BEACON FEN
ENERGY PARK

Planning Inspectorate Reference: EN010151

Statement of Common Ground Between the Applicant and the Forestry Commission

Document Reference: 8.14

October 2025

The Planning Act 2008
The Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedure) Regulations 2009 - Regulation 5(2)(a)
The Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (SI 2017/572) – Regulation 14

Quality information

Prepared by	Checked by	Verified by	Approved by
AR	MS		MS

Revision History

Revision	Revision date	Details	Authorized	Name	Position
1	14.10.2025	Deadline 2 updates	14.10.2025	MS	TD

Abbreviation	Description
AC	Alternating Current
AIS	Air Insulated Switchgear
Applicant	Beacon Fen Energy Park Ltd
BBC	Boston Borough Council
BESS	Battery energy storage system
CCTV	Closed circuit television
DC	Direct Current
DCO	Development Consent Order
EA	Environment Agency
ES	Environmental Statement
GIS	Gas Insulated Switchgear
HOT	Head of Terms
HV	High Voltage
IDB	Internal Drainage Board
LCC	Lincolnshire County Council
LFR	Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue Service
LLFA	Local Lead Flood Authority
Low Carbon	Low Carbon Ltd
MW	Megawatts
NE	Natural England
NGR	National Grid Reference
NKDC	North Kesteven District Council
NPSs	National Policy Statements
NSIP	Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project
OBSMP	Outline Battery Safety Management Plan
OCEMP	Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan
OCTMP	Outline Construction Traffic Management Plan
ODEMP	Outline Decommissioning Environmental Management Plan
OLEMP	Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan
Order	The Beacon Fen Energy Park Order
PCU	Power Conversion Unit
PINS	Planning Inspectorate

PEIR	Preliminary Environmental Information Report
Proposed Development	The entire development to be constructed and operated within the Site, as set out in Schedule 1 of the draft DCO
PRoW	Public Right of Way
PV	Photovoltaic
RR	Relevant Representation(s)
SLR	SLR Consulting, formerly Wardell Armstrong (WA)
SoCC	Statement of Community Consultation
SoCG	Statement of Common Ground
SoS	Secretary of State
The Site	The entire Order Limits or red line boundary located approximately 6.5 km northeast of the village of Sleaford and 2.5 km north of Heckington

List of Outstanding Issues and Information

Outstanding issue/info.	Section/Paragraph	Responsibility	Action

1. Introduction

1.1 Overview

1.1.1 This Statement of Common Ground ('SoCG') with the Forestry Commission (Document Ref: 8.14) has been prepared on behalf of Beacon Fen Energy Park Ltd (the 'Applicant') in support of an application for a Development Consent Order ('DCO'), that has been submitted to the Secretary of State (the 'SoS') for the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, under Section 37 of the Planning Act 2008 (the '2008 Act').

1.1.2 The Applicant is seeking development consent for a ground-mounted solar photovoltaic ('PV') electricity generation and battery energy storage system ('BESS'), together with associated grid connection infrastructure (the 'Proposed Development'), at an area sited approximately 6.5 km northeast of the village of Sleaford and 2.5 km north of Heckington (the 'Site'). The Proposed Development would have a generation capacity of approximately 400 megawatts ('MW') of electricity, with a 600MW BESS.

1.1.3 The Site corresponds to the entire Order Limits and represents the entire land area required for construction, operation and decommissioning of the Proposed Development. It is made up of the Solar Array Area (comprising the solar PV and BESS infrastructure) the Cable Route Corridor (comprising an electrical connection from the Solar Array Area to the Bicker Fen National Grid 400kV substation) and the Bespoke Access Corridor (for a bespoke access from the A17 to the Solar Array Area). This is termed the Bespoke Access Road.

1.1.4 The Proposed Development falls within the definition of a 'Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project' ('NSIP') under Section 14(1)(a) and Sections 15(1) and (2) of the 2008 Act, as it is an onshore generating station in England that would have a generating capacity greater than 50MW electrical output. As such, a DCO application is required to authorise the Proposed Development in accordance with Section 31 of the 2008 Act.

1.1.5 The DCO, if made by the SoS, would be known as 'The Beacon Fen Energy Park Order 202[]' (the 'Order').

1.2 The Applicant

1.2.1 The Applicant is a subsidiary of Low Carbon Ltd ('Low Carbon'). Low Carbon is a privately-owned global renewable energy company.

1.3 The Site

1.3.1 The Site represents the entire Order Limits and is located east of Sleaford in Lincolnshire. It extends to approximately 758ha and comprises of three functional areas: the Solar Array Area, the Cable Route Corridor and the Bespoke Access Corridor.

Solar Array Area

1.3.2 The Solar Array Area is approximately 529ha in size and located to the north of Heckington, centred at the National Grid Reference ('NGR') 514682 347825. The Solar Array Area is located wholly within the administrative areas of North Kesteven District Council ('NKDC') and Lincolnshire County Council ('LCC').

1.3.3 The Solar Array Area predominantly comprises agricultural land in arable use, divided by ditches with sparse tree cover that is limited to small woodland blocks and scattered hedgerow trees. A small reservoir is located in the south-west of the Solar Array Area.

1.3.4 The Solar Array Area is bound to the south, west and north by local highways, and bound to the east by the Car Dyke. Public Right of Way ('PRoW') Ewer/12/1 extends across the north-eastern corner of the Site, close to the northern Site boundary. There are no other PRoW within the Solar Array Area.

1.3.5 Villages in proximity to the Solar Array Area include:

- Howell immediately to the south-west, with Heckington c. 1.7km beyond;
- Ewerby Thorpe immediately to the west, with Ewerby c. 1.1km beyond;
- Anwick c. 2.7km to the north-west;
- North Kyme c. 2.4km to the north; and
- South Kyme c. 1.5km to the east.

Cable Route Corridor

1.3.6 The Cable Route Corridor is approximately 183 ha in size and extends c. 13km south-east from the Solar Array Area to Bicker Fen substation, at NGR TF 19684 38599. The Cable Route Corridor is located wholly within the administrative area of LCC. The majority of the Cable Route Corridor is located within the administrative area of NKDC, however the southern section is located within BBC's administrative area.

1.3.7 Land use within the Cable Route Corridor is predominantly agricultural. A number of local highways cross the Cable Route Corridor, and the A17 crosses east to west within the north-west section of the Corridor. The railway linking Heckington west to Sleaford and east to Swineshead intersects the mid-section of the Corridor. There are a number of PRoW within the Cable Route Corridor, including one alongside the South Forty Foot Drain which also crosses the Cable Route Corridor.

Bespoke Access Corridor

1.3.8 The Bespoke Access Corridor is approximately 45.4 ha in size comprising predominantly agricultural land and extends approximately 3km south-west from the Solar Array Area to the A17. The Bespoke Access Corridor is located wholly within the administrative areas of LCC and NKDC.

1.3.9 The Bespoke Access Corridor has been refined during the pre-application stage, informed by results from environmental surveys and consultation feedback.

1.3.10 Asgarby Road and Heckington Road crosses the Bespoke Access Corridor and there are four PRoW located within the route.

1.4 The Proposed Development

1.4.1 The main components of the Proposed Development are summarised below and defined in Schedule 1 of the **Draft DCO** (**APP-039**).

Solar Array Area

1.4.2 The Solar Array Area consists of solar PV panels and modular ground-mounting structures. The height of the panels considered will be up to 3.9m above ground level in fields to the east and 3.5m above ground level in fields to the west, south and an isolated field in the north. The proposal is for a fixed (i.e., static) panel orientation, facing due south which is commonly seen on existing UK solar farms, and angled 10° to 45° from horizontal. Supporting infrastructure includes inverters, combiner boxes, transformers and switchgear converting the Direct Current ('DC') to Alternating Current ('AC') and stepping up the voltage so it can be exported to the National Grid. An inverter, transformer and switchgear comprised together is termed a Power Conversion Unit (PCU).

1.4.3 A 600MW BESS adjacent to the Onsite Substation is included in the Proposed Development within the Solar Array Area. This will allow the electricity generated by the panels to be stored on site at times when grid demand is low, then exported at times of higher demand. The BESS containers and switch rooms are anticipated to be up to 8m x 3m in size, with a height of up to 4.5m.

1.4.4 Low voltage onsite electrical cabling is required to connect the PV modules and BESS to the inverters, and the inverters to the onsite transformers. Higher voltage cables are required between the transformers and the switchgear and from switchgear to the substation.

1.4.5 A new Onsite Substation is proposed and would have up to four High Voltage (HV) transformers with a maximum footprint of no more than 40,000m2 (e.g. 250m x 160m (or 200m x 200m)) and a height of up to 13m). The Onsite Substation will include a 33kV switchroom, control and storage buildings that would house office space and welfare facilities, as well as operational monitoring and maintenance equipment and equipment for reactive compensation and/or harmonic filtering. The design control building and office/welfare will be defined as part of detailed design.

1.4.6 The perimeter fence would likely comprise standard post and wire, deer fencing up to 3m tall around the Solar Array Area. Security fencing, up to 3.4m will be installed around the substation compounds and, possibly, other infrastructure / compounds. Acoustic fencing, up to 4m tall, may be required around the BESS, subject to the detailed design and layout.

1.4.7 Mounted internal-facing closed circuit television (CCTV) systems will likely be deployed around the perimeter of the operational areas of the Site; anticipated to be 5m high. The CCTV cameras would have fixed view sheds and will be aligned to face along the fence. Motion detection security lighting will be used around the electrical infrastructure and potentially at other pieces of critical infrastructure.

1.4.8 During construction, temporary construction compounds will be required, as well as temporary roadways, to enable access to all the land within the Site.

Localised earthworks to form suitable development platform for the substation and BESS will also be required.

1.4.9 There will be one primary access on the western edge of the Solar Array Area and a secondary access to the north, both of which will allow larger vehicles (including first responder vehicles) to access the BESS and Onsite Substation. Tertiary operational access primarily for smaller vehicles is provided to the north west and south.

1.4.10 PRoW Ewer/12/1 is being extended in a south and westerly direction as a permissive path terminating in the vicinity of Ewerby Thorpe, and will be in place for the operational duration of the Proposed Development. The exact route of the permissive path will be determined via the discharge of a requirement in the **Draft DCO (APP-039)**, but is anticipated to run in a south easterly direction along Car Dyke then heading south west on the north side of Hodge Dike. An undetermined number of footbridges (unlikely to be more than eight in number) to cross existing watercourses will be required and will require the usual water course crossing agreements to be sought with the relevant Internal Drainage Board (IDB) in parallel with the discharge of the requirement.

Cable Route

1.4.11 The Cable Route running between the Solar Array Area and the Bicker Fen 400kV Substation will be constructed through trenched methods and, where required, trenchless methods.

1.4.12 During construction, temporary construction compounds will be required approximately every 1-3 km, as well as temporary roadways, to enable access to all land. It is anticipated that there will be 6 main compounds that are distributed at approximately equal distances along the cable route to facilitate proper construction management. Smaller temporary compounds may also be located anywhere within the final working area.

1.4.13 Vegetation and hedgerows lost during construction of the Cable Route will be re-instated where possible subject to easement restrictions.

Bespoke Access Road

1.4.14 A dedicated access from the A17 to the Solar Array Area is required. It will be constructed in advance of material construction commencing on the Solar Array Area and will facilitate construction in that area. During construction, temporary construction compounds will be required which may be anywhere along the route.

1.4.15 The Bespoke Access Road will likely be the last component of the Proposed Development to be removed as it will be used to facilitate decommissioning of the Solar Array Area. Whilst it is assumed for the **Environmental Statement ('ES') (APP-050 to APP-285)** that the road will be removed (unless otherwise stated in the relevant chapter), it is possible that engagement with the landowners at that time will establish a preference for it to be retained. Optionality has been deliberately retained in the Application to facilitate such a scenario.

1.4.16 There will be no permanent lighting installed and access will be controlled through gates at all stages.

1.4.17 Vegetation and hedgerows lost during construction of the Bespoke Access Road will be re-instated following decommissioning subject to the road being removed.

In any or all of the above areas

1.4.18 Along with the above, in any or all of the three areas, the Proposed Development will include the following (subject to certain requirements):

- Access tracks of between 3.5m to 9m width for construction access and routine maintenance when operational. Access tracks located adjacent to drainage ditches will incorporate the necessary ecological, Environment Agency (EA) and/or Internal Drainage Board (IDB) buffers where required;
- Boundary treatments, means of enclosure, security measures, and paths;
- Landscaping and reinstatement planting and Biodiversity Net Gain related habitats;
- Flood resilience measures including swales and storm water attenuation, and works to existing irrigation systems;
- Utility diversions;
- Bunds, embankments, protective works to buildings, maintenance and improvement of streets; and
- Construction related (and decommissioning related) work sites.

Bicker Fen Substation Works

1.4.19 The extension of Bicker Fen substation will include a new generation bay, a new generation bay control room and a perimeter access road. A new generation bay will also include electrical equipment required for connection to the transmission system.

1.4.20 National Grid Electricity Transmission plc ('NGET') have requested that there be optionality within the design of the extension to Bicker Fen substation. The two design options that have been assessed in the **ES (APP-050 to APP-285)** and included in the Application are: Air Insulated Switchgear ('AIS') and Gas Insulated Switchgear ('GIS').

Draft Development Consent Order

1.4.21 The Proposed Development is described in detail in Schedule 1 to **the Draft DCO (APP-039)**, and the areas in which each component (the 'Work Numbers') may be constructed are shown on the **Works Plans (APP-010)**.

1.4.22 The Proposed Development is split into 10 Work Numbers as follows:

- Work No. 1 – a ground mounted solar photovoltaic generating station with a gross electrical output capacity of over 50 megawatts;
- Work No. 2 — a battery energy storage system compound and associated works (including fire safety infrastructure);
- Work No. 3 — development of an onsite substation and associated works;
- Work No. 4 — works in connection with electrical cabling and associated compounds;
- Work No. 5 — works to the existing Bicker Fen National Grid substation to create a new generation bay and substation extension;

- Work No. 6 — various ancillary works relating to the Solar Array Area, including cabling, fencing, security features, access tracks, watercourse crossings and landscaping and biodiversity mitigation measures;
- Work No. 7 — construction and decommissioning compounds in connection with Work Nos. 1, 2 and 3;
- Work No. 8 — works to create the Bespoke Access Road;
- Work No. 9 — areas of habitat management; and
- Work No. 10 — works to facilitate access to Work Nos. 1 to 9.

1.4.23 In addition, Schedule 1 to the **Draft DCO (APP-039)** lists other associated works (referred to as "further associated development") which may be carried out in connection with the construction of Work Nos. 1 to 10.

1.5 The Development Consent Order Process

1.5.1 As a NSIP, the Applicant is required to seek a DCO to obtain planning and other powers to construct, operate and maintain the generating station, in accordance with Section 31 of the 2008 Act. Sections 42 to 48 of the 2008 Act govern the consultation that an applicant must carry out before submitting an application for a DCO and Section 37 of the 2008 Act governs the form, content and accompanying documents that are required as part of a DCO application.

1.5.2 An application for development consent for the Proposed Development has been submitted to and accepted for examination by the Planning Inspectorate ('PINS') acting on behalf of the SoS. PINS is now examining the Application and will make a recommendation to the SoS, who will then decide whether or not to make (grant) the DCO.

1.6 Purpose of this Document

1.6.1 This document is intended to summarise clearly the agreements reached between the Applicant and the parties on matters relevant to the examination of the Application, in order to assist the Examining Authority to understand progress of negotiations between the parties. It has been prepared having regard to the guidance in *Planning Act 2008: Pre-examination stage for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects* and *Planning Act 2008: Examination stage for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects* (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, April 2024).

1.6.2 It is intended that the SoCG will provide information for the examination process, facilitating a smooth and efficient examination and managing the amount of material that needs to be submitted.

1.7 Role of Key Stakeholders

1.7.1 This SoCG refers to communications and correspondence with the Forestry Commission. The role of the Forestry Commission and how it relates to the Application is summarised, below.

1.7.2 The Forestry Commission is a Non-Ministerial Government Department and as such provides no opinion supporting or objecting to an application.

1.7.3 The Forestry Commission is a prescribed consultee in respect of all DCO applications that are likely to affect land in England. While they provide advice on the potential impact that the Proposed Development could have on trees and woodland, the Forestry Commission provide no opinion supporting or objecting to an application. The Applicant has consulted the Forestry Commission throughout development of the Proposed Development.

1.7.4 The Forestry Commission is the Government expert on forestry and woodland, and a statutory consultee (as defined by Schedule 1 of The Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms And Procedures) Regulations 2009) for major infrastructure (Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPS)) that are likely to affect the protection or expansion of forests and woodlands (Planning Act 2008).

1.7.5 The Forestry Commission's role covers forestry and woodland matters, including the following:

- Protecting, expanding and promoting the sustainable management of woodlands;
- Managing and maintaining publicly owned woodlands;
- Overseeing tree planting and woodland creation; and
- Increasing the value of woodlands to society and the environment.

1.7.6 It can be taken that any matters not specifically referred to in the 'Matters Agreed during Pre-Examination Stage' or 'Matters not yet agreed during Pre-Examination Stage' sections of this SoCG are not of material interest or relevance to The Forestry Commission representations and have, therefore, not been considered in this SoCG.

1.7.7 This SoCG has been produced to confirm to the Examining Authority where agreement has been reached between the parties, where agreement has not been reached (and that is the parties' final position) and where discussions are still ongoing.

1.8 Status of this Version

1.8.1 This SoCG is prepared in collaboration with the Forestry Commission and represents the final agreed version of the SoCG. This SoCG has been produced to confirm to the Examining Authority where agreement has been reached between the parties.

1.8.2 It can be taken that any matters not specifically referred to in the 'Matters Agreed during Pre-Examination Stage' (Section 3) or Matters Agreed during Examination Stage' (Section 4) of this SoCG are not of material interest or relevance to the Forestry Commission representations and have, therefore, not been considered in this SoCG.

1.8.3 Section 2 of this document summarises the consultation undertaken with the Forestry Commission to date and Section 3 sets out the matters agreed between the parties during the pre-examination and Section 4 sets out matters agreed during examination stage in respect of the Application.

2. Summary of Consultation

2.1.1 Table 2.1, below, contains a record of pertinent correspondence between the Applicant and the Forestry Commission.

Table 2.1 – Summary of Correspondence

DATE	FORM OF CORRESPONDENCE	NOTES
11/05/2023	EIA Scoping request and response	The Forestry Commission Local Partnership Advisor provided an opinion in response to the EIA Scoping Request, which was returned to the Applicant via PINS in May 2023. See **Appendix 1.2 Scoping Opinion (Document Ref: 6.3, ES Vol. 2 6.3.2)** (**APP-071)** of the **Environmental Statement (ES) (Document Ref: 6.1) (APP-072)**.
29/02/2024	Email from the Forestry Commission Local Partnership Advisor – Section 42 response	The Forestry Commission Local Partnership Advisor provided advice on the potential impact that the Proposed Development could have on trees and woodland, including ancient woodland.
01/07/2025	Relevant Representation by the Forestry Commission	The Forestry Commission provided further advice following submission of the Environmental Statement (ES) on the potential impact that the Proposed Development could have on trees and woodland, including ancient woodland.
03/10/25	Teams meeting with the Forestry Commission	SLR held a Teams meeting with the Forestry Commission to discuss the SoCG.
06/10/205	Draft Statement of Common Ground returned by the Forestry Commission	The Forestry Commission provided comments on the draft Statement of Common Ground.

3. Matters Agreed during Pre-Examination Stage

3.1.1 Table 3.1, below, contains a list of 'matters agreed' at the date of submission of the document to the Forestry Commission, along with a concise commentary of what each item refers to and how it came to be agreed between the two parties.

3.1.2 In addition, Annex G of the Rule 6 Letter from PINS explicitly states that the SoCG with the Forestry Commission should include the following:

- Effects on ancient and veteran trees, priority habitats, and protected woodlands; and
- Appropriateness and effectiveness of the Arboricultural Impact Assessment, the Vegetation Removal Plan, the Landscape Strategy Plan, the OCEMP and the ODEMP.

3.1.3 These points, as well as the other key matters, have been addressed in the table(s), below.

Table 3.1 – List of Matters agreed during Pre-Examination Stage

MATTER	COMMENTARY
Ancient Woodland within the Site	The Forestry Commission was consulted by PINS on the Applicant's Scoping Request (see **Appendix 1.1 Scoping Report (Document Reference: 6.3 ES Volume 2, 6.3.1) (APP-071)** and **Appendix 1.2 Scoping Opinion Document Reference: 6.3 ES Volume 2, 6.3.2) (APP-072)**) during the pre-application process. The Forestry Commission confirmed that it was satisfied that there is no ancient woodland within the development area. No ancient woodland was identified during the arboricultural survey at the Site and subsequent arboricultural impact assessment (AIA) (see **Appendix 6.6 Arboricultural Impact Assessment (Document Ref: 6.3, ES Vol. 2, 6.3.18) (APP-088)**).
Woodland retention and replacement	The Forestry Commission was consulted by PINS on the Applicant's Scoping Request (see **Appendix 1.1 Scoping Report (Document Reference: 6.3 ES Volume 2, 6.3.1) (APP-071)** and **Appendix 1.2 Scoping Opinion Document Reference: 6.3 ES Volume 2, 6.3.2) (APP-072)**) during the pre-application process. The Forestry Commission noted that the Scoping Report suggested that woodland would be retained and woodland creation undertaken to compensate for any losses and enhance existing woodland where possible, including the introduction of woodland shelter belts. This remains the case for the Proposed Development. **Appendix 6.7 Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (Document Ref: 6.3, ES Vol. 2, 6.3.19) (APP-089)** outlines the general specifications for compensatory planting, including standards to be followed, planting methodology, work required to ensure establishment of newly

	planted trees and hedgerows, and ongoing management needs. **Appendix 6.6 Arboricultural Impact Assessment (Document Ref: 6.3, ES Vol. 2, 6.3.18) (APP-088)** includes details of which woodlands will be retained and which will require removal to facilitate the development. This is also shown in **Figure 6.32 Vegetation Removal Plan (Document Ref: 6.4, ES Vol. 3, 6.4.43) (APP-236 to APP-238)**.
Tree and woodland protection during construction (excluding Cable Route Corridor)	The Forestry Commission was consulted by PINS on the Applicant's Scoping Request (see **Appendix 1.1 Scoping Report (Document Reference: 6.3 ES Volume 2, 6.3.1) (APP-071)** and **Appendix 1.2 Scoping Opinion Document Reference: 6.3 ES Volume 2, 6.3.2) (APP-072)**) during the pre-application process. The Forestry Commission stated that details should be provided of how existing trees and woodlands will be protected. These details have been included; during the development design process, site fencing, solar arrays and access tracks have been amended to promote retention of the maximum amount of the tree population, including all veteran trees, ensuring protection measures can be implemented. Within its Section 42 consultation response, the Forestry Commission noted that all of the woodlands and veteran trees will be maintained and have their Root Protection Areas (RPA) protected for the duration of the build. This has been brought forward into **Appendix 6.6 Arboricultural Impact Assessment (Document Ref: 6.3, ES Vol. 2, 6.3.18) (APP-088)**, which includes details of proposed tree protection measures, including Tree Protection Fencing for both the Solar Array Area and the Bespoke Access Route Corridor.
Proposed site fencing installed within the RPAs of retained trees and hedgerows	Within its Section 42 consultation response, the Forestry Commission recommended that if the fencing that is currently proposed within RPAs cannot be moved so that it is outside the RPA, additional tree protection (such as ground protection) would be required to ensure no loss and deterioration of trees and woodland. **Appendix 6.6 Arboricultural Impact Assessment (Document Ref: 6.3, ES Vol. 2, 6.3.18) (APP-088)** includes a provision for the site fencing to be moved out of the RPA and veteran buffer zone. Appendix 6.6 also includes a requirement to detail the protection methodologies within an Arboricultural Method Statement (AMS) to be prepared as part of the detailed CEMP at the detailed design stage. These recommendations to produce an AMS are included in **Appendix 2.4 Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan (Document Ref: 6.3, ES Vol. 2, 6.3.7) (APP-077)** and **Appendix 6.7 Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (Document Ref: 6.3, ES Vol. 2, 6.3.19) (APP-089)**.
Consideration of future tree and woodland management	The Forestry Commission was consulted by PINS on the Applicant's Scoping Request (see **Appendix 1.1 Scoping Report (Document Reference: 6.3 ES Volume 2, 6.3.1) (APP-071)** and **Appendix 1.2 Scoping Opinion Document Reference: 6.3 ES Volume 2, 6.3.2) (APP-072)**) during the pre-application process. The Forestry Commission recommended that access to woodlands for management would need to be considered for future management for the purpose of improving and maintaining biodiversity and current woodland management programmes. **Appendix 6.7 Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (Document Ref: 6.3, Es Vol. 2,**

6.3.19) (APP-089) contains a specification of enhancement measures for retained and enhanced habitat, including hedgerows and woodlands. It also includes a specification for arboricultural works to rejuvenate trees and woodlands in poor current condition, involving the opportunity to create veteran tree features where appropriate and the use of grassland margins to provide a suitable buffer between development activities and retained trees, hedgerows and woodlands. The proposed access arrangements onsite are illustrated upon **Figure 6.31 Landscape Strategy Plan (Document Ref: 6.4 ES Vol 3, 6.4.42) (APP-233 to APP235)**, with access for woodland management and maintenance to be confirmed at the detailed design stage and specified within the Arboricultural Method Statement (AMS) within the detailed Construction Environmental Management Plan and detailed Decommissioning Environmental Management Plan, plus the detailed Landscape and Ecological Management Plan.

4. Matters Agreed during Examination Stage

4.1.1 Table 4.1, below, contains a list of 'matters agreed' correct after discussions with the Forestry Commission, along with a concise commentary of what the item refers to and how it came to be agreed between the two parties. Table 4.1 confirms agreement on the key matters stated in Annex G of the Rule 6 letter.

Table 4.1 – List of Matters Agreed during Examination Stage

MATTER	COMMENTARY
Construction within veteran trees RPAs, leading to habitat deterioration.	The Forestry Commission submitted a relevant representation consultation response in July 2025, raising concerns that construction is planned within the RPAs of several veteran trees. The draft Statement of Common Ground sent to the Forestry Commission included this Relevant Representation matter within Table 4.1 as a matter not yet agreed during the Pre-Examination stage. The details included in the commentary in Table 4.1 for the client are reproduced below: 'T*wo veteran trees were identified in* ***Appendix 6.6 Arboricultural Impact Assessment (Document Ref: 6.3, ES Vol. 2, 6.3.18) (APP-088)*** *as being potentially impacted by the Proposed Development works.* *The first veteran tree that was identified as being potentially impacted is tree T95, which is within the Solar Array Area. The potential impact identified was the proposed installation of site fencing within T95's veteran buffer zone (note, not within the tree's BS 5837:2012 derived RPA). It is stated in Appendix 6.6 Arboricultural Impact Assessment (Document Ref: 6.3, ES Vol. 2, 6.3.18) (APP-088) that "The Site fencing shall be located outside of the veteran tree buffer zones of the veteran trees as detailed on the Tree Protection Plan Sheets 1-12 (Drawing ST19595-106-1) at the detailed design stage, which are to be secured post consent by the requirement to prepare a detailed CEMP". Therefore, there will be no deterioration of the veteran tree T95 due to the Proposed Development, as the Site fencing is to be moved out of this tree's Root Protection Areas (RPA) and veteran buffer zone.* *The second veteran tree identified in Appendix 6.6 Arboricultural Impact Assessment (Document Ref: 6.3, ES Vol. 2, 6.3.18) (APP-088) as being potentially impacted by the Proposed Development is tree T1124, which is within the proposed Cable Route Corridor. An access route for cable installation works traffic is within this tree's veteran buffer zone and BS 5837 derived RPA. This access route will utilise a well-established existing farm track. This track has an aggregate wearing course that is already compacted from usage to date. As an*

existing farm track, the soil underlying this track will have become compacted over time by frequent use by farm vehicles / machinery and, thus, the soil underneath the track is highly unlikely to be suitable for tree root growth due to its already compacted nature. The Department for Communities and Local Government publication 'Tree Roots in the Built Environment (The Stationary Office, 2006)' provides guidance on soil compaction and tree root growth and states that "Pedestrian traffic and vehicle movement cause soil compaction. It is very important to realise that a major contribution to soil compaction occurs in the first pass of vehicles over the ground. Fig. 4.3 shows the increase in soil bulk density in an agricultural soil with a single pass of a tractor and trailer and that a major fraction of the compaction occurs when only two wheels have passed over the ground. The direct impacts of compaction are a loss of pore space and an increase in bulk density. Growth of roots is restricted in compacted soils. Destruction of macropores reduces the number of pathways for root proliferation and increased soil strength causes mechanical impedance for root elongation. Roots are unable to enter pores narrower in diameter than the root cap, unless they can exert sufficient pressure to displace soil particles and widen pore openings. In compacted soil, the pressure required to displace particles is higher than in in more loosely packed soil because of increased mechanical strength when particles are forced apart…. Roots are unable to exploit soils which have a bulk density of '1.8 g cm^{-3} and above'. The track is a well-established track with a compacted aggregate wearing course and, thus, the soil underlying the track will likely already be compacted to a level that makes it non-conducive for root growth due to previous compaction damage. This already compacted soil is very unlikely to be able to become 'even more' compacted due to use by traffic using it for the cable installation works. As such, use of the track for the cable installation traffic will not be detrimental to the root system of the veteran tree T1124 and will not lead to a deterioration of the physiological functioning of the tree or the veteran habitat that the tree provides.

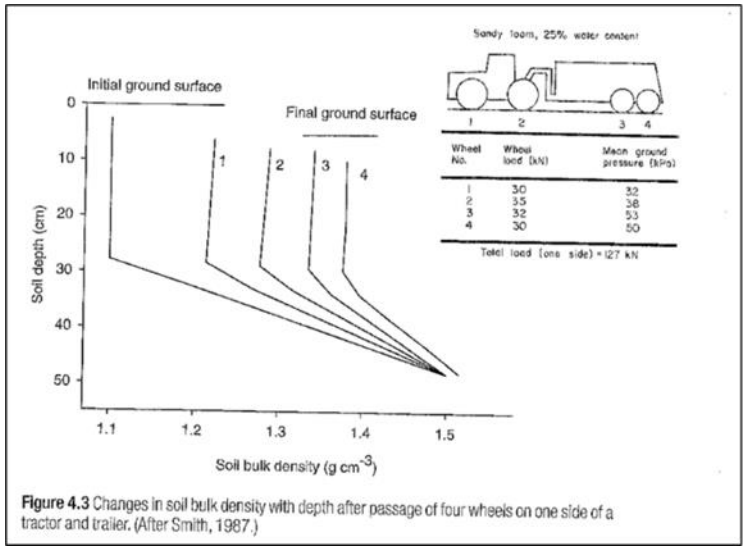

Figure 4.3 Changes in soil bulk density with depth after passage of four wheels on one side of a tractor and trailer. (After Smith, 1987.)

Figure 4.3. (Ref. Tree Roots in the Built Environment (Department for Communities and Local Government – The Stationery Office, 2006)).

The remainder of tree T1124's veteran buffer zone and RPA will be fenced off, during usage of the track as part of the Proposed Development, thereby protecting the unsurfaced parts of the buffer zone and RPA from traffic associated with the Proposed Development. Appendix 6.6 Arboricultural Impact Assessment (Document Ref: 6.3, ES Vol. 2, 6.3.18) (APP-088) states that "If the track is to be upgraded or refurbished, these works shall be assessed by the Project Arboriculturist and appropriate mitigation measures will be specified and complied with". Proposed tree protection measures, including for veteran trees are detailed in Appendix 6.6 Arboricultural Impact Assessment (Document Ref: 6.3, ES Vol. 2, 6.3.18) (APP-088) for the Solar Array Area and Bespoke Access Corridor. The protection measures for the Cable Route Corridor are to be finalised at the detailed design stage in the Arboricultural Method Statement (AMS). Appendix 2.4 Outline Construction Environmental Plan (OCEMP) (Document Ref: 6.3, ES Vol. 2, 6.3.7) (APP-077) includes (at paragraph 6.14) the provision for an AMS and Tree Protection Plans (TPPs) to be prepared at the detailed design stage.

	There are no veteran trees located within the Cable Route Corridor; however, one veteran tree (T1124) is within influencing distance of the Order Limit boundary for the cable route, despite being located outside of the Cable Route Corridor. As discussed above, this tree will not be impacted by the cable installation works'. Following a TEAMS meeting with the Forestry Commission on the 3rd of October 2025, the Forestry Commission returned the draft Statement of Common Ground, with the following statement added: 'The *Forestry Commission acknowledges that the site fencing has been moved out of the RPA of Tree T95. Also that effects will be minimised Tree T1124 by works to the cable route corridor as the increase in traffic will be minimal and that the tree will be protected during the works. The tree will also be monitored and managed to preserve and enhance it*.'
Replacement canopy cover compensatory planting.	The Forestry Commission submitted a relevant representation consultation response in July 2025, in which they raised a lack of clarity in whether the compensatory planting is sufficient to compensate for the loss of canopy cover on the site. The draft Statement of Common Ground sent to the Forestry Commission included this Relevant Representation matter within Table 4.1 as a matter not yet agreed during the Pre-Examination stage. The details included in the commentary in Table 4.1 for the client are reproduced below: '***Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (Document Ref: 6.3, Es Vol. 2, 6.3.19) (APP-089)*** *provides for shrub planting with trees, with this proposed compensatory planting detailed on* ***Figure 6.31 Landscape Strategy Plan (Document Ref: 6.4 ES Vol 3, 6.4.42) (APP-233 to APP-235).*** *As discussed above, the proposed planting has been designed to meet a number of requirements, including landscape character and biodiversity net gain. The canopy of the individual trees and tree groups that proposed to be removed in the Solar Array Area is 252m² in the Bespoke Access Corridor is 41m² and the indicative losses in the Cable Route Corridor is 8,042m². The total loss of canopy cover will be 8,335m². These figures are derived from the* ***Appendix 6.6 Arboricultural Impact Assessment (Document Ref: 6.3, ES Vol. 2, 6.3.18) (APP-088)****, where the tree group and woodland losses are detailed, with the crown areas for the individual trees to be removed as detailed on the* ***Solar Array Tree Protection Plan Sheets 1-12 Ref. ST19595-1****, which are appended to* ***Appendix 6.6 Arboricultural Impact Assessment (Document Ref: 6.3, ES Vol. 2, 6.3.18) (APP-088)****, measured.* ***Figure 6.31 Landscape Strategy Plan (Document Ref: 6.4 ES Vol 3, 6.4.42) (APP-233 to APP-235)*** *details the proposed compensatory woodland planting (Indicative Woodland Mix/ Proposed Native Shrub Mix) which will be comprised of the following species*

mix: Acer campestre (20%), Alnus glutinosa (20%), Corylus avellana (10%), Crataegus monogyna (10%), Quercus robur (15%), Salix caprea (10%) and sorbus aucuparia (15%). The total area to be planted with this native woodland mix is 39,630m², which is detailed in ***Figure 6.31 Landscape Strategy Plan (Document Ref: 6.4 ES Vol 3, 6.4.42) (APP-233 to APP-235).*** *In reviewing this against* ***Appendix 6.6 Arboricultural Impact Assessment (Document Ref: 6.3, ES Vol. 2, 6.3.18) (APP-088)*** *and the accompanying* ***Tree Protection Plan Sheets 1-12*** *within it, the compensatory woodland planting is 4.75 times the canopy cover to be removed. This figure was calculated by dividing the total area to be planted with woodland (39,630m²) by the total canopy cover by area (8,335m²) of the individual trees, tree groups and woodland to be removed to enable the Proposed Development. We consider that this to be sufficient to compensate for canopy cover that will be removed.*

In the Policy Paper 'Natural England and Forestry Commission: Our Position on Woodland Creation', the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Forestry Commission and Chief Executive (CE) of Natural England state that they see their organisations' roles as "advocating woodland creation and tree planting". No metrics are provided in this policy paper for compensatory planting. The Government's statement 'Keepers of time: Ancient and Native Woodland and Trees Policy in England' states that its strategic objectives are to:

- *''increase the net area of native woodland;*
- *establish new woodlands, wood pasture and parkland and future veteran trees; and*
- *provide greater connectivity for habitats and species by encouraging new woodlands near and adjacent to existing resources."*

The proposed compensatory woodland tree planting will increase canopy cover on the Proposed Development Site, will establish new woodland planting and will provide greater connectivity for species by providing woodland shelterbelt links between hedgerows on site. The increase of canopy cover on site within the Solar Array Area meets the strategic objectives of the Government. The Department for Energy Security & Net Zero 'Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy (EN-1)' states at Section 5.11.27 that ''The applicant should assess the impacts on, and loss of, all trees and woodlands within the project boundary and develop mitigation measures to minimise adverse impacts and any risk of net deforestation as a result of the scheme." The impacts of the loss of trees has been assessed and compensatory woodland tree planting is to be undertaken, resulting in an increase in tree canopy cover on site that is 4.75 times the canopy cover to be removed. This is an aforestation net gain.'

	Following a TEAMS meeting with the Forestry Commission on the 3rd of October 2025, the Forestry Commission returned the draft Statement of Common Ground, with the following statement added: *'The Forestry Commission is however satisfied with the new information regarding canopy cover assessment and new planting proposals.'*
Draft Development Consent Order	The Forestry Commission submitted a relevant representation consultation response in July 2025 raising concerns that Section 43 of the **Draft DCO (Document Ref: 3.1) (APP-039)** "*appears to allows for the felling, lopping, or cutting back of roots of any tree or shrub in any part of the development which may be believed to be necessary from obstructing or interfering with the construction, maintenance, operation or decommissioning of the authorised development*". In addition, the same '*does not appear to require any opinion from an arboricultural specialist and does not allow an exemption for any irreplaceable habitat. We have concerns this would allow for any tree, including ancient and veteran trees to be felled with very little oversight and no consideration for habitat compensation*'. The draft Statement of Common Ground sent to the Forestry Commission included this Relevant Representation matter within Table 4.1 as a matter not yet agreed during the Pre-Examination stage. The details included in the commentary in Table 4.1 for the client are reproduced below: '*The detailed Construction Environmental Management Plan will include an Arboricultural Method Statement (AMS) that will specify works to be carried out during the construction phase. The detailed Decommissioning Environmental Management Plan will also include an Arboricultural Method Statement (AMS) that will include a specification of works to be carried out during the decommissioning phase.* *These principles are secured in* ***Appendix 2.4 Outline Construction Environmental Plan (oCEMP) (Document Ref: 6.3, ES Vol. 2, 6.3.7) (APP-077)*** *at paragraph 6.14, which includes the provision for an Arboricultural Method Statement (AMS) and Tree Protection Plans (TPPs) to be prepared at the detailed design stage. The AMS and TPPs will accord with the mitigation measures detailed in section 6.6 of the oCEMP, which includes the following provisions:* • *Temporary fencing will be used to demarcate important and protected habitats and vegetation in accordance with industry standard guidance during the construction stage.*

	• *Existing vegetation to be retained will be safeguarded through the establishment of tree protection zones that will be clearly fenced to prevent encroachment into root protection areas (RPA).* • *Any vegetation lost during construction, including trees, hedgerows or other valuable habitats, will be replaced (though not necessarily in the same location) and enhanced through proposed compensatory planting and seeding measures in accordance with the landscaping strategy.* • *Paragraph 6.14.15 in **Appendix 2.4 Outline Construction Environmental Plan (oCEMP) (Document Ref: 6.3, ES Vol. 2, 6.3.7) (APP-077)** includes a provision for the appointed Arboricultural Clerk of Works (ACoW) to monitor tree protection measures.* • *The AMS to be produced will detail which trees are to be removed and will include a provision that the ACoW shall be consulted on any further removals required, with the removals and any proposed compensation measures to be in accordance with specifications and methodologies as required by the ACoW*.' Following a TEAMS meeting with the Forestry Commission on the 3rd of October 2025, the Forestry Commission returned the draft Statement of Common Ground, with the following statement added: *'The Forestry Commission is satisfied that veteran trees have been considered and will be protected during the works. Due to the irreplaceable nature of ancient and veteran trees, any works required will need to be considered especially carefully by the ACoW.'*
Extent of compensatory tree planting relating to the size of woodland mitigation habitat creation.	Within the Forestry Commission's Section 42 consultation and, subsequently, within their relevant representation response, the Forestry Commission recommended woodland creation in 5ha blocks or the enhancement of existing woodlands to create blocks of at least 5ha to improve connectivity between woodland sites. **Figure 6.31 Landscape Strategy Plan (Document Ref: 6.4 ES Vol 3, 6.4.42) (APP-233 to APP-235)** details the proposed compensatory planting and **Appendix 6.7 Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (Document Ref: 6.3, ES Vol 2, 6.3.19) (APP-089)** sets out reasons for the proposed planting and also includes maintenance specifications, which are based on the habitat condition assessment and subsequent habitat management recommendations detailed in the **Biodiversity Net Gain Strategy (Document Ref. 7.3) (APP-280).** A key objective of the proposed planting is to improve connectivity between the various existing isolated, plantation areas and scrub through the introduction of new hedgerows and native shrub planting with trees. In this respect, advice provided by the Forestry

Commission (1 March 2024) regarding the need to provide linkages between existing areas of woodland has been used to inform the landscape strategy. The landscape proposals are intended to provide a balance between providing improved connectivity with existing woodland and a strong green framework to assimilate the proposed energy infrastructure whilst maintaining some perceptions of 'openness', which is characteristic of the Fenland landscape.

Ecological planting enhancements have been dictated by the landscape type, using reference documents such as Natural England's National Character Areas Ref. No. 46 - The Fens and No. 47 - .Southern Lincolnshire Edge The landscape has only been drained in the 17th century and is largely flat 'big sky' and, therefore, woodlands are not a key feature in this landscape. Introducing more substantial woodland blocks as suggested would not be characteristic of the host landscape and would detract from its open character.

The Forestry Commission's response to the above commentary is detailed below:

'*The Forestry Commission notes the explanation although disagrees that large woodland blocks would change the landscape character of the area or detract from the open character considering the development proposed. Trees are an important part of the landscape, even in fenland areas which historically had higher canopy cover levels than are currently present. Trees provide benefits for people and nature and can play an increasing role in climate mitigation*'.

The Forestry Commission's further comments are noted. **Figure 6.31 Landscape Strategy Plan (Document Ref: 6.4 ES Vol 3, 6.4.42) (APP-233 to APP-235)** proposes that there will be 3.96Ha of woodland planting to be undertaken within the Solar Array Area. The Forestry Commission have agreed to the new planting, where they stated in the response to the first draft of the Statement of Common Ground that *'The Forestry Commission is however satisfied with the new information regarding canopy cover assessment and new planting proposals.'*

[redacted]

Signed: Sandra Squire

On behalf of: The Forestry Commission

Date:14th October 2025

Signed: Jessica Gough [redacted]

On behalf of: Beacon Fen Energy Park Ltd

Date: 15th October 2025