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Area Director: [REDACTED]

Re: Fosse Green Energy – Examining Authority First Written Questions (ExQ1)

Forestry Commission Interested Party Reference Number: [REDACTED]

Please find our responses to ExQ1 questions below:

Question ENC.1.08: Mitigation Commitments

The proposed level of tree planting and woodland created for this project, at around 200 individual trees represents a very small proportion of the whole site. 200 trees would equate to around 0.1 to 0.2ha of area if they were all being planted on one site. (Approximately 0.016% of the whole site)

Therefore it would not meet the Governments definition of woodland; which would typically be:

- a minimum area of 0.5ha
- a minimum width of 20m
- a potential tree canopy cover of at least 20%
- a canopy consisting of specimens that meet the definition of trees

EN-1 Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy Section 4.3.20 states:

'The Government has set 13 legally binding targets for England under the Environment Act 2021, covering the areas of: biodiversity; air quality; water; resource efficiency and waste reduction; tree and woodland cover; and Marine Protected Areas. Meeting the legally binding targets will be a shared endeavour that will require a whole of government approach to delivery. The Secretary of State should have regard to the ambitions, goals and targets set out in the Government's Environmental Improvement Plan for improving the natural

environment and heritage. This includes having regard to the achievement of statutory targets set under the Environment Act.'

A greater extent of woodland creation that is well-designed and managed is encouraged as more proportionate to the scale of development in the context of national targets, local biodiversity policies and targets (including the local nature recovery strategy) and could help to avoid the impacts to ancient woodland.

There are numerous fragmented mixed deciduous woodlands both within and adjacent to the site. There are no plans to improve habitat connectivity between these fragmented woodlands. Fragmentation is one of the greatest threats to mixed deciduous woodland. Woodlands can suffer loss or deterioration from nearby development through damage to soils, roots and vegetation and changes to drainage and air pollution from an increase in traffic and dust, particularly during the construction phase of a development.

Woodlands that become isolated in their landscape and surrounded by development will deteriorate over time if habitat connectivity is not considered and provided.

Inclusion of better connectivity and habitat corridors can also help to promote diversity and healthy populations of other species groups such as birds. A study by Copping et al., 2025 (Solar farm management influences breeding bird responses in an arable dominated landscape) highlighted that well managed solar farms, which included areas of wildflower meadow, habitat corridors (e.g. hedgerows) and wooded areas, can have a high diversity of bird species and biomass. Therefore protection, enhancement and creation of these features will benefit a wide variety of taxa, which can be considered as an integral part of a woodland ecosystem.

This once again highlights the need for larger buffers, with greater ecologically focused enhancement and connectivity, which will not only protect the woodlands directly, but will also benefit the species associated to them.

Our view is that significantly larger and well designed buffers with an enhanced woodland edge habitat and improved connectivity more broadly (through habitat creation and enhancement) is required to avoid degrading all affected woodland habitat.

Question ENC.1.14: Mitigation – Ancient Woodlands

- a) The Standing Advice is still under review and we have no update as to when it may be published.
- b) A 15m buffer is a minimum starting point designed for tree root impacts. There are other impacts that need to be considered before direct and indirect effects of irreplaceable habitat, and deterioration of condition can be considered avoided.

Measures need to be effective for the specific site and proportionate to the project's landscape scale and the cumulative effects on blocks of ancient woodland, connectivity and functionally linked habitat, especially considering the project would almost enclose the ancient woodland on three sides.

We have however met with the Developer to discuss their plans and the buffer area around the ancient woodland. We are satisfied that the buffer area is nearer to 30m for most of the site with only some areas encroaching in closer, mostly for access purposes. However concerns remain that none of the planting proposals for the site are located near the ancient woodland which is being afforded a grass buffer.

The LNRS identifies the fields around the Ancient Woodland for buffering of the ancient woodland which would involve supplementary planting.

A larger wooded area, including woodland planting, scrub and woodland edge would provide better protection for the ancient woodland. Species such as bats, birds and invertebrates rely on woodland edge as foraging and commuting habitat. A bigger, better quality and better-connected buffer should be designed and maintained to protect the highly valuable woodland edge and maintain suitable habitat.

If the habitat becomes unsuitable for woodland associated species (e.g. invertebrate woodland pollinators), this could have a knock-on effect on the woodland health and could lead to further degradation.

Question ENC.1.17: Veteran Trees

The developer has provided information around the impacted veteran trees and what the access tracks will be used for. We have agreed that as they are only to be used in the case of an emergency, then the effects to the veteran trees will be minimal.

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely


Local Partnership Advisor