



Frodsham Solar

Environmental Statement: Volume 2

Appendix 7-5: Assessment of Frodsham Helsby Ince Local Wildlife Site

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and Scope

- 1.1.1 This Technical Appendix has been prepared to accompany **Chapter 7: Terrestrial Ecology [EN010153/DR/6.1]** of the Frodsham Solar Environmental Statement (ES).
- 1.1.2 It presents an assessment of Frodsham, Helsby and Ince Marshes Local Wildlife Site (LWS) against the current LWS selection criteria for the Cheshire region¹, focusing on the area of the LWS that overlaps with the Order Limits boundary.
- 1.1.3 The request to assess the current status of Frodsham Helsby and Ince LWS against the current LWS criteria arose during consultation with Cheshire West and Chester Council (CWaCC). CWaCC requested the following: *The ES should include a LWS Assessment to assess the site against current criteria, to determine its quality in relation to its current qualifying features and to identify any further unlisted LWS features present. A mitigation and compensation plan should be formulated from this information.* Therefore, this technical appendix includes an assessment of Frodsham Helsby Ince LWS against the current LWS selection criteria. The assessment of impacts on the LWS as a result of the Proposed Development are discussed in Section 7.8 of Chapter 7 and habitat creation/enhancement measures proposed within the Frodsham Helsby Ince LWS are detailed within the **Outline Landscape Environment Management Plan [EN010153/DR/7.13]**.
- 1.1.4 This assessment has been informed by a combination of a desk-based review of relevant ecological information, together with a suite of ecological and ornithological surveys, details of which are included in **Technical Appendices 7-1 – 7-3**.
- 1.1.5 As detailed on the Cheshire West and Chester Public Interactive Map², currently recognised qualifying criteria of Frodsham, Helsby and Ince Marshes LWS include:
- Neutral grassland (H7);
 - Restorable grassland (H11);
 - Coastal and Floodplain grazing marsh (H17);
 - Fens, swamps, bogs and reedbeds (H18);
 - Wildlife corridors/buffers (H24);
 - Accessible natural greenspace (H26);
 - Mosaics (H27);
 - Saltmarsh and intertidal mudflats (H28)
 - Birds (S2);
 - Mammals (S3); and,

¹ Cheshire Wildlife Trust (2012). Local Wildlife Site Selection Criteria for the Cheshire region. Covering the districts of Cheshire West and Chester, Cheshire East, Wirral, Halton and Warrington. Updated February 2014.

² Available at: [Public Map Viewer \(cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk\)](https://publicmapviewer.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk) [Accessed 16/09/2024]

- Vascular plants (S13).

1.1.6 Throughout this report, common names for species are favoured over scientific names unless there is potential for confusion, in which case scientific names are also presented.

2 ASSESSMENT OF FRODSHAM, HELSBY AND INCE MARSHES LWS AGAINST CURRENT CRITERIA

2.1.1 **Table 2.1** presents the criteria that are considered to be met within areas of Frodsham, Helsby and Ince Marshes LWS that overlap with the Order Limits, together with a justification for why they are considered to be met.

Table 2.1: LWS Criteria Met at Frodsham, Helsby and Ince Marshes LWS

Criteria	Justification
Habitat Criteria	
H2 Wet Woodland	<p>Criterion met: Woodland communities meeting the definition of National Vegetation Classification (NVC) W2, W4, W5, W6, W7 (alder, willow sp. or downy birch dominant). Areas of locally native semi-natural lowland mixed deciduous woodland and/or wet woodland greater than 0.25 ha should be selected.</p> <p>Justification: The wet woodland adjacent to the access road in Frodsham Windfarm is consistent with NVC community W2 (willow and birch with frequent common reed). The area of this habitat type located within the Site is less than 0.25 ha; however, combined with an adjacent area of this habitat type that sits outside the Site boundary, the total area is greater than 0.25 ha.</p>
H7 Neutral grassland	<p>Criterion met: Threshold to qualify as Lowland meadow BAP priority habitat, with four 'occasional' indicator species (from Table 3 (of the LWS Selection Criteria)), at least three of which are listed as neutral grassland indicators.</p> <p>Justification: No individual neutral grassland field within the Site meets the threshold; however, all the neutral grassland fields combined do meet the criteria by having the following 'occasional' indicator species included in Table 3 (* denotes neutral grassland indicators):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bugle*; • Common bird's foot trefoil* • Goat's-beard*; • Meadow vetchling*; and, • Small sedges (spiked sedge, yellow sedge and false fox sedge).
H11 Restorable grassland	<p>Criterion met: Moderately species rich semi-improved, where there is good potential to restore to BAP quality. Threshold to qualify as restorable grassland habitat requires a minimum of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four 'occasional' indicator species present from Table 3 (of the LWS Selection Criteria), but two or fewer occur from the lists given for neutral/acid/marshy/calcareous grassland. <p>Justification: Numerous grassland fields within the Site include at least four 'occasional' indicator species included in Table 3 of the criteria.</p>
H18 Fens, swamps, bogs and reedbeds	<p>Criterion met: Areas of fens, swamps, reedbeds, lowland raised bogs and blanket bogs with sphagnum moss, cotton grasses or abundant tall vegetation such as common reed, tall sedges and grasses or wetland plants from Table 5 (of the LWS Selection Criteria).</p> <p>Justification: Areas of reedbed adjacent to the River Weaver and within Frodsham Windfarm comprise the following species from Table 5:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common reed; and, • Marsh woundwort.

Criteria	Justification
H20 Ponds and ditches	<p>Criterion met: All seasonal or permanent ponds or ditches of <2 ha where one or more of the following criteria are met:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High value ponds or ditches which support species or species assemblages which qualify under the species selection criteria S 1-13 and are dependent on the pond; and, • Ponds or ditches which sit within 250 m of a high value pond or ditch, which have a strong likelihood of hosting the qualifying species or species assemblages. <p>Justification: Ditches supporting water vole and European eels are known to be present within the Site. Further ditches within 250 m, which have a strong likelihood of hosting the qualifying species, are also present within the Site.</p>
H24 Wildlife corridor/buffers	<p>Criterion met: Areas of land including hedges and ditches where they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a physical link between two or more areas of high wildlife value and has favourable conditions for the movement of species between these habitats; and, • Provide additional buffering habitat for species associated with existing wildlife sites. <p>Justification: Habitats within the Site, including the network of hedgerows and ditches, provide a physical link between areas of high wildlife value, including woodland, wetland and open grassland, and has favourable conditions for the movement of species between these habitats. The Site provides additional buffering habitat for species associated with Mersey Estuary Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar Site, and has been confirmed as functionally linked land.</p>
H25 High value hedges	<p>Criterion met: High value species rich hedges at least 20 m in length where they have a least four native woody species in a 30 m section within 2 m of the centre of the hedge.</p> <p>Justification: Hedges meeting the above criteria are present within the Site.</p>
H26 Accessible natural greenspace	<p>Criterion met: Sites when the social/aesthetic/educational interest of the site derives from the wildlife features of the site.</p> <p>Justification: Regular walkers and birdwatchers visit the LWS for the wildlife features of the Site.</p>
Species Criteria	
S1 Butterflies	<p>Criterion met: Regularly supports an assemblage of species with a minimum total score of 16 points calculated from Table 6 (of the LWS Selection Criteria).</p> <p>Justification: Species recorded during the invertebrate assessment undertaken in 2023 (see Appendix 7.2 Protected Ecological Species Baseline Report) that are included in Table 6 of the LWS Selection Criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speckled wood (1 point); • Green-veined white (1 point); • Red admiral (1 point); • Small tortoiseshell (1 point); • Peacock (1 point); • Large white (1 point); • Meadow brown (1 point);

Criteria	Justification
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small white (1 point); • Meadow brown (1 point); • Small white (1 point); • Gatekeeper (1 point); • Comma (1 point); • Small copper (2 points); • Small skipper (2 points); • Large skipper (2 points); • Common blue (2 points); and, • Ringlet (5 points).
S2 Birds	<p>Criterion met: Sites that support either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any regular probable breeding or over wintering* bird species listed in Table 7 (of the LWS Selection Criteria); • Any regular over wintering population as listed in Table 8 (of the LWS Selection Criteria); or, • At least 10 probable breeding species from Tables 7 and 9 (of the LWS Selection Criteria). <p>Justification:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular probable breeding or over wintering bird species listed in Table 7 (of the LWS Selection Criteria): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Avocet: 0-3 breeding territories estimated; ○ Gadwall: 1-12 breeding territories estimated; ○ Little ringed plover: 0-2 breeding territories estimated; and, ○ Yellow wagtail: 0-4 breeding territories estimated. • Regular over wintering population as listed in Table 8 (of the LWS Selection Criteria): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Black-tailed godwit; ○ Duck species (5+ species of dabbling ducks: shoveler, mallard, pintail, wigeon and teal); ○ Pink-footed goose; and, ○ Teal. • At least 10 probable breeding species from Tables 7 and 9 (of the LWS Selection Criteria): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Avocet; ○ Gadwall; ○ Little ringed plover; ○ Yellow wagtail; ○ Barn owl; ○ Bullfinch; ○ Dunnock; ○ House sparrow; ○ Kestrel; ○ Lapwing;

Criteria	Justification
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Linnet; ○ Mallard; ○ Meadow pipit; ○ Reed bunting; ○ Ringed plover; ○ Shelduck; ○ Shoveler; ○ Skylark; ○ Song thrush; ○ Starling; ○ Stock dove; and, ○ Yellowhammer.
S3 Mammals	<p>Criterion met: Sites that regularly support an assemblage of mammals from Table 10 (of the LWS Selection Criteria) which score a total of 12 points.</p> <p>Justification: Species recorded during field surveys (see Appendix 7.2 Protected Ecological Species Baseline Report) that are included in Table 10 of the LWS Selection Criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Otter (12 points); • Water vole (4 points); and, • Badger (2 points).
S4 Dragonflies and damselflies (Odonata)	<p>Criterion met: Sites that regularly support species assemblages (probable breeding) scoring eight points or more from Table 11(of the LWS Selection Criteria).</p> <p>Justification: Species recorded during the invertebrate assessment undertaken in 2023 (see Appendix 7.2 Protected Ecological Species Baseline Report) that are included in Table 6 of the LWS Selection Criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Azure damselfly (1 point); • Blue tailed damselfly (1 point); • Brown hawkler (1 point); • Common darter (1 point); • Large red damselfly (1 point); • Migrant hawkler (4 points); and, • Ruddy darter (4 points).
S7 Fresh water fish	<p>Criterion met: Sites that regularly support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The European eel. <p>Justification: based on a desk-based review of HyNet North West Hydrogen Pipeline Aquatic Ecology Survey Report (October 2024³), European eels are present within the Site. It has therefore been assumed that the Site regularly supports this species.</p>
S13 Vascular plants	<p>Criterion met: Sites that regularly support significant or viable populations of any species listed in Table 21 of the LWS Selection Criteria.</p>

³ WSP UK Limited for Cadent Gas Limited (2024). HyNet North West Hydrogen Pipeline. Appendix 5k: Aquatic Ecology Survey Report. WSP UK Limited for Cadent Gas Limited.

Criteria	Justification
	Justification: A small population of European spindle (listed on Table 21 of the LWS Selection Criteria) is present within the Site boundary (at SJ503781). An additional, larger population of European spindle is present immediately south of this area, beyond the Site boundary. Together, these two areas are considered to support a population that is likely self-sustaining in the medium term.

3 CONCLUSION

- 3.1.1 This assessment concludes that Frodsham, Helsby and Ince Marshes LWS does meet the criteria of an LWS.
- 3.1.2 The assessment of impacts on the LWS as a result of the proposed development is discussed within Section 7.8 of Chapter 7 Ecology and habitat creation/enhancement measures proposed within the Frodsham Helsby Ince LWS are detailed within the **Outline Landscape Environment Management Plan [EN010153/DR/7.13]**.