



Application by Fosse Green Energy Ltd for an order granting development consent for the Fosse Green Energy solar farm

Action Point 5 arising from Issue Specific Hearing 3

**by North Kesteven District Council
(ID [REDACTED])**

**NKDC reference: 23/0325/NSIP
Planning Inspectorate reference: EN010154
24th March 2026**

Lincoln and Witham Landscape Recovery Project

1. This document provides the North Kesteven District Council (NKDC) response to Action Point 5 arising from Issue Specific Hearing 3:

‘Submit a plan showing the full extent of the land subject to the proposed Lincoln and Witham Landscape Recovery Project (LWLRP) and provide a summary note: outlining the project membership; explaining the purposes of the project; and setting out the timescales for the project implementation in the event of applications to the government being successful.’

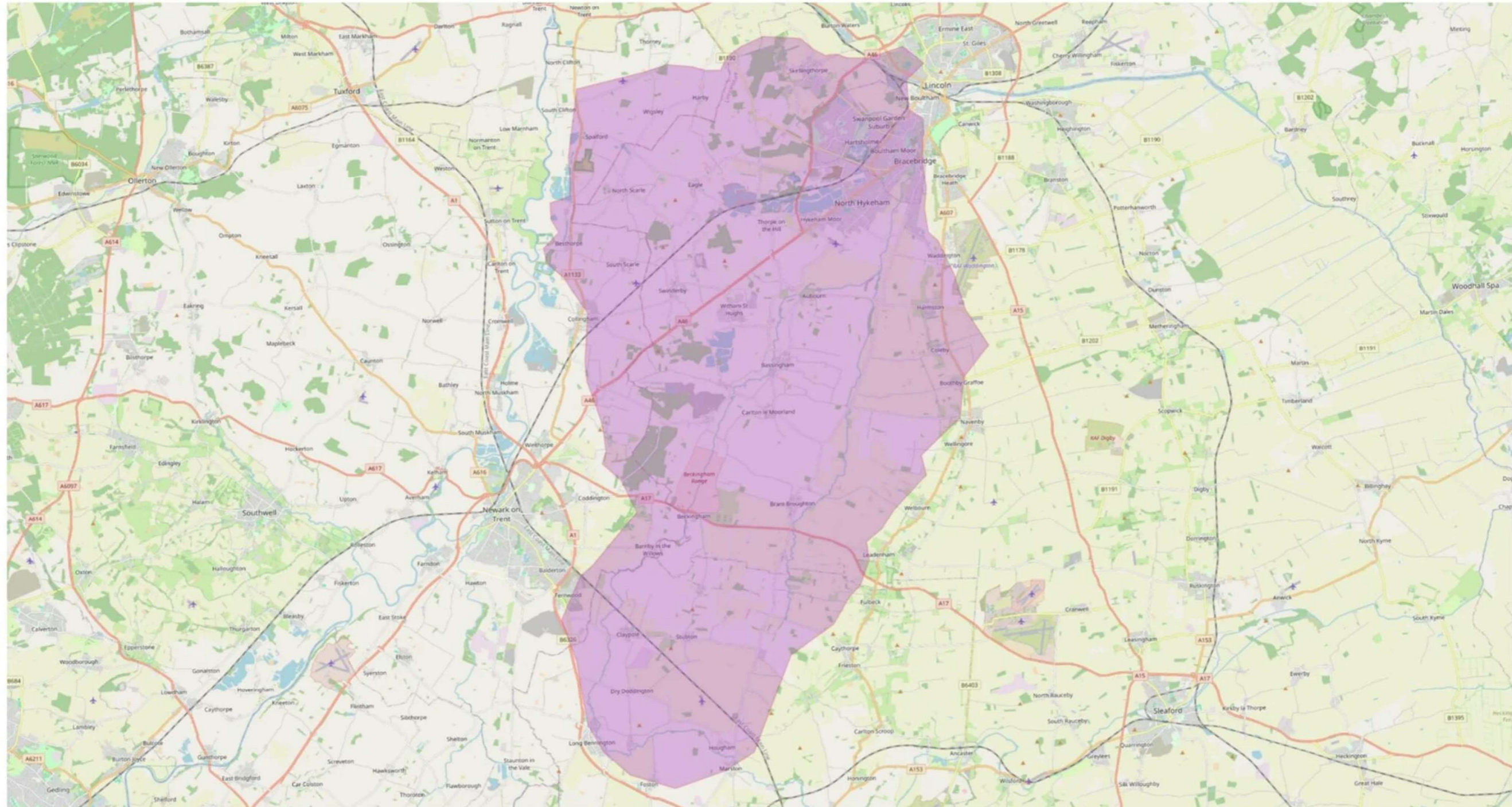
Project Area

2. A general plan of the area covered by the Lincoln and Witham Landscape Recovery Project (LWLRP) is provided on the next page of this submission. It should be borne in mind that the boundary is not being treated as a hard edge for the project, and it is anticipated that there will be much wider spill-over effects in relation to its objectives. The Principal Site for the Proposed Development sits entirely within the LWLRP area; though part of the Cable Corridor sits outside it to the north and east of Navenby.
3. The LWLRP area includes all of the Witham Valley Country Park (WVCP) area, with the exception of a strip of land at the northern end of the WVCP to the west of Lincoln which extends beyond the LWLRP. If possible, the Council will provide better mapping at a later deadline, and hopes to be able to superimpose the WVCP and the Order Limits on to the LWLRP plan to illustrate the geographical relationships between them.

Background

4. For many years, the LWLRP area has been recognised as an underused asset with significant potential. The ambition to establish a Sub-Regional Country Park here was first outlined in the 2006 draft Regional Spatial Strategy, later adopted in 2009; and a similar concept was identified as the Witham Valley Country Park in the first Central Lincolnshire Local Plan version adopted in 2017. Working together, North Kesteven District Council, Lincoln City Council, and Natural England developed the original concept: a connected network of accessible green spaces that would strengthen links for both people and wildlife.
5. In recognition of the significant benefits associated with a landscape-scale initiative of this nature, the Council issued a formal letter of support for the LWLRP’s initial submission to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs’ (DEFRA) Landscape Recovery Fund (LRF) in September 2023¹. This application, along with 33 other projects across the country, was successful, securing funding for a two-year Development Phase to inform and strengthen a subsequent bid to the LRF.

¹ The initial bid to DEFRA was submitted for this project it was submitted under the name ‘Lincoln and Witham Valley Farming and Nature Network’ (LWFNN), but has since evolved and is now the Lincoln and Witham Landscape Recovery Project. Some references to LWFNN may still appear in publications and on websites.



6. Development work will include bringing forwards detailed land management plans, quantifying environmental and social outcomes and further assessing the impact on food production.
7. The LWLRP builds on the lessons from that earlier vision. It aims to link, enhance, and expand the existing mosaic of green spaces and wildlife sites, using nature-friendly land management to create continuous wildlife corridors. The Council owns several sites within the project area and is committed to improving public access to these spaces, as well as strengthening the connections between them. A Project Briefing Note is included at Appendix A to this submission, setting out the vision, objectives and benefits of the project.

NKDC involvement

8. To support the preparation of the forthcoming stage 2 submission to DEFRA, Council officers have participated in meetings focused on access and tourism, contributing professional insight and providing feedback on emerging opportunities and project ambitions.
9. Additionally, the Council has supplied data relating to leisure and tourism assets, along with information on established self-guided walking routes - Stepping Out Walks, Ridges and Furrows, and Spires and Steeples - to assist in the development of a comprehensive map of access routes across the project area.
10. It is anticipated that the project will enable land managers to explore new approaches to land stewardship, ensuring that landscapes are protected and enhanced for future generations. Moreover, it aims to strengthen both the physical and emotional connections between communities and the natural environment that surrounds them. The District Council remains engaged with the project and has offered to provide a further letter of support for the next submission which is expected to be made in April 2026.

Other project members

11. As well as NKDC and Lincolnshire County Council, the LWLRP involves landowners and managers, including local farmers; and bodies such as Natural England and Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust. The Doddington Estate has been particularly active, including through its Wilder Doddington initiative.
12. Delivery of the project will depend heavily on securing funding. The Council will endeavour to provide further information on timescales for project implementation at a later deadline.

Appendix A:

LWLRP Briefing Note

Lincoln and Witham Landscape Recovery Project Briefing Note

Vision

The overarching Vision for the project is to deliver a more resilient landscape; thriving people and a thriving economy. This requires establishing long-term agreements ensuring high-distinctiveness habitats can remain in place in-perpetuity. In turn this will create financial and ecological resilience for landowners, facing loss of direct subsidies, extreme weather exacerbated by climate change, and volatile input and market prices. Farmers will also be encouraged to rebalance their production systems, reduce carbon emissions and rebuild soil health which in turn will diversify revenue streams, reduce reliance on subsidies and provide a more sustainable model for the long-term.

The project focuses on three main areas:

- Creation of new species-rich habitats for biodiversity
- Improved connectivity and management of existing wildlife-rich habitats
- Work to promote improved farming techniques to increase resilience and reduce environmental impact

New Species Rich Habitats

The primary biodiversity objective will be delivered through creation of a coherent landscape-scale nature network along the Witham Valley, throughout the Upper Witham catchment, along the A46 corridor and, importantly, into the city of Lincoln, with more regenerative and nature-friendly farming in between.

The project aims to create 3205ha of new habitat and 19km of riparian river restoration for biodiversity, an aim that is central to the project. Opportunities extend across the landscape and encompass the hydrological regimes of the area.

- 19km river and riparian restoration will be explored, including floodplain enhancement and river realignment.
- 885ha wet habitats will be created within the floodplain and low-lying land, including floodplain grazing marsh, floodplain meadows, wet willow carr woodland, osier beds, reedbeds and lowland fen habitats.
- 2,018ha mesic (damp) habitats will be created above the wet habitats and will include lowland meadow, other neutral grassland, scrub, wood pasture, lowland mixed deciduous woodland, field ponds and orchards (with the potential to create highly productive regenerative syntropic underplanted orchards and food forests).
- 302ha dry habitats will be created on the higher land and will include lowland heath, acid grassland, scrub, mosaics and heathland wood pasture.

Improved Connectivity & Management of Existing Wildlife Rich Habitats

The project area contains a series of high biodiversity value sites, including two SSSIs and two Wildlife Trust Nature Reserves. However, the sites are currently disconnected by large areas of intensive arable land, placing many important species at risk. In summary, the project area includes:

- 77 ha of SSSIs
- 1738 ha of Local Wildlife Sites (LWS)
- 209 ha of Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland (ASNW)
- 434 ha of Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS)

There are also two existing principal biodiversity hubs for the project:

- Whisby Nature Reserve, the county's most species-rich site (currently over 4,000 species recorded)
- Wilder Doddington, currently the Midlands' largest Countryside Stewardship Scheme and the largest inland site for nature in the county. It is set to become a regionally significant freshwater biodiversity hub following its Lottery-funded project to rewet 210 ha of the estate.

The farms and pockets of habitat across the project area will be reconnected via corridors and stepping stones, allowing wildlife to move more freely between them. Working on the Lawton principle of "bigger, better, more joined up", alongside improved management practices, this area has the potential to be a beacon for biodiversity in the midst of one of the most intensively farmed counties in England.

The project will connect designated public, NGO and private nature sites together, improving their resilience, management, status and quality.

Improved Farming Techniques – increase resilience & reduce impact

The project will support farmers and food production by cascading more regenerative, resilient, climate- and wildlife-friendly farming practices through the project area.

As a first step, almost all the farmer members seek to understand their carbon balance and soil health status. More sustainable regenerative farming will continue to produce food but focus on positive soil management, improving carbon sequestration and storage, water availability and infiltration, and biodiversity via the soil food web. It will also see significant reductions in synthetic fertilisers and agrochemicals. Further opportunities include the use of robotic technology to improve efficiency in, for example, vegetable production.

The project will use new technologies to determine the optimal areas to create connective field margins, and 'link fields' will be used to help develop corridors of biodiversity and wildlife. This will include woodland planting to connect existing woods, widening field margins and improving hedgerow

management (e.g. widening hedges, cutting regimes). Improving management techniques and adding corridors will help soften the edge effects when transitioning from nature sites into farmland.

Social Engagement

LWFNN creates an opportunity to help address multiple social issues in and around Lincoln, there are other landowners genuinely open to enabling access through the LR Development phase.

LWFNN's principle of engagement will be to work through a Social Impact Advisory Panel. These partner organisations will collaborate and co-design with our target communities. They will form the steering group for delivering strategic social targets within the project This dynamic public-private-VCSE collaboration will focus on three activities:

- Green Social Prescribing (“GSP”) ○ Engaging communities in natural heritage
- “Nextdoor-Nature” ○ Improving physical access to green spaces for all, and developing sustainable active-transport
- Nature tourism.
 - Local community participation throughout the project

Green Social Prescribing

Led by Active Lincolnshire the project will pilot a ‘Natural Health Service’ for Lincoln and Witham Valley, working with the NHS, care providers and community groups to encourage nature-based activity to improve health outcomes and reduce primary care burden via a self-funding delivery model.

Engagement may be through simply being in the space, through volunteering or taking part in activities. The activities will be promoted to target audiences through a GSP network (GPs), community and voluntary organisations, offering individual sign-ups and spaces for community organisations to bring groups as part of their regular activity.

Nextdoor-Nature

Led by LWT using the experience gained through their established and successful [Nextdoor-nature](#) initiative to bring people together to help nature flourish where they live, study and work, and facilitate nature-focused community participation. Open to nonwildlife trust members and focused on new areas specifically Lincoln and high IMD rural clusters, these community groups decide aims and objectives, with LWT supporting skill development. It is a simple format and small in scale to ensure communities find it relevant and achievable. Groups decide their plan, whilst LWT provide them with the master-planning skills and support.

Nature Tourism

This will be led by LCC via Visit Lincolnshire Services (“VLS”), building on an existing green tourism strategy in other parts of the county. North Kesteven District Council have now offered additional project management support for this part of the project. Engagement and participation will be delivered via their highly regarded web-platform (2m UVPA). It will assist facilitating micro-volunteering or citizen science

experiences which are increasingly in demand. New website resources will enable increased physical access (see below) by informing locals and visitors with trail options in the LWFNN for a range of abilities.

Project Benefits

Primary benefits of the project will include:

- Substantial flood management by reconnecting the Witham Valley with its floodplain, increasing the naturalness of the river and improving water retention in the Upper Witham catchment, especially through water meadow creation
- Water quality improvement and reduced flow rates resulting from the restoration of the Witham catchment
- A 'living lab' to monitor, measure, research and verify the impact of project delivery and provide an evidence base for future projects and policymakers
- Collaboration with other UK projects to enhance learning, build market confidence and create a best practice community for nature recovery, from financial planning and feasibility through project design to the complex nuances of delivery in practice
- Contribution to local and regional Nature Recovery Strategy, especially given Lincoln's "wide-reaching plan to weave biodiversity into every aspect of the council's remit across Lincolnshire"
- Long-term financial and environmental resilience for the farms, communities and people of Lincolnshire
- A green corridor along and across the A46, linking the project sites through green bridges
- Connecting people with nature by taking nature recovery networks into the parks, green spaces and SSSIs in the city of Lincoln, and building on the city's existing management practices to encourage species richness and biodiversity, and ambition to be a National Park City.