Yorkshire Wildlife Trust

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18/07/2023

Yorkshire GREEN Issue Specific Hearing 3 and 4 - Yorkshire Wildlife Trust Response to The Examining Authority's further written questions and requests for information (ExQ2))

On the 25th May 2023 a representative of Yorkshire Wildlife Trust attended Issue Specific Hearing 2 to elaborate on its view on the use of bird diverters as embedded mitigation. Following on from this a number of questions (The Examining Authority's further written questions and requests for information (ExQ2)) were directed to Yorkshire Wildlife Trust. The following summarises our response to these questions:

Q3.0.1 Potential for bird strike with overhead lines on the River Ouse

a) Could YWT submit any evidence to support its position in oral and written submissions that there is the potential for bird strike with proposed new overhead lines crossing the Ouse to cause population effects at a designated site level, specifically in respect of whooper swan associated with the Ouse and Nene Washes and pink-footed goose associated with the Wash and North Norfolk Coast?

YWT response: York Ornithological Club maintain records of Whooper Swans and Pink Footed Geese moving through the York area. It is widely understood that the Whoopers are wintering on the Ouse and Nene Washes and the Pink Footed Geese are from North Norfolk. We would suggest that it is for the applicant to provide evidence to the contrary and if so, where they have come from, given there are so few wintering areas in southern Britain.

b) Does YWT have any survey data for whooper swan and pink-footed goose numbers during spring migration?

YWT response: Yorkshire Ornithological Club hold records, as detailed above.

c) Does YWT wish to comment on the Applicant's survey data for the River Ouse in [APP-130 and APP-131] and summarised in Table 6.2 of [REP4-023]? Attached.

YWT response: No further comments.

d) Does YWT consider that the proposed new overhead line in this location would have a greater potential effect on these bird species than the existing overhead line that is proposed to be dismantled? If so, why?

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YWT response: As they both cross the river corridor, then the level of risk is likely to be similar. However, without daily inspections beneath the lines during the migration season, it is not possible to conclude that the existing lines are not causing strikes. Foxes and other predators remove carcasses very quickly, especially when they learn where the food source regularly occurs.

Q3.0.3 Potential for bird strike – records

Do YWT or the Applicant have any records of bird strike with existing overhead lines on the River Ouse or River Wharfe? If so, provide this material.

YWT response: York Ornithological Club may do.

Q3.0.5 Potential for bird strike: River Wharfe

a) In light of its written submission, can YWT confirm whether or not it considers that the proposed works in the vicinity of the River Wharfe could affect bird features of European designated sites?

YWT response: The Wharfe in that area does not seem to be a major migration corridor, unlike the Ouse. However, we are still concerned about bird strikes in this area, particularly at certain times.

b) Could YWT submit any evidence to support its view that the proposed modification to overhead lines in the River Wharfe corridor could result in bird strikes amongst local populations of goosander, mallard, grey heron and mute swan?

YWT response: No. But clearly the river supports populations of these species and they move along the river and are vulnerable in darkness and poor daytime visibility.

c) Does YWT consider that the existing overhead line in this location would have a greater potential effect on these bird species once modified (as proposed) than it currently does? If so, why?

YWT response: See response to Q3.0.1(d). Without evidence of the current level of bird strikes beneath the lines it is impossible to conclude there is not currently an issue and therefore we must be precautionary and avoid impacts in the first instance, in line with the mitigation hierarchy.

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Q3.0.7 Proposed mitigation: effectiveness of bird diverters

Do YWT or the Applicant hold any evidence about the effectiveness of bird diverters in minimising or avoiding the risk of bird strike in relation to the species identified by YWT, namely: whooper swan, pink, footed goose, goosander, mallard, grey heron and mute swan?

YWT response: We request that the applicant provides evidence from monitoring locations where they have installed bird diverters. It is not within our remit to collect or hold data of this nature.

Please refer to the following research papers for evidence of the effectiveness of diverters:

Frost, D. The use of 'flight diverters' reduces mute swan *Cygnus olor* collision with power lines at Abberton Reservoir, Essex, England . Conservation Evidence (2008) 5, 83-91.

This study indicates reduction in mortality of mute swans due to collision with overhead power lines following the installation of flight diverters. It also recommends that appropriate bird flight diverters are fitted as routine best practise when installing any new overhead power lines.

Gallis, M. & Sevcik, M. Monitoring of effectiveness of bird flight diverters in preventing bird mortality from powerline collisions in Slovakia.

This study observed a 93.5% reduction in the number of fatalities under the marked power lines after line marking compared to the period before installation of line markers. The reactions of birds at greater distances and reduced number of bird victims under marked lines indicate that all tested diverters have a positive effect on reducing the number of avian collisions with power lines.

I trust these comments are helpful.

Kind regards

The Planning Team
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