

Springwell Solar Farm - Responses to ExQ1 from North Kesteven District Council (ID 20054501)

ExQ1	Question to NKDC:	NKDC Response
3. Air Quality		
Q1.3.3	<p>Outline Management Plans</p> <p>The Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan (oCEMP) [APP-0140]; Outline Decommissioning Environmental Management Plan (oDEMP) [APP-0146] and the Outline Construction Traffic Management Plan (oCTMP) [APP-0141] all contain measures that seek to mitigate/ minimise effects on air quality.</p> <p>Are you content with the measures set out in these and are they sufficient to adequately mitigate/ minimise air quality effects?</p>	As set out in paragraph 13.11 of its LIR, NKDC is satisfied that the oCEMP, oDEMP and oCTMP have considered all relevant matters which would be expected to be contained within such documents. The methods being utilised within the documents are what we would expect to minimise negative air quality impacts.
5. Climate Change		
Q1.5.1	<p>Assessment Methodology</p> <p>Are NKDC and LCC content with the methodology used in the climate change assessment in the ES [APP-048] and the assumptions used in ES Appendix 8.1: Raw Data and Emissions Factors [APP-096]?</p>	NKDC is content with the methodology proposed and assumptions in the appendix 8.1.

Q1.5.2	<p>Baseline for Assessment Comparisons</p> <p>In the decision letter for Gate Burton Energy Park (July 2024), the Secretary of State commented that it considered a Combined Cycle Gas Turbine power plant an inappropriate baseline for assessment comparisons.</p> <p>a. Applicant, provide further justification for this assumption in light of the SoS' view.</p> <p>b. What comparison should be used instead?</p>	<p>b. Noting the comment re Gate Burton Energy Park (July 2024), the Secretary of State commented that it considered a Combined Cycle Gas Turbine power plant an inappropriate baseline for assessment comparisons. NKDC agree that the current singular comparison does not fully represent the energy contribution to the grid in the current state and it is recommended that a comparison against other technologies is taken into account as well (e.g. nuclear, on and offshore wind), as was deemed acceptable for the more recent West Burton Solar Park DCO.</p>
7. Cultural Heritage		
Q1.7.1	<p>Requirement 11 - Archaeology</p> <p>HE state in its RR [RR-159] that there needs to be a mechanism whereby the results of additional assessment stage trial trenching undertaken post-DCO have a material bearing upon the subsequent phase of the archaeological mitigation scheme. The Examining Authority (ExA) note in paragraph 4.1.7 of the Outline Written Scheme of Investigation (oWSI) [APP-0148] that Task specific WSIs would be prepared in</p>	<p>b. NKDC considers that Requirement R11(1) approval should be in consultation with the HE only. This is because NKDC has a joint working arrangement with LCC and are content to leave the discharge of this condition with LCC without consultation with NKDC.</p> <p>c. NKDC is content to defer the precise drafting of the wording to R11 with LCC to comment on as the relevant planning authority on this matter.</p>

	<p>consultation with the Local Planning Authority's (LPA) archaeological advisor prior to the carrying out of any archaeological trenching or investigation.</p> <p>a. Applicant, explain with reference to the wording of R11 and R5 how the LPA will be involved in determining the scope for any subsequent archaeological work and additional mitigation measures in the detailed design, as a result of the above archaeological trenching or investigation?</p> <p>b. Should R11(1) include that any approval by the relevant planning authority (LCC) be in consultation with HE and NKDC?</p> <p>c. LCC, NKDC and HE, provide your comments on the proposed drafting of this requirement including any additional/ revised drafting as appropriate with accompanying justification.</p>	
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Q1.7.2	<p>Above Ground Heritage Assets</p> <p>NKDC [RR-305] and LCC [RR-233] raised concern that there is a lack of detailed analysis of built heritage assets. The Applicant submitted revised documents [AS-001, AS-012, AS-013, AS-014, AS-015, AS-018 and AS-019] in response to Section (s) 51 advice issued by the Planning Inspectorate [PD-002].</p> <p>a. LCC and NKDC, for those heritage assets that have been scoped into the assessment, do you agree with the results of the Applicant's assessment?</p> <p>b. LCC and NKDC, can you provide a list within your Local Impact Report (LIR) of built heritage assets that have not been scoped into the assessment which you consider should be scoped in with accompanying justification?</p> <p>c. Applicant, provide justification for the scoping out of the specific farmhouses referenced in the NKDC RR as follows:</p>	<p>a. NKDC do agree with the results of the applicant's assessment for those heritage assets that have been scoped in. To be clear, the Council remains of the view that the approach to the assessment methodology has resulted in several heritage assets of importance being scoped out.</p> <p>b. NKDC has provided comments on the heritage assets which we consider should be scoped into the assessment and accompanying justification at paragraphs 16.11 to 16.13 of the Council's LIR. As the Council's LIR has been approved by Planning Committee (1 April 2025), it is not possible to change our LIR at this stage. By way of assistance, below is a list of the heritage assets which we consider should be scoped into the assessment and why.</p> <p>The applicant has provided additional information on a selected number of above ground heritage assets in its latest SOCG with the Council (to be submitted at Deadline 1) which are relevant to the Council's position. These are Temple Farmhouse, Home Farmhouse, Farmyard north of the Firs and Scopwick Mill. The Council's view on these is included in the list below.</p> <p>Listed Farmhouses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thompsons Bottom Farmhouse and outbuildings (LBEN 1254329/1254407) - The setting of Thompson's Bottom farm and outbuildings is adversely affected. The solar array is located in close proximity to the eastern elevations of the farm complex and has no bespoke mitigation considered. Historic England Advice note 3 – The Setting of Heritage Assets, describes how the approach to and from heritage assets are considerations of their setting. Currently the approach to Thompson's Bottom farm from the east is one of open agricultural fields and views, this will be replaced with a large solar array, with no proposed mitigation, demonstrating an acute impact which needs further assessment. No further details on this asset were provided in the SOCG. The Council considers that this heritage asset should be scoped into the ES. Temple Farmhouse (LBEN 1254328 and 1261359) – Further details have been provided in the SOCG and this can be scoped out. Home Farmhouse (LBEN 1061825) - Further details have been provided in the SOCG and this can be scoped out. Farmyard to the north of The Firs (LBEN 1280661) - Further details have been provided in the SOCG and this can be scoped out.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thompsons Bottom Farmhouse and outbuildings (LBEN 1254329/1254407) • Temple Farmhouse (LBEN 1254328 and 1261359) • Home Farmhouse (LBEN 1061825) • Farmyard to the north of The Firs (LBEN 1280661) 	<p>Other Listed Buildings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scopwick Mill (Grade 2) – Whilst there has been mitigation to move the solar array from the property, there would still be a less than substantial harm on the site due to the landscape impact of the solar array on views to the south from the mill. The impact will be adverse and should be scoped into the assessment. The Council does not agree with the applicant’s conclusions drawn from the additional information provided in the SOCG and considers that it should be scoped into the ES. <p>Non-designated Farmhouses</p> <p>The setting and impact of non-designated farm complexes has not been adequately assessed. The farmhouses that should be scoped into the assessment due to the proximity of the solar array, and impacts on their setting, includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slate House (MLI120942) - Surrounded by the proposed development, as are its associated buildings. Impact on setting not assessed. Located southeast of Ashby Lodge (MLI88323), itself also close to Thompson’s Bottom Farm. • Ashby Lodge (MLI88323) - Close proximity to both Slate House and Thompson’s Bottom Farm. Part of a cluster of farmsteads where impacts on setting require further consideration. • Rowston Top (The Maltings) (MLI120856) - Surrounded by the solar scheme and its approach. Much of its farmland and approaches taken up by the scheme. Possible historical association with Ashby Hall estate (i.e. may have been an estate farm). Its historical significance and relationship to Ashby Hall require further investigation. • Glebe Farm (MLI120941) - Close to Rowston Top and Ashby Hall. Located northwest of Ashby Hall (Rowston Top is northeast). Relationship within the historic landscape and possible estate connections warrant consideration. • Scopwick Lowfield Farm (MLI120841) (located above Kirkby Green) - Surrounded by the solar array, which alters views to and from the farm. Access roads from the south and north also impacted. Some views remain intact (notably two fields southeast between LF08 and LF11 within the order limits).
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8. Draft Development Consent Order (DCO)		
Q1.8.8	<p>Part 6 Miscellaneous and General – Articles 40 and 41</p> <p>NKDC [RR-305] has set out that it has some concerns around the powers that would be afforded under Articles 40 and 41. Please explain fully what these concerns are.</p>	<p>Article 40 states that subject to paragraph (2) and article 41, the undertaker may fell or lop any tree or shrub near any part of the development for maintenance purposes as set out in the dDCO.</p> <p>NKDC note that the government’s guidance on drafting DCOs recommends, in respect of provisions in relation to hedgerows and protected trees, that a schedule of each are provided within the DCO. The Council considers that a similar approach should be taken in respect of non-protected trees and shrubs.</p> <p>As such, NKDC consider that the developer should set out a schedule and provide a map of the location of the trees and shrubs to which this article relates. NKDC consider that this would assist the Council in its duties to investigate any breach of the DCO’s provisions in the interests of expediency.</p> <p>NKDC consider that Article 40 should include provisions to inform the relevant planning authority before any felling or lopping is undertaken and to replace any trees or shrubs that are felled under its provisions.</p> <p>Article 41 is concerned with works to trees subject to a tree preservation order (TPO) that is within the Order limits and was made after November 2024. No TPOs have been made to date. The Council requests a provision is made to ensure that where possible, the undertaker seeks to replace any trees that are removed.</p>
9. Land, Soils and Groundwater		
Q1.9.2	<p>Agricultural Land Classification Surveys</p> <p>The Applicant has undertaken Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) Surveys of the application site [APP-112 to APP-114]. NE [RR-291] has noted that the ES [APP-051, Table 11.12] presents a breakdown of land use across the Order limits,</p>	<p>b. In its LIR at paragraph 18.15, the Council agrees that the ALC surveys have been undertaken by a professional team in agreement with Natural England and are considered reliable.</p> <p>The Council, however, raises some concerns at paragraphs 18.17-18.21 of its LIR over the way that the ES has considered the impact of temporary uses (satellite collector compounds, BESS and Springwell substation and main collector compound) which would result in permanently ‘sealing over’ the land. We note that this is the subject of ExQ1.9.4. In its LIR at paragraph 18.20, the Council also raises a question over whether the provision of temporary green infrastructure in field Tb2 (through the formation of a bund to screen the substation and BESS) and a community growing area would be a further permanent loss of BMV agricultural land due to the change in land use over a 40 year period. In</p>

	<p>but does not specifically categorise any construction compounds or access tracks.</p> <p>a. Applicant, confirm if construction compounds and access tracks have been taken into account in Table 11.12 and if so, where.</p> <p>b. Are LCC and NKDC content that the ALC surveys have been undertaken robustly?</p>	<p>total the temporary green infrastructure could account for a further 20ha loss of BMV land. This is not fully explained in the ES.</p>
Q1.9.5	<p>Cumulative Effects on Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land</p> <p>The Applicant has set out [APP-056, Paragraph 16.8.9.] that it estimates the total area of BMV land within Lincolnshire to be over 410,000ha. Therefore, the Proposed Development would alone occupy some 0.13% of the BMV land in Lincolnshire and with the development of all the solar farms identified in the cumulative assessment [APP-056, Table 16.1] alongside the Proposed Development, approximately 2% of the county BMV land resource will be temporarily used.</p>	<p>These figures are not necessarily recognised by Natural England or DEFRA, but NKDC agree that if verified or confirmed they would be correct.</p>

	Do LCC and NKDC agree with the Applicant's figures?	
Q1.9.6	<p>Soil Management and Mitigation</p> <p>The oCEMP, oOEMP, oDEMP and Outline Soil Management Plan (oSMP) contain a range of measures to manage and mitigate potential effects on soil. NE [RR-291] has raised several concerns with regard to the contents of the oSMP, with regard to soil handling and soil reinstatement.</p> <p>a. Applicant, provide further justification for the need to handle soils in the wetter winter period, and/ or provide further information to illustrate that every effort will be taken to avoid the need to handle soils in a plastic condition.</p> <p>b. Applicant, should the oSMP include a clear commitment to restoring the original ALC grade of all restored agricultural land?</p> <p>c. Applicant, clarify why removal of hardstanding is specifically limited to a 1 metre depth.</p>	<p>e. NKDC broadly agree with these documents, subject to adequate enforcement of all .</p> <p>As explained in paragraphs 4.16-17 of the Council's WR, on a without prejudice basis, the Council will also seek ongoing negotiations with the applicant into mitigation measures for BMV impacts; primarily by way of sheep grazing. We will seek to ensure that the mitigation efforts and outcomes are commensurate with the scale and proportion of impacts on BMV land relative to other solar NSIP projects in Lincolnshire. The Council's agricultural adviser, Landscape, comment that whilst sheep grazing between panels is possible, this area of Lincolnshire is not known for such activity. We are therefore concerned as to the likelihood of this occurring.</p> <p>The applicant's outline Operational Environmental Management Plan (APP-0143) contains only a brief commitment at paragraph 2.4.4 and at present there is no evidence of, or commitment to, securing a contract with a grazier. We would encourage the applicant to prepare mitigation measures with reference to the BRE document 'Agricultural Good Practice Guidance for Solar Farms'. The Council's overall position though is that mitigation by grazing does not in any event wholly overcome the generational change and adverse impact on BMV land arising from the land use change to solar energy generation.</p>

	<p>d. Applicant, explain why reference is made within the ES [APP-051, Paragraphs 11.7.22 and 11.8.24] to the importation of topsoil during restoration and why this could be necessary.</p> <p>e. Are LCC and NKDC content with the measures set out in all of the above management plans?</p>	
Q1.9.11	<p>Unexploded Ordnance</p> <p>The ES [APP-051, Table 11.3] sets out that the risk of Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) will be managed by the implementation of a UXO Risk Management Plan for intrusive works.</p> <p>a. Is it appropriate to prepare the risk management plan post consent?</p> <p>b. Is the requirement for a risk management plan suitably secured in the dDCO?</p>	<p>NKDC do not hold in-house expertise regarding unexploded ordnance. This would be a matter which we would refer to the Defence Infrastructure Organisation or the Emergency Services.</p>
10. Landscape and Visual Impact		
Q1.10.2	<p>Residents and Visitors of Surrounding Villages</p> <p>Are LCC and NKDC satisfied with the Applicant's justification set out in Table 10.2 and Section 10.5 of ES</p>	<p>As set out in the Council's Local Impact Report paragraphs 17.29 to 17.38, NKDC notes the assessment of the impact of the Proposed Development on residential visual amenity within both the ES Chapter 10 and the Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVAA). The Council does not disagree with the methodology or outcome of the RVAA noting that it is aligned with the <i>Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 2/19: Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (TGN 2/19)</i>.</p>

	<p>Chapter 10 [APP-050] for not undertaking a full assessment of visual impacts for:</p> <p>a. Residents and visitors to the villages of Scopwick, Kirkby Green, Blankney and Ashby de la Launde; and</p> <p>b. Residents of the barracks at RAF Digby.</p>	<p>The study area is reasonably justified, with TGN 2/19 not being specific in this regard, stating only: <i>“other development types including potentially very large but lower profile structures and developments such as road schemes and housing are unlikely to require RVAA, except potentially of properties in very close proximity (50-250m) to the development.”</i></p> <p>The applicants RVAA does identify and acknowledge there are a number of residents in nearby properties that will experience significant effects, which we agree with, however these are unlikely to reach the Residential Visual Amenity Threshold (RVAT), where <i>“the Proposed Development would be so ‘over bearing’ or ‘dominating’ at any residential property that the resulting visual effect would widely be regarded to render the property an ‘unpleasant’ or ‘unattractive’ place to live”</i>.</p> <p>The report is supported with well-presented plans and photos, which aid understanding of the process and assessment.</p> <p>The Council notes that the design evolution has ensured that solar arrays have been removed where initially located close to residential properties to achieve a suitable setback distance.</p> <p>The Council recommends that properties at Temple High Grange Cottages, Temple High Grange Farm and Corner Cottage would benefit from additional hedgerow planting along the A15 on land within the DCO red line to mitigate the visual impact of the NGNS.</p> <p>Specifically, NKDC is now satisfied with the Applicant’s justification set out in Table 10.2 and Section 10.5 of ES Chapter 10 [APP-050] for not undertaking a full assessment of visual impacts for:</p> <p>a. Residents and visitors to the villages of Scopwick, Kirkby Green, Blankney and Ashby de la Launde; and</p> <p>b. Residents of the barracks at RAF Digby</p> <p>A concern was identified at the scoping stage that receptors in these villages/settlements would have views of the development and subsequently had the potential to experience adverse visual effects. It was requested that the applicant include an assessment of changes in view from these receptors.</p> <p>Now the scheme is fixed and has responded to potential views from these receptors, there is limited intervisibility between the settlements and the proposals as identified in the LVIA, which is detailed in</p>
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		<p>paragraphs 10.5.18 to 10.5.27 and Paras 10.5.28 to 10.5.30 of the LVIA. We have not identified anything that would contradict the statements in regard to intervisibility made in the LVIA. Therefore, any further detailed assessment would re-iterate the statements made in paragraphs 10.5.18 to 10.5.27 and Paras 10.5.28 to 10.5.30 of the LVIA, and would not be required.</p> <p>The key areas of concern are communities and visitors accessing these settlements on the surrounding road and footpath networks, where there are views of the development identified, and the LVIA confirms that sensitive visual receptors will experience adverse visual effects in these locations.</p>
Q1.10.3	<p>Wider Landscape Character</p> <p>Numerous IPs [including RR-306] raise concern regarding the extent of solar development within the wider Lincolnshire area and the impact this would have on the character of the landscape. However, the ES [APP-050] assessed that significant effects in construction, operation and decommissioning would be limited to tightly defined tracts of Landscape Character Area (LCA) 7 and LCA11.</p> <p>a. Applicant, explain why the wider landscape character at the regional or county scale would not be adversely affected by the Proposed Development alone.</p> <p>b. When considered cumulatively with other solar developments (both above and below the threshold for</p>	<p>b. NKDC has concerns regarding effects on the national, county and regional landscape character areas. Our comments on landscape are set out in our LIR at paragraph 17.22-28 and the Council's landscape consultant's comments attached at Appendix E. An updated version of our landscape consultant's comments can be found at Appendix A of the Council's WR.</p> <p>The mass and scale of these projects combined has the potential to lead to adverse effects on landscape character over an extensive area across these published character areas. The landscape character of the local, and potentially regional area, may be completely altered over the operational period through an extensive area of land use change, and introduction of energy infrastructure in an area that is predominantly agricultural. This would also be an issue when experienced sequentially for visual receptors travelling through the landscape and experiencing these schemes across potentially several kilometres, albeit with gaps between the schemes. However repeated views and presence of large scale solar would combine over time to create a greater perception of change.</p> <p>To calibrate this change to the landscape, these schemes combined, if built, would clearly require the update of any published landscape character assessment, including at a national level (NCA's), so as to include large scale solar as a defining land use characteristic as well as agriculture. This is a clear and marked change to landscape character.</p>

	<p>NSIP development), does the extent of solar development affect the key characteristics of the Central Plateau Landscape Character Type (LCT) or National Character Area (NCA) 47 - Southern Lincolnshire Edge?</p> <p>c. Applicant, in a similar format to Figure 16.8 [APP-072], provide a plan that shows the Order limits and other solar developments in relation to the boundary of LCA7, LCA11, the Central Plateau LCT and NCA47?</p>	
Q1.10.4	<p>Character of Surrounding Villages</p> <p>Do LCC and NKDC agree with the Applicant's position in ES chapter 10 [APP-050] that the changes to the Landscape Character Area (LCA) 7 and LCA11 surrounding Blankney, Scopwick, Kirkby Green, Ashby de la Launde and RAF Digby will not affect the character of these villages? If not, provide an explanation of how the character of these villages would be affected.</p>	<p>Our comments on landscape are set out in our LIR at paragraph 17.22-28 and the Council's landscape consultant's comments attached at Appendix E. An updated version of our landscape consultant's comments can be found at Appendix A of the Council's WR.</p> <p>Development has been offset from these villages, and therefore we would not expect there to be any direct landscape effects. Limited intervisibility has been identified between the development and these villages/settlements, and therefore the perception of solar development from within is likely to also be limited.</p> <p>However, we do have concerns regarding indirect effects to these villages through a change to the context and setting through introducing large scale solar to the surrounding landscape. These are characterised as rural settlements, and therefore we would judge that some of the village character is defined through their context, setting and relationship to a rural landscape, and this would be eroded through being set within a landscape containing more urbanised elements such as solar and associated infrastructure. Perception of development from the surrounding landscape is likely to come from sequential views along roads and footpaths in the surrounding area, as well as a change in land use.</p>

Q1.10.19	<p>Enhancement Opportunities</p> <p>Paragraphs 10.6.6 and 10.6.7 of the ES [APP-050] identify that the North Kesteven Landscape Character Assessment encourages “Replacement hedgerow planting where these have been lost or degraded” for both LCA 7 and LCA 11.”</p> <p>Is the extent of hedgerow planting proposed by the applicant in line with the enhancement opportunities identified in the North Kesteven Landscape Character Assessment?</p>	<p>Our comments on landscape are set out in our LIR at paragraph 17.22-28 and the Council’s landscape consultant’s comments attached at Appendix E. An updated version of our landscape consultant’s comments can be found at Appendix A of the Council’s WR.</p> <p>While the submission includes landscape proposals, as illustrated on Figures 3.3 Green Infrastructure Parameters (multiple sheets) as part of the LVIA Chapter and within Appendix 1 the Outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan, these are of a high level and it would be expected that if the project proceeds, much more detailed plans would to be submitted and subsequently agreed with the appropriate authority prior to the commencement of any works. This would include clear detail of the areas of landscape mitigation, location and types of planting (species), as well as number, density and specification. This should be secured through the DCO, along with management of these newly planted areas for a duration to promote appropriate establishment.</p> <p>Any detailed planting scheme would include for the areas identified on the Green Infrastructure Parameters as being planted with new hedgerows. And while we agree that hedgerow planting is aligned with the enhancement opportunities identified in the North Kesteven Landscape Character Assessment for both LCA 7 (Limestone Heath) and LCA 11 (Central Clays and Gravels), and we accept that hedgerow planting can be an effective way to screen and integrate development proposals while adding valuable assets in both landscape and ecological terms; this needs to be carried out in a way that is sensitive to the existing landscape, and not simply to screen views of the proposals. New hedgerow planting can screen or block currently open views, such as along the A15, foreshortening the view and altering both the character and visual experience from receptors.</p>
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11. Noise and Vibration		
Q1.11.1	<p>Methodology</p> <p>Are NKDC content with the methodology used in the noise and vibration assessment in the ES [APP-052] and the assumptions [APP-052, Paragraphs 12.4.16 to 12.4.37] used for: construction plant items and activities; construction and decommissioning traffic; and operational plant noise?</p>	<p>The Council is satisfied with the applicant's methodology as stated at paragraph 19.12 of its LIR. The assumptions made are reasonable.</p>
12. Population		
Q1.12.1	<p>Skills and Education Package</p> <p>NKDC [RR-305] state that it is seeking a skills and education package.</p> <p>a. NKDC, do you consider this to be necessary for mitigation of impacts or is it considered enhancement?</p> <p>b. NKDC, do you consider that this should be in addition to the measures set out in the outline Employment, Skills and Supply Chain Plan [APP-0153] and R16 of the dDCO [APP-012]?</p>	<p>a. Section 5.18 of EN1 recognises that solar farms will have socio-economic impacts which should be assessed and mitigated, where appropriate. At paragraph 5.13.11 it advises the SoS to consider any relevant positive provision the applicant has made or is proposing to make to mitigate impacts (for example through planning obligations) and any legacy benefit that may arise.</p> <p>The outline Employment, Skills and Supply Chain Plan is currently a brief document containing limited detail about how the applicant will deliver on the proposed mitigation at post-decision stage. We note that an updated version will be required in discharge of Requirement R16. As stated at paragraph 20.19 of its LIR, the Council anticipates that there are likely to be financial elements to the discharge of this document (potentially the funding of apprenticeships and educational/higher education placements) where a s106 agreement will be required. The outline Employment, Skills and Supply Chain Plan is not clear on how the proposed activities (set out in Section 2 of the plan) will be funded. For example, at paragraph 2.3.1 the plan refers to apprenticeships, training and upskilling opportunities which may require funding to be initiated.</p> <p>There are now precedents arising from other solar farm DCOs. The Longfield Solar Energy Limited (LSE) have entered into a Community Benefit Agreement with Essex County Council to provide £2.1million in education, supply chain, skills and employment funding across the lifetime of the Longfield scheme,</p>

	<p>c. Has there been any discussion regarding a possible s106 agreement? If so, provide an update.</p>	<p>with training and apprenticeships in the renewables sector receiving £50,000 a year. Within North Kesteven District, a very recent DCO decision on Heckington Fen solar farm granted permission in 2024 subject to a s106 agreement. The s106 provided £50,000 per year for the life of the project for the purpose of increasing employment, education and skills opportunities in the local area for individuals in the renewable energy, sustainable farming/agricultural diversification, ecology and sustainable development sector, and which included the provision of training and apprenticeships and education bursary payments.</p> <p>There is potential across Lincolnshire for upskilling the local workforce as well as providing training, bursaries and apprenticeships to offer legacy opportunities in renewable energy education. In order to implement the Employment, Skills and Supply Chain Plan there would be some initial startup costs for such initiatives. A financial skills and education package would offer cumulative opportunities across both North Kesteven and the wider Lincolnshire region offering a specific legacy for scale of development proposed.</p> <p>b. NKDC considers that the s106 agreement would be in addition to the measures set out in the outline Employment, Skills and Supply Chain Plan and R16 of the dDCO for the reasons given above. It would assist in providing a beneficial effect after development.</p> <p>c. NKDC and LCC have requested a s106 agreement to fund some of the proposals contained within the outline Employment, Skills and Supply Chain Plan. NKDC has been party to a new SOCG with the applicant (to be submitted at Deadline 1) which includes the provision for a skills and employment financial package. This is acknowledged and welcomed. The Council will work constructively with the applicant to progress a s106 agreement for submission to the Examination.</p>
Q1.12.3	<p>Stepping Out Network and Effects on Tourism</p> <p>ES Chapter 13 [APP-053] acknowledges that significant visual effects from PRoW and the Stepping Out Network may adversely impact the number of visitors to the area in</p>	<p>a. Users of PROW in rural areas, particularly well-used trails such as the Stepping Out Walks network, are particularly susceptible to changes to their view. This is because these users are typically there due to enjoy the landscape and setting, which is often the purpose for being there. Any changes in view would therefore be more pronounced for these users. This should be judged in the context of the moderate/ major adverse visual effects for footpath users identified in the LVIA within ES chapter 10 which are Significant effects in EIA terms.</p>

	<p>the operational phase. However, the Applicant's position [APP-053, Paragraph 13.7.26] is that as other routes of the network may continue to be used, the residual impacts associated with loss of visitors such as the potential loss of business will not likely be impacted.</p> <p>a. Do you agree with the Applicant's conclusion of no significant effect on tourism related to the stepping out walks considering there are moderate/ major adverse visual effects for footpath users identified in ES chapter 10 [APP-050]?</p> <p>b. Is any evidence available that quantifies how regularly the PRoW and the Stepping Out Network within and adjacent to the Order limits are used?</p>	<p>This section of the Stepping Out network is very popular and averages approximately 10,000 visits a year. The Blankney/Scopwick Stepping Out route also forms part of the well-established Spires & Steeples long distance trail which is advertised nationally and attracts many thousands of visitors to the district. Any temporary closure will potentially impact the number of visitors to the area while changes to landscape may have longer term implications for the attractiveness of both the local Stepping Out Route and the Spires and Steeples trail. It may be necessary to re-route or close part of this trail and there will be costs associated with ensuring any changes are adequately publicised. Walking in the countryside is a key selling point for the District and is vital for both the wellbeing of residents and tourism. The short-term impacts of temporary disruption to established routes and the longer-term impacts of changes to landscape and therefore relative attractiveness of the route are significant.</p> <p>Walking is identified as a key reason for visiting North Kesteven in the Council's Tourism Strategy 2024-29. The promotion of walking routes is recognised as an ongoing action within the Tourism Action Plan.</p> <p>b. The Stepping Out Walks network across North Kesteven cover over 200 miles of walking trails and are managed by Hill Holt Wood (HHW) on behalf of the Council. Quarterly we receive footfall data which is gathered from footfall counters which are placed at points on the actual walks so we can collect precise data to record footfall.</p> <p>Across the whole Stepping Out Network for 24/25 we had 25,0283 people using the walks as they wish. A further 1,347 people used the network on led walks organised by NKDC and HHW.</p> <p>To break down the walks to include the Spires and Steeples routes: within them 5 walks cut across large sections of the route accounting for a footfall of 30,050 users in 2024/25. A total of 12,108 people walked across the Scopwick and Blankney routes alone.</p> <p>Stepping Out walk footfall counter data for 2024/25:</p>
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2024-25	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March		Sub Total
Hill Holt Wood Total	14091	22887	23593	25741	24535	20725	18143	19527	22393	15555	19401	24991		251582
Countryside NK Events	0	34	6			32	25	20	15	20	20	8		180
Walking Festival	0	0	1167	0	0	0								1167
Stepping Out Network	14091	22853	22420	25741	24535	20693	18118	19507	22378	15555	19401	24991		250283
Skellingthorpe Old Wood	843		912	351	361	223	561	882	1111	1737	746	634		8361
Aubourn & Haddington			846	2331	1221	1437	1456	1944	1737	373	758	1007		13110
River Witham				470	716	529	560	610	577	600	580	678		5320
Thopre on the Hill & Tunman		752	441	774	964	598	705	691	814	603	488	764		7594
Haverholm/Eastern Slea	90	454	211	331	201	120	202	148	210	220	268	223		2678
Slea Riverside Walk			171	50	102	262	221	181	230	158	121	262		1758
Rauceby	690	881	721	609	558	894	379	620	980	740	791	1021		8884
Welbourn	315	370	410	441	565	479	328	468	320	364	542	577		5179
Wellingore & Temple Bruer	439	697	467	482	665	442	471	684	476	535	708	551		6617
Bloxholm & Brancewell														0
Car Dyke by Wood & Fen	133	766	958	1012	1040	1241	728	671	713	612	806	772		9452
Martin/Metheringham barff	418	658	613	426	525	413	488	332	408	446	416	428		5571
Nocton & Dunstan	301	134	219	120	212	424	144	360	241	334	222	208		2919
Blankney	44	64	927	710	721	969	902	836	592	447	430	563		7205
Scopwick & Kirkby Green	231	517	300	574	633	274	296	328	506	370	440	434		4903
Culverthorpe	998	2769	1330	1558	1363	1091	1041	1555	1459	1154	857	1068		16243
Heckington	1439	4657	1348	1236	1134	1298	1398	902	1218	1104	978	1544		18256
Hill Holt Wood	640	401	825	439	385	681	599	568	301	537	484	585		6445
Big Wood	832	1015	801	263	617	396	345	540	496	754	647	493		7199
Lollycocks	2276	2591	4832	6682	7251	4168	3894	2131	3640	3751	4078	5012		50306
Millennium Green	4402	6127	6088	6882	5301	4754	3400	5056	6349	716	5041	8167		62283

Along with the footfall counters we also get download / page views from the walking app AllTrails. We have access to the data from the app which allows us to collect data from 40 advertised walks which are promoted through their app. We can then see how many people visit the app to view or download our Stepping Out walks. In 2024/25 there were 65,805 people who viewed our walks on the app. 3865 of these views were of the main 4 routes around Scopwick. 3499 people viewed the Spires and Steeples route which is advertised on the AllTrails app in 4 sections.

All Trails Page View Data 2024/25

All Trails Data	April - June 24	July - Sept 24	Oct - Dec 24	Jan - March 25
			Page views	
Skellingthorpe Old Wood	2800	1900	2100	3400
Nocton and Car Dyke	1500	1300	1100	1400
Sleaford Riverside Walk	1200	1000	644	897
River Witham Circular	767	513	442	816
Lincoln Edge	1100	701	466	917
South Rauceby and Rauceby H	1287	515	313	470
Martin and Metheringham Barff	662	443	396	625
Thorpe on the Hill	1210	393	434	709
Navenby and the viking way	868	577	395	813
Culverthorpe hall and gardens	203	192	505	738
High Wood and North Rauceby	760	527	439	463
Aubourn Countrytrail	385	351	179	421
Temple Brue and Knights Temp	232	554	374	635
Blankney	412	265	297	356
Culverthorpe Parkland	615	583	187	190
Nocton Wood	328	203	207	530
Heckington Fen	595	520	346	471
Morton and Tunman Wood	643	508	313	709
Bassingah, Carlton & norton D	465	402	284	562
Dunston Village	477	364	375	383
Bloxholme and Digby	247	166	160	206
S&S Part 4	336	204	105	241
Tattershall Bridge	202	169	132	161
Scopwick	212	209	127	130
Billinghay and Walcott	258	129	73	154
S&S Part 3	297	146	56	206
Doddington	235	119	75	131
Welbourn Parish	210	54	60	278
S&S Part 2	241	152	56	181
Welbourn Village	294	152	60	194
Ridges and Furrows Part 1	179	87	105	83
Aubourns Two church trail	178	198	233	292
Ridges and furrows Part 3	89	64	40	60
Kirkby green	108	71	35	44
Ridges and furrows Part 2	78	44	63	111
Spires and Steeples Part 1	474	357	139	308
Aubourn and South Hykeham	250	213	99	190
Ridges and Furrows part 4	230	139	92	161
Hill Holt Wood	136	81	49	114
Millennium Green	N/A	N/A	3	169