>
<b>Venue</b>	<b>Microsoft Teams</b>
<b>Meeting objectives</b>	<b>Project Update Meeting</b>
<b>Circulation</b>	All attendees

### Summary of key points discussed, and advice given

The Planning Inspectorate (the Inspectorate) advised that a note of the meeting would be taken and published on its website in accordance with section 51 of the Planning Act 2008 (the PA2008). Any advice given under section 51 would not constitute legal advice upon which applicants (or others) could rely.

### Proposed Development

Introductions were given by Renewable Energy Solutions (the Applicant), which included a summary on their project portfolio.

The Applicant discussed their proposed development, which would involve the generation of 400MW of solar energy and battery storage of 200MW that would have a 40-year life span. The Applicant confirmed that the red-line boundary for the proposal was not yet defined, however a maximum of 2400 acres of land was under consideration, where 1400 to 1500 acres is anticipated for solar generation. All the land is anticipated to be under one ownership and within the Bassetlaw District Council (BDC) boundary. The river Trent would form the eastern boundary of the site, which would sit on arable farmland around Sturton le Steeple village and would be solely in Nottinghamshire.

The Inspectorate enquired about the relationships with the Local Authorities (LA) and the Applicant confirmed it was meeting Nottinghamshire County Council on 16 January 2024; whilst a meeting with BDC was still being organised.

The Applicant explained that the intention was to develop the proposal within the existing field contours regarding the layout of the solar panels and retaining the existing site features. The Applicant stated that this was at an early stage and would be reviewing the indicative emerging layout, which will be refined via the design process prior to the submission of the Development Consent Order (DCO) application.

The Applicant asked whether the Inspectorate had any advice about the approach to design iteration. The Inspectorate advised that it would consider how the Proposed Development is described in the scoping request and comment on this as part of the

Scoping Opinion as necessary to inform the scope of the Environmental Statement (ES). The Inspectorate advised that the Rochdale Envelope provides guidance on flexibility within DCO applications.

## **Activities to date**

The Applicant discussed with the Inspectorate activities undertaken to date, which included:

- Site visits;
- Engagement with tenant farmers, including negotiating options and/or lease agreements with landowners;
- Ongoing initial surveys and assessments;
- Stakeholder engagement and early informal consultation;
- Early engagement with National Grid has proceeded to an agreement in principal for a 600MW grid connection to the existing West Burton substation and early discussions with IGP regarding interactions and impacts between the grid connections; and
- Meeting with developers of other Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIP) in the surrounding area.

The Inspectorate advised the Applicant to factor in the cumulative impacts of other DCO projects and/or proposals in the region.

## **Consenting Programme**

The Applicant described the indicative project timeline for the Proposed Development:

- Preliminary Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) – end of Q2 2024.
- Statutory consultation – Q3 2024.
- DCO submission – Q1 2025.
- Decision – Q4 2026.

The Applicant and the Inspectorate discussed the prospect of submitting draft application documents for feedback and the likely timescales associated with this. The Applicant, noted the timescales of 6-8 weeks to receive feedback from the Inspectorate on draft documents and would consider this service in the future.

## **Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Scoping**

The Applicant informed the Inspectorate that it would not undertake a formal EIA Screening request.

The Applicant confirmed that an EIA Scoping request was expected to be submitted by spring 2024 with a GIS Shapefile submitted at least 10 working days prior. The Applicant confirmed that it would provide a more definitive submission date in due course.

The Inspectorate advised the Applicant that Advice Note 7 provides further guidance on scoping and sets out the technical specification for the GIS shapefile. The Inspectorate confirmed that submission practicalities could be discussed at a meeting closer to the time and would be happy to do a test run of any file transfer.

## **Environmental Surveys**

Baseline survey work was already underway, including ornithology survey work during 2023.

The Applicant has started research on relevant cumulative sites and will be seeking to agree the approach to cumulative assessment as part of the EIA scoping process.

The Applicant confirmed that it is discussing the approach to Habitat Regulations Assessment with the project ecologist. It will also discuss this with Natural England. The Applicant will be using Natural England's discretionary advice service (DAS) and will consider entering into DAS with other statutory consultation bodies.

## **Stakeholder engagement**

The project was launched in Summer 2023 with outreach including early meetings with tenant farmers and key local stakeholders, the project website was launched and community contact points established.

Early informal consultation commenced from 23 October to 4 December 2023 including two in-person events and one webinar, an online consultation with an online feedback form, newsletters sent to over 2,500 addresses, letters to stakeholders and a media release.

The Applicant met with the local MP as boundary changes will change constituency in the next election.

The Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC) would be confirmed in Spring 2024 detailing the consultation programme for agreement with relevant local authorities.

The Statutory Consultation would commence in Summer 2024 for eight weeks which would encourage formal feedback from the community on the refined plans.

The Applicant confirmed that engagement with tenants and stakeholders will be ongoing following the Statutory consultation period through to DCO submission.

The Inspectorate informed the Applicant of the need to submit the s46 notification before commencing Statutory consultation.

## **Compulsory Acquisition (CA)**

The Applicant informed the Inspectorate that the current expectation is that no CA will be required and that the decision whether there is a need to include CA would be taken in finalising the list of s42 land interest consultees.

The Applicant queried about streamlining the process if there is no CA involved in the Proposed Development and the Inspectorate confirmed it would communicate streamlining options if necessary.

## **Specific decisions/ follow-up required?**

The following actions were agreed:

- The Applicant and the Inspectorate agreed to meet before each statutory milestone and would have the next project update meeting prior to scoping.