RWE

Peartree Hill Solar Farm

Environmental Statement

Volume 4

Appendix 7.9: Passage Bird Survey Report

Planning Act 2008

Infrastructure Planning

(Applications: Prescribed Forms

Application Document Ref: EN010157/APP/6.4

and Procedure) Regulations 2009 -

February 2025

Regulation 5(2)(a`



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1

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of this report

1.1.1 This report presents the results of a survey for passage birds undertaken in relation to the proposed Peartree Hill Solar Farm (hereafter referred to as the 'Proposed Development') on land in East Riding of Yorkshire (the 'Site') between August and September 2024 inclusive. These surveys were carried out by RSK in order to record the passage bird populations present within and in close proximity to the survey area (land within and in close proximity to Land Areas B to F).

1.2 Development proposals

- 1.2.1 The Proposed Development will connect to the National Grid Creyke Beck Substation via underground cables. Interconnecting cable routes between Land Areas B to F are shown in **Figure 1**. The maximum working width for cable installation is 30m for the grid connection cable route and 10m for the interconnections.
- 1.2.2 Existing areas of woodland within the Order Limits are to be retained, and some areas within the Order Limits will be used for ecological mitigation/enhancement.
- 1.2.3 While it is anticipated that the majority of existing field boundary habitats will be retained post-development, sections of hedgerow, field margins and trees will be affected during construction, particularly for facilitating access and cable routes. However, where possible, methods to reduce impact to boundary habitats, such as horizontal directional drilling (HDD), will be employed.
- 1.2.4 Extensive areas of the Site are due to be managed for biodiversity to mitigate the loss of ground-nesting and wintering-bird habitat, as well as to ensure the Proposed Development achieves its Biodiversity Net Gain target as explained within ES Volume 4, Appendix 7.10: Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment [EN010157/APP/6.4. Ecological mitigation areas, existing habitats will be enhanced through measures outlined within the Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (Outline LEMP) [EN010157/APP/7.5].

1.3 Site context

1.3.1 The Site encompasses an area of approximately 891 hectares (ha) and is located to the east of the town of Beverley, close to the hamlet of Meaux and villages of Routh and Long Riston.



- 1.3.2 The Order Limits comprise several Land Areas (labelled B to F) and sections of cable route, identified as follows and shown on ES Volume 3, Figure 1.2: Land Areas and Cable Routes Plan with Field Numbering System [EN010157/APP/6.3]:
 - Land Area B: Land north-west of Long Riston;
 - Land Area C: Land west of Arnold;
 - Land Area D: Land south of the A1035;
 - Land Area E: Land east of Weel;
 - Land Area F: Land north of Wawne;
 - Interconnecting cable routes: Cable B-B, Cable C-D, Cable E-E and Cable E-F;
 - Grid connection cable route.
- 1.3.3 Each Land Area is made up of number-referenced fields (e.g. B1). Most of these are arable fields. However, there are also some fields of grazed grassland, and relatively small areas of neutral grassland, broadleaved woodland and scrub in some of the Land Areas. The fields are divided by hedgerows, farm access tracks, ditches and watercourses, and there are also some small woodland blocks.
- 1.3.4 The surrounding land is largely agricultural land, farmsteads and minor settlements with a complex network of watercourses and ditches. Land Areas B to F have few roads other than Meaux Lane, which cuts through the centre of Land Areas D and F. The easternmost Fields B5 and B6 are separated from the rest of the Land Areas by the A165 road. The River Hull flows close to the western edges of Land Area E and intersects the proposed grid connection cable route. The town of Beverley lies c.1.3km west of the Land Areas at the nearest point. The North Sea and the Humber Estuary each lie c.10 km to the east and south respectively.
- 1.3.5 The interconnecting cable routes are located between the Land Areas and comprise mostly arable fields bordered by hedgerows and wet drains/ditches.
- 1.3.6 The grid connection cable route links the Land Areas to National Grid Creyke Beck Substation, located close to Cottingham. The habitat within the cable route is mostly arable fields, however there are sections of modified grassland and notable habitats within Figham Pastures Local Wildlife Site.

1.4 Survey area

- 1.4.1 The survey area upon which this report is based covers Land Areas B to F.
- 1.4.2 This report does not include the grid connection cable route as surveys are on-going and are due to be completed in April 2025. A separate report which will include Autumn and Spring passage bird surveys results and the wintering bird survey results of the grid connection cable route will be provided once surveys are completed during April 2025.



1.4.3 ES Volume 3, Figure 1.2: Land Areas and Cable Routes Plan with Field Numbering System [EN010157/APP/6.3] and Figure 1 display the Order Limits and the field numbering system.

1.5 Structure of this report

- 1.5.1 This report is structured as follows:
 - Section 2 presents legislation and guidance relevant to passage birds;
 - **Section 3** describes the methods adopted for the collection and interpretation of passage bird data;
 - Section 4 presents the results of the field survey;
 - Section 5 evaluates the results of the field surveys and assesses the importance of the passage bird populations recorded;
 - Section 6 summarises the findings of the passage bird survey report;
 - Appendix A provides supplementary survey data.



2.0 LEGISLATION, PLANNING POLICY AND GUIDANCE

2.1 Overview

2.1.1 Relevant legislation and guidance relating to passage birds is summarised below. This legislation and guidance have been used to inform the evaluation of the conservation status of the species recorded during the field survey, and when assessing the importance of the passage bird populations present.

2.2 Legislation

- 2.2.1 The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) ('The Habitats Regulations') transpose into UK legislation elements of the European Commission (EC) Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds 2009 (2009/147/EC). Under this legislation, the UK government is required to take special conservation measures (including the designation of land as Special Protection Areas (SPAs)) to conserve populations of species listed on **Annex 1** of the Directive throughout their distributions. These sites form part of the UK's national site network of core sites that are protected for rare and threatened species.
- 2.2.2 Bird species listed on **Annex 1** of the Directive are those which are deemed to be:
 - in danger of extinction;
 - vulnerable to specific changes to their habitats;
 - considered rare due to their small population sizes and/or restricted local distributions; and
 - in need of particular attention due to the specific nature of their habitat requirements.

Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)

- 2.2.3 Wild birds are protected in the UK under Section 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA) 1981 (as amended). This protection was extended by the Countryside Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000. Under this legislation it is an offence to:
 - kill, injure or take any wild bird;
 - take, damage, destroy or otherwise interfere with the nest of any wild bird while that nest is in use or being built;
 - at any other time take, damage, destroy or otherwise interfere with any nest habitually used by any wild bird listed in Schedule A1 of the WCA as a protected nest and nest site;



- obstruct or prevent any wild bird from using its nest; and
- take or destroy an egg of any wild bird.
- 2.2.4 In addition, certain species are listed on Schedule 1 of the WCA and receive special protection under Sections 1(4) and 1(5), which confer penalties where the above-mentioned offences are committed, in addition to making it an offence to:
 - disturb any such bird whilst building its nest or whilst it is in or near a nest containing eggs or young; and
 - disturb the dependent young of such a bird.
- 2.2.5 As this legislation relates to offences and penalties during the breeding season only, further reference to Schedule 1 of the WCA is not made in this report.

Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006

- 2.2.6 The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 requires local and governmental authorities and departments to have regard to the conservation of biodiversity and a range of measures associated with public rights of way and other rural affairs.
- 2.2.7 49 bird species are listed as being Species of Principal Importance for conservation in England under Section 41 (S41) of the NERC Act 2006, and as such they are a material consideration during the planning process. These Species of Principal Importance are those identified as requiring action under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UKBAP), which continue to be regarded as species of conservation priority under the UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework (which succeeded the UKBAP in July 2012).

2.3 Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework

2.3.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2024) sets out the government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. This includes requirements for the contribution to and enhancement of the natural environment, including habitats and biodiversity. The NPPF specifies the obligations that local authorities and the UK government have regarding statutory designated sites and protected species under UK and international legislation and how these are to be delivered in the planning system.

2.4 Guidance

Birds of Conservation Concern

2.4.1 The Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC) Red, Amber and Green lists categorise the UK's regularly occurring bird species according to their level of



conservation concern (Stanbury *et al.*, 2021). Although these listings confer no legal protection, they are useful in guiding conservation action for individual species when birds may be affected by plans or projects.

Red list species

- 2.4.2 These are species of high conservation concern, including:
 - species that are globally threatened according to the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) criteria;
 - species with a historical breeding decline that have not shown a substantial recent recovery;
 - species that have shown a severe breeding decline over the last 25 years or longer term;
 - species that have shown a severe breeding range decline over the last 25 years or longer term; and
 - species whose non-breeding populations have declined over the last 25 years or longer term.

Amber list species

- 2.4.3 These are species of medium conservation concern, including:
 - species of European Conservation Concern;
 - species whose populations have declined historically but which have made a substantial recent recovery;
 - species whose breeding populations have declined moderately over the last 25 years or longer term;
 - species that have shown a moderate breeding range decline over the last 25 years or longer term;
 - species whose non-breeding populations have declined moderately over the last 25 years or longer term; and
 - rare breeders or non-breeding rarity species with internationally important or localised populations.

Green list species

- 2.4.4 Green list species fulfil none of the criteria detailed above. As such, they have stable or increasing populations and are not currently of conservation concern.
- 2.4.5 Non-native species such as Canada goose (*Branta canadensis*) are not afforded Red, Amber or Green list status.



Yorkshire Priority Species

- 2.4.6 The East Riding of Yorkshire Biodiversity Action Plan (ERYBAP) sets out habitats and species of particular conservation value within the county in order to raise awareness of biodiversity issues and provide a mechanism through which conservation targets for these habitats and species can be delivered within the county.
- 2.4.7 The ERYBAP lists 18 bird species that are present within East Yorkshire at a national or regional level.

Humber Estuary SPA Component Species

- 2.4.8 The Humber Estuary SPA qualifies under article 4.2 of the European Commission Bird Directive (79/409/EEC) in that it supports an internationally important assemblage of waterbirds. The SPA lies approximately 10km to the south of the Site at its closest point. As of June 2023, the 34 main component species of the Humber Estuary SPA non- breeding waterbird assemblage are:
 - Brent goose
 - Greylag goose
 - Pink-footed goose
 - Shelduck
 - Shoveler
 - Wigeon
 - Mallard
 - Teal
 - Pochard
 - Scaup
 - Goldeneye
 - Bittern
 - Little egret
 - Marsh harrier
 - Hen harrier
 - Crane
 - Avocet
 - Oystercatcher
 - Lapwing
 - Golden plover
 - Grey plover
 - Ringed plover
 - Bar-tailed godwit
 - Black-tailed godwit
 - Whimbrel
 - Curlew
 - Turnstone
 - Knot
 - Sanderling
 - Dunlin



- Ruff
- Green sandpiperGreenshank
- Redshank



3.0 METHODS

3.1 Target species

3.1.1 For the purpose of this survey, only observations of specific target species were recorded, these being waterbirds (wildfowl, herons, waders, gulls, etc) and rare raptors (harriers, hobby, etc), with particular attention being paid to those species for which the Humber Estuary SPA is designated, as listed in paragraph 2.2.4.

3.2 Field surveys

- 3.2.1 The field surveys for passage birds were undertaken between August and September 2024 inclusive.
- 3.2.2 The large scale and flat topography of the survey area meant that vantage point (VP) surveys, which are traditionally used for observing wetland birds, such as wader species, were unsuitable for use. As the survey area is primarily composed of large arable fields bordered by hedgerows, set in an almost entirely flat landscape with no prominent rises or features, a very large number of VP surveys would have been required in order to sufficiently cover the whole survey area. Thus, walkover transect surveys were selected as the preferred method of survey to allow the Site to be accessed and surveyed in a manageable period of time.
- 3.2.3 The surveys involved suitably experienced ornithologists walking predetermined transect routes (see **Figure 2**) throughout the survey area during the daytime, mapping bird species encountered (either visually or through their vocalisations) using standard British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) species codes and behaviour notation (Marchant, 1983). The transect routes were interspersed with stops, during which the ornithologist scanned for birds using optical equipment. Where flocks of waders or wildfowl were observed, they were observed at a suitable distance so that their behaviour, such as whether they were feeding or roosting, could be noted. Birds of particular note observed within 100m of the survey area, such as flocks of waders, were also recorded. Special attention was given to undertaking counts of any notable assemblages of feeding and/or roosting birds.
- 3.2.4 In addition to the daytime transect surveys, nocturnal surveys were also carried out in order to establish the usage of the survey area by species with nocturnal activity. Nocturnal surveys were conducted by a pair of ornithologists using thermal cameras to locate birds feeding or roosting in the fields on Site. The nocturnal surveys were focused on sections of the survey area which were considered most suitable for passage birds at the time in survey, particularly in relation to crop cycle, i.e. those fields in full crop (predominantly maize or wheat) at the time of survey were omitted due to



- being unsuitable for supporting passage birds. The areas surveyed nocturnally were Fields B1-B8, C1-C9, D11-D17 and E13-E17 (see **Figure 1**).
- 3.2.5 The field surveys comprised two visits (i.e. one per month in August and September). Survey visits were undertaken in suitable weather conditions and at a range of times of day and night, avoiding extreme temperatures, heavy rain, snow or fog during which bird activity may be atypical and/or surveying may be impractical.
- 3.2.6 The dates and weather conditions for all survey visits are indicated in **Appendix A**.

3.3 Interpretation of survey results

- 3.3.1 In order to assess the importance of the passage bird populations recorded during the field surveys, interpretation of the survey results considered the following:
 - the conservation statuses of the species recorded (i.e. their inclusion on any of the legislation or conservation status categories described in Section 2);
 - the sizes of the populations recorded (i.e. species abundance); and
 - the spatial patterns of passage bird usage within the survey area, including areas and habitat types of particular importance to passage birds.
- 3.3.2 A peak count was derived for each species as being the highest number of individuals observed across the entire survey area on any one visit.

3.4 Constraints and limitations

- 3.4.1 Field surveys for passage birds were undertaken at the appropriate time of year to record the passage species potentially present on Site and took place at appropriate times of day. Survey visits were undertaken in suitable weather conditions, with occasional light rain, fog and frost encountered during the surveys considered to be insufficient to significantly affect the bird populations recorded.
- 3.4.2 It should be noted that ecological features (e.g. bird populations) are transient, and that the distributions of habitats and species may be subject to change. As such, in line with Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) guidance, the ecological survey data presented in this report are considered valid for at least two years (CIEEM, 2019), after which, if site conditions change markedly, it may be necessary for further field surveys to be undertaken.
- 3.4.3 Note a separate Information to Inform Appropriate Assessment Report has been undertaken which has considered the potential impact of the Proposed Development on bird species associated with the Humber Estuary SPA/Ramsar site and is provided in the **Habitats Regulations Assessment**



Information to Inform Appropriate Assessment [EN010157/APP/5.3]. A detailed impact assessment has been undertaken as part of ES Volume 2, Chapter 7: Biodiversity [EN010157/APP/6.2] to determine the potential impact on bird species and outline any mitigation measures (if required). Therefore, other than a broad assessment as outlined above, this report does not attempt to undertake any assessment of the likely impacts of the Proposed Development and should be regarded as a baseline report only.



4.0 RESULTS

4.1 Field surveys

4.1.1 A total of 12 target bird species were recorded during the field surveys of the survey area between August and September 2024 inclusive. The observations of each of these species are summarised in **Table 1** below, including details on location and behaviour.

Table 1: Summary of target species observations during the 2024 passage surveys

Common name	Scientific name	Number	Field ID/Location	Visit	Time	Behavi our
Mallard	Anas platyrhynchos	12	Monk Dike adjacent to C8	2	Nocturnal	Loafing
Teal	Anas crecca	43	Monk Dike adjacent to B3	1	Diurnal	Feeding
Cray baran	Ardon aineres	4	Monk Dike adjacent to C2	2	Diurnal	Feeding
Grey heron	Ardea cinerea	1	Monk Dike adjacent to C5	2	Nocturnal	Feeding
Little a met	Egretta garzetta	1	Monk Dike adjacent to B2	1	Diurnal	Feeding
Little egret		2	Monk Dike adjacent to C1	2	Diurnal	Feeding
		1	D12	1	Diurnal	Flyover
Lapwing	Vanellus vanellus	41	Large field south of D10	2	Nocturnal	Feeding
Golden plover	Pluvialis apricaria	1	E8	1	Diurnal	Flyover



Common name	Scientific name	Number	Field ID/Location	Visit	Time	Behavi our
Curlew	Numenius	46	E13	1	Diurnal	Resting
Curiew	arquata	11	E15	1	Diurnal	Feeding
Green sandpiper	Tringa ochropus	3	Monk Dike adjacent to B4	2	Diurnal	Feeding
Black-	Chroicocephalus ridibundus	1	B1	1	Diurnal	Loafing
headed gull		13	F10	2	Diurnal	Feeding
Common	Larus canus	1	B1	1	Diurnal	Loafing
gull		22	C4	2	Diurnal	Feeding
Horring and	Lorus organization	3	E1	1	Diurnal	Feeding
Herring gull	Larus argentatus	4	E11	2	Diurnal	Feeding
Lesser	l amos forces	2	E1	1	Diurnal	Feeding
black- backed gull	Larus fuscus	3	E11	2	Diurnal	Feeding



5.0 EVALUATION

5.1 Overview

- 5.1.1 The assessment of the importance of the passage bird populations recorded within the survey area, during the field surveys undertaken between August and September 2024 inclusive, is provided below, taking into consideration:
 - the conservation statuses of the species recorded (i.e. their inclusion on the legislation and guidance described in **Section 2** of this report);
 - the sizes of the populations of the species recorded (i.e. species abundance); and
 - the spatial patterns of passage bird usage within the survey area, including areas and habitat types of particular importance to passage birds.

5.2 Humber Estuary SPA Component Species

5.2.1 Of the 34 main component species of the Humber Estuary SPA non-breeding waterbird assemblage, seven were recorded on site during the field surveys. **Table 2** below compares the peak count for each of these species against the five-year average WeBS count total for the Humber Estuary.

Table 2: Assessment of Humber Estuary Population Impacts

Species	Peak count	WeBS 5-year average	%	Comment
Mallard	12	1459	0.8%	A single flock were loafing on Monk Dike during nocturnal visit 2.
Teal	43	5710	0.8%	A single flock were feeding on Monk Dike during diurnal visit 2.
Little egret	2	215	0.9%	Up to 2 birds were present feeding on Monk Dike across both visits.
Lapwing	41	15951	0.3%	A single bird flew high over Land Area D during visit 1. A flock of 41 were feeding in a large arable field adjacent to Land Areas C and D during nocturnal visit 2.
Golden plover	1	21160	>0.1%	A single bird flew high over Land Area D during visit 1.



Species	Peak count	WeBS 5-year average	%	Comment
Curlew	57	2291	2.5%	A flock of 57 birds was spread across two fields in Land Area E during diurnal visit 1.
Green Sandpiper	3	14	21.4%	A group of three birds were feeding along Monk Dike during diurnal visit 2.

5.3 Site usage by passage birds

- 5.3.1 The survey area location (including field numbers) is indicated in **Figure 1**. The distributions of passage birds recorded within the survey area are indicated in **Figure 3**.
- 5.3.2 The largest concentrations of passage birds were recorded on Monk Dike, which runs north to south through and adjacent to Land Areas B and C, including all observations of wildfowl and species recorded during the surveys. This waterbody features raised embankments on both sides along its entire length through the survey area, thus visually shielding it from the adjacent arable land.
- 5.3.3 The large arable fields on site held some suitability for wader species such as lapwing and curlew, whilst gulls were recorded sporadically feeding and resting in these fields, though the presence of these species was often influenced by local factors such as ploughing and other farm works taking place in the vicinity.
- 5.3.4 There were no significant observations of birds flying over the survey area during the survey, with overhead flyovers being limited to individual lapwing and golden plovers, without interacting with the survey area. There were no observations of wader or wildfowl species flying into or taking off from the survey area during the survey, suggesting that the survey area is not being used by populations of wetland birds in response to nearby tidal influences on the River Hull and Humber Estuary.



6.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1.1 The field surveys undertaken between August and September 2024 inclusive, to inform the Proposed Development, recorded a total of 12 target bird species using the survey area, including seven species which form part of the Humber Estuary SPA non-breeding assemblage.
- 6.1.2 The survey area contains some habitats of value to passage birds; notably the large Monk Dike which runs through the Site, and to a lesser extent the large arable fields which form the majority of the Site. The passage populations of some component species of the Humber Estuary SPA may be impacted by the development. Full assessment has been provided in the Habitats Regulations Assessment Information to Inform Appropriate Assessment [EN010157/APP/5.3] and further detail is discussed within ES Volume 2, Chapter 7: Biodiversity [EN010157/APP/6.2].
- 6.1.3 Considering the suitability of the survey area and adjacent land for passage birds, and the populations recorded during the field surveys undertaken in 2024, a detailed impact assessment has been undertaken as part of **ES Volume 2, Chapter 7: Biodiversity [EN010157/APP/6.2]**. It is envisaged that no further surveys for passage birds will be required.



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FIGURES

Figure 1 Site Location Plan with Field Numbering System

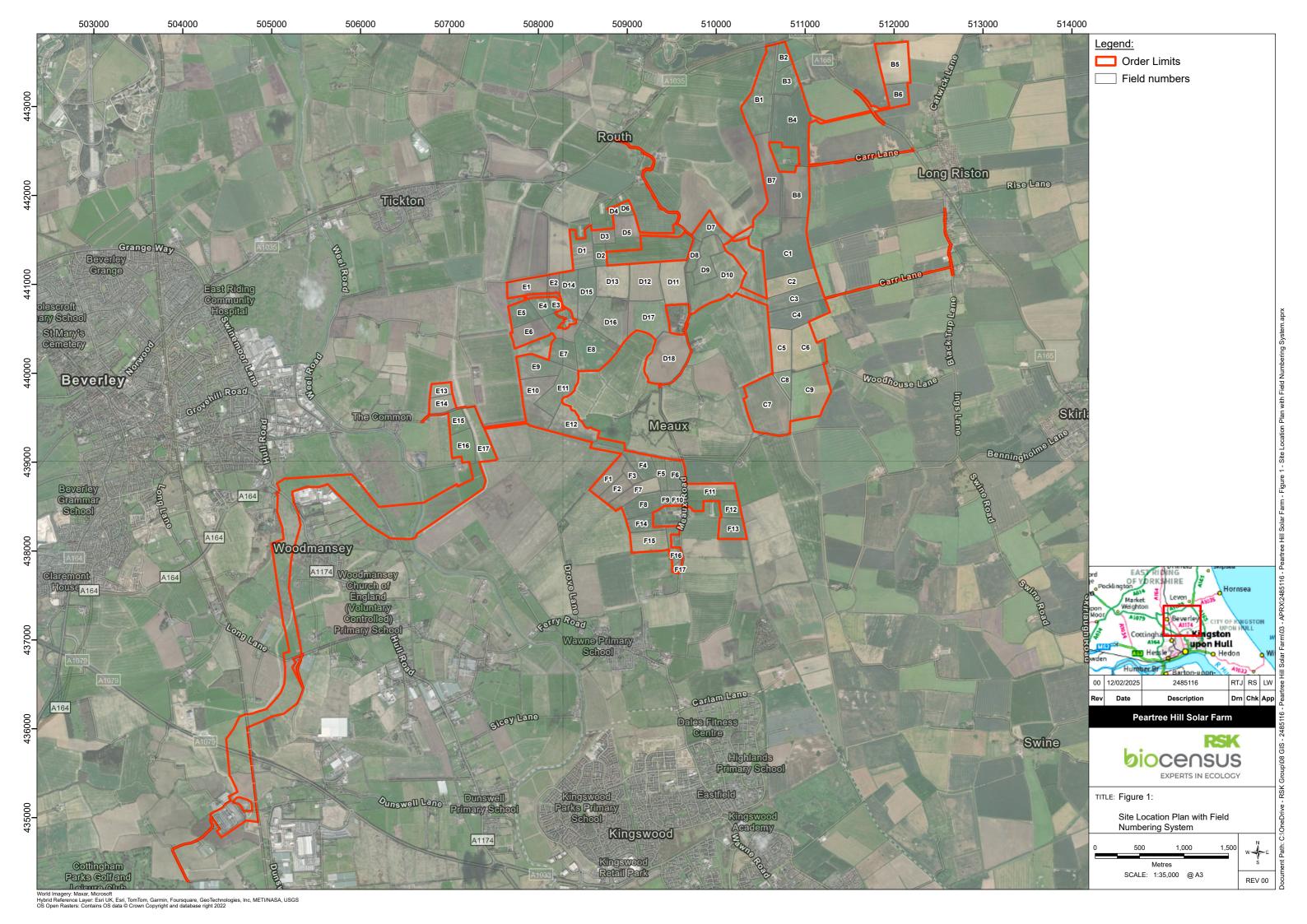




Figure 2 Transect routes

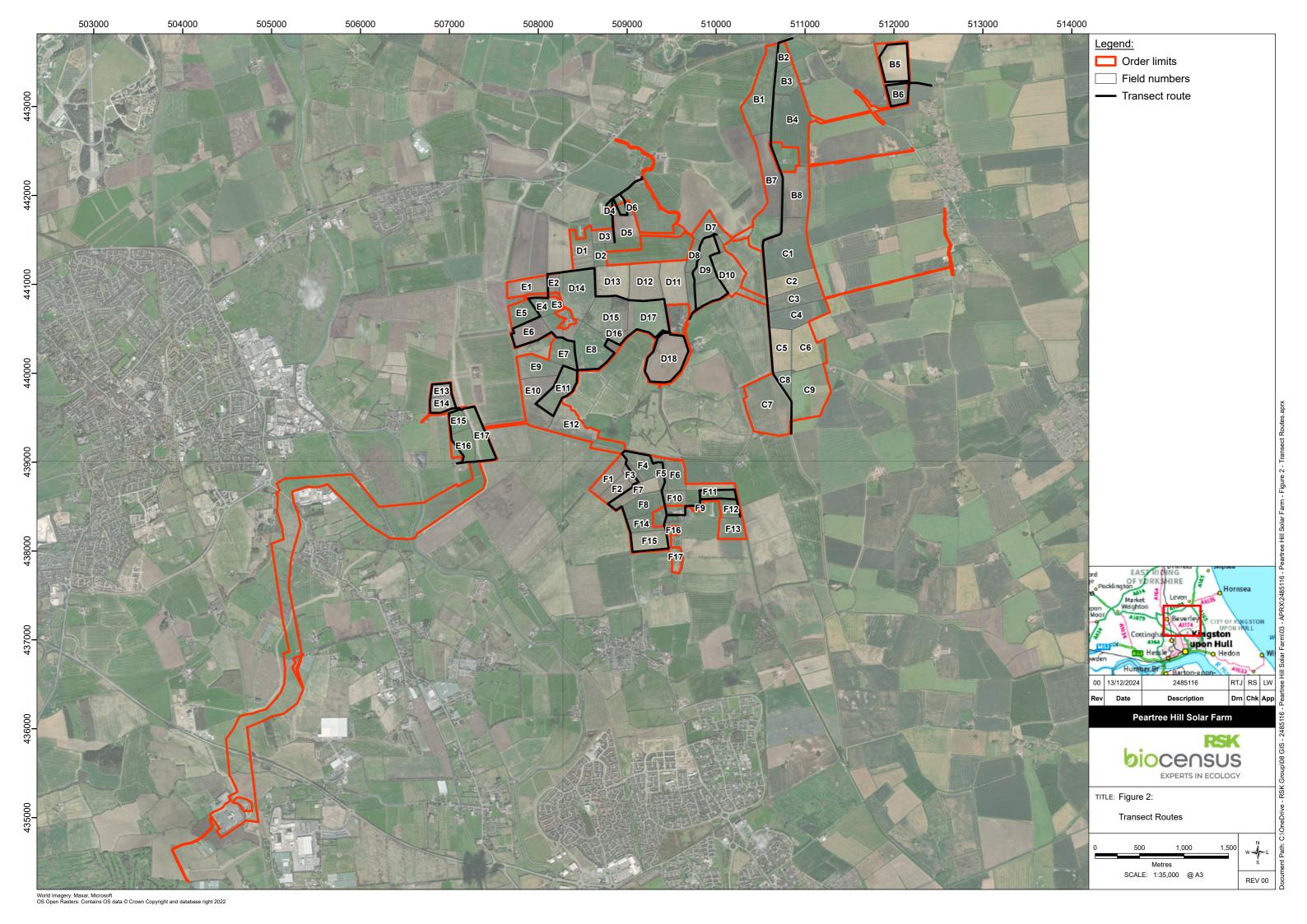




Figure 3 Target species observations















APPENDIX A – SURVEY DETAILS

Visit	Date	Fields	Diurnal/ Nocturnal			Cloud cover (oktas)		Wind strength (Beaufort	Precipitation
			Noctumal	Min	Max	Min	Max	scale) and direction	
	13/08/2024	B5-B6, E13- E17, F1-F17	Diurnal	26	26	2	2	3 NW	None
	14/08/2024	D1-D18	Diurnal	15	20	2	6	2 NE	None
1	14/08/2024	D12-D17, E13- E17	Nocturnal	19	19	0	1	1 NE	None
	15/08/2024	B1-B8, C1-C9, E1-E12	Diurnal	17	19	6	8	4 SW	Light Showers
	15/08/2024	B1-B8, C1-C9	Nocturnal	16	17	8	8	3 SW	None
2	17/09/2024	D1-D10, E13- E17, F1-F17	Diurnal	17	19	2	2	2 E	None
	17/09/2024	D12-D17, E13- E17	Nocturnal	13	15	0	0	1 NE	None
	18/09/2024	B1-B8, C1-C9, D11-D18	Diurnal	14	17	2	2	2 NE	None



Visit		Date	Fields	FIAIRE	Diurnal/ Nocturnal	Temperature (° C)		Cloud cover (oktas)		Wind strength (Beaufort	Precipitation
			Noctumal		Min	Max	Min	Max	scale) and direction		
		18/09/2024	B1-B8, C1-C9	Nocturnal	12	13	0	2	2 E	None	
		19/09/2024	E1-E12	Diurnal	14	16	8	8	2 NE	None	

RWE Renewables UK Limited

Windmill Hill Business Park, Whitehill Way, Swindon, Wiltshire, England, SN5 6PB www.rwe.com