

Date: 21 October 2025
Our ref: 528972
Your ref: EN010157

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BY EMAIL ONLY

Dear Inspector,

NSIP Reference Name / Code: EN010157
User Code: F0F015D2C

Title: Natural England's comments in respect of the Peartree Hill Solar Farm Project, promoted by RWE Renewables UK Solar and Storage Limited (Deadline 4).

Examining Authority's submission deadline with a date of 31 October 2025.

Natural England is a non-departmental public body. Our statutory purpose is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.

For any further advice on this consultation please contact the case officer [REDACTED] at [REDACTED]@naturalengland.org.uk and copy to consultations@naturalengland.org.uk.

Yours faithfully

[REDACTED]
Yorkshire and Northern Lincolnshire Area Team
Natural England

Natural England’s Written Representations

PART I: Summary and conclusions of Natural England’s advice.
PART II: Natural England’s detailed advice (starting on page 7)

Part I: Summary and conclusions of Natural England's advice

Summary of Natural England's advice

Natural England considered that the Applicant has provided insufficient evidence and is not yet satisfied that the following issues have been addressed:

- **Internationally designated sites.**
 - Potential loss of functionally linked land for the relevant qualifying birds features of the listed SPA/Ramsar sites.
- **Protected Species.**
 - Protected species – Badger.
 - Protected species – Breeding birds.

1.1 Natural England's advice in these relevant representations is based on information submitted by RWE Renewables UK Solar and Storage Limited (*'the Applicant'*) in support of its application for a Development Consent Order ('DCO') in relation to Peartree Hill Solar Farm (*'the project'*).

1.2 Part I of these Written Representations provides a summary (above) and overall conclusions of Natural England's advice. This advice identifies whether any progress in resolving issues has been made since submission of our Written Representations (REP2-154).

1.3 Our comments are set out against the following sub-headings which represent our key areas of remit as follows:

- International designated sites
- Nationally designated sites
- Protected species
- Biodiversity net gain
- Soils and best and most versatile agricultural land
- Ancient woodland and ancient/veteran trees

1.4 Our comments are flagged as red, amber, yellow, green or grey:

- **Red** are those where there are fundamental concerns which it may not be possible to overcome in their current form.
- **Amber** are those where further information is required to determine the impacts of the project and allow the Examining Authority to properly undertake its task and/or where further information is required on mitigation/compensation proposals in order to provide a sufficient degree of confidence as to their efficacy.
- **Yellow** are those where Natural England does not agree with the Applicant's position or approach. We would ideally like this to be addressed but are satisfied that for this particular project it is unlikely to make a material difference to our advice or the outcome of the decision-making process. However, we reserve the right to revise our opinion should further evidence be presented. It should be noted by interested parties that whilst these issues/comments are not raised as significant concerns in this instance, it should not be understood or inferred that Natural England would be of the same view in other cases or circumstances.
- **Green** are those which have been successfully resolved (subject always to the appropriate requirements being adequately secured).
- **Grey** are notes for Examiners and/or competent authority.

1.5 Natural England has been working closely with RWE Renewables UK Solar and Storage Limited to provide advice and guidance on the Peartree Hill Solar Farm project since 2024 through Natural England's Discretionary Advice Service. Natural England has agreed to attend meetings with the Developer with a view to progressing Statements of Common Ground as part of the Examination process and to try to resolve outstanding issues ahead of the Examination. We have engaged on the draft Statement of Common Ground (SoCG).

2. Internationally designated sites

2.1 Natural England's position regarding internationally designated sites has changed since submission of our Written Representations (REP2-154).

2.2 Our updated advice regarding impacts on internationally designated sites on the basis of further information submitted is set out below. Further detail on our reasoning for this is given against each impact pathway within Part II.

2.3 Natural England is not yet satisfied for 'amber' issues identified in the text below that it can be ascertained beyond reasonable scientific doubt that the project would not have an adverse effect on the integrity of the following internationally designated sites.

- Humber Estuary Special Protection Area (SPA)
- Humber Estuary Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
- Humber Estuary Ramsar.

2.4 Further information is required to assess the following impact pathways for the above designated sites:

- Potential loss of functionally linked land for the relevant qualifying birds features of the listed SPA/Ramsar sites – Permissive footpaths in the proposed mitigation areas (construction and operation) ('amber') **[NE1b]**.

2.5 Natural England has also noted a number of 'yellow' issues in relation to the above internationally designated sites. As stated in section 1, we would ideally like these to be addressed, but we are satisfied that for this particular project it is unlikely to make a material difference to our advice or the outcome of the decision-making process. Please find a summary of each 'yellow' issue below, and refer to Table 1 for further details:

- Potential loss of functionally linked land for the relevant qualifying birds features of the listed SPA/Ramsar sites – Bird surveys (construction and operation) ('yellow') **[NE1e]**.

2.6 Natural England is satisfied that 'green' issues are unlikely to result in adverse effects on the integrity of the following internationally designated sites, subject always to the appropriate mitigation/compensation as outlined in the application documents being adequately secured.

- Potential loss of functionally linked land for the relevant qualifying birds features of the listed SPA/Ramsar sites – Core mitigation areas and the implementation of a buffer ('green') **[NE1a]**.
- Potential loss of functionally linked land for the relevant qualifying birds features of the listed SPA/Ramsar sites – Hydrology of the proposed mitigation areas (construction and operation) ('green') **[NE1c]**.
- Potential loss of functionally linked land for the relevant qualifying birds features of the listed SPA/Ramsar sites – Management of the proposed mitigation areas (construction and operation) ('green') **[NE1d]**.

- Potential loss of functionally linked land for the relevant qualifying birds features of the listed SPA/Ramsar sites – In combination impacts (construction and operation) ('green') **[NE1g]**.
- Potential noise and visual disturbance impacts to functionally linked land for relevant qualifying bird features of the listed SPA/Ramsar sites – construction (construction) ('green') **[NE2a]**.
- Potential water quality impacts – construction – Horizontal Directional Drilling – Bentonite breakout (construction) ('green') **[NE5]**.

3. Nationally designated sites

3.1 Natural England's position regarding nationally designated sites has not changed since submission of our Written Representations (REP2-154).

4. Protected species

4.1 Natural England's position regarding European protected species has changed since submission of our Written Representations (REP2-154).

4.2 Our updated advice regarding impacts on protected species on the basis of further information submitted is set out below. Further detail on our reasoning for this is given against each impact pathway within Part II.

4.3 Natural England's position regarding protected species is summarised below. Further detail on our reasoning for this is given in Part II.

- Protected species– Badger ('amber') **[NE8b]**.
- Protected species– Bats ('green') **[NE8c]**.
- Protected species– Breeding birds ('yellow') **[NE8d]**.

5. Biodiversity Net Gain Provision

5.1 Natural England's position regarding provision of biodiversity net gain has not changed since submission of our Relevant Representations (RR-012).

6. Soils and best and most versatile agricultural land

6.1 Natural England's position regarding soils and best and most versatile agricultural land has changed since submission of our Written Representations (REP2-154).

6.2 Our updated advice regarding impacts on soils and the best and most versatile agricultural land on the basis of further information submitted is set out in the paragraphs below. Further detail on our reasoning is given in Part II.

6.3 Natural England's position regarding soils and the best and most versatile agricultural land is summarised below. Further detail on our reasoning for this is given in Part II.

- Soils and best and most versatile agricultural land - Comments on Appendix 10.2: Agricultural Land Classification Report ('grey') **[NE10]**.
- Soils and best and most versatile agricultural land - Comments on Outline Soil Management Plan ('grey') **[NE11]**.

7. Ancient woodland and ancient/veteran trees

7.1 Natural England is not providing bespoke advice on the ancient woodland and ancient/veteran trees information provided in the Environmental Statement (ES) for this project. Our position regarding ancient woodland and ancient/veteran trees is summarised below. Further detail on our reasoning for this is given in Part II.

- Ancient woodland and ancient/veteran trees – General ('grey') **[NE12]**.

8. Natural England's overall conclusions

8.1 Natural England's advice is that there are a number of matters which have not been resolved satisfactorily as part of the pre-application process that must be addressed by RWE Renewables UK Solar and Storage Limited and the Examining Authority as part of the Examination and consenting process before development consent can be granted, as summarised in Section 2 above and outlined in further detail in Part II below.

8.2 Some of these matters are important enough to mean that if they are not satisfactorily addressed it would not be lawful to permit the project due to its impacts on SAC, SPA, Ramsar and SSSI interests. The specific concerns in relation to each are detailed in Part II.

Natural England's Written Representations

9. Part II: Natural England's detailed advice

9.1 Part II of these Representations updates and where necessary augments Part II of the Written Representations (REP2-154). It expands upon the detail of all the significant issues ('amber' issues) which, in our view remain outstanding and includes our advice on pathways to their resolution where possible. Part II also shows 'green' issues which have been agreed since our Written Representations (REP2-154) (subject always to the appropriate requirements being secured adequately).

9.2 Natural England will continue engaging with the applicant to seek to resolve these concerns throughout the examination. Natural England advises that the matters indicated as 'amber' will require consideration by the Examining Authority during the examination.

Table 1: Natural England's Written Representations					
NE key issue ref	Topic	Issue summary (C) – construction phase (O) – operational phase	NE commentary and advice on the further information required to enable assessment.	Natural England comment on the mechanism for securing mitigation/compensation measures in the DCO	Risk Red/ Amber/ Green/ Grey
NE1a	International designated sites <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Humber Estuary SPA Humber Estuary Ramsar 	Potential loss of functionally linked land (FLL) for the relevant qualifying bird features of the listed SPA/Ramsar sites. (C) and (O)	<u>Core mitigation areas and the implementation of a buffer</u> Natural England welcome the updated information provided. We agree that this point is now resolved.		'Green'
NE1b	International designated sites <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Humber Estuary SPA 	Potential loss of functionally linked land (FLL) for the relevant qualifying bird features of the listed SPA/Ramsar sites.	<u>Permissive footpaths in the proposed mitigation areas</u> Natural England is progressing discussions with the applicant regarding the design of permissive footpaths in proximity to the proposed mitigation areas.	Further information required.	'Amber'

Table 1: Natural England's Written Representations					
NE key issue ref	Topic	Issue summary (C) – construction phase (O) – operational phase	NE commentary and advice on the further information required to enable assessment.	Natural England comment on the mechanism for securing mitigation/compensation measures in the DCO	Risk Red/ Amber/ Green/ Grey
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Humber Estuary Ramsar 	(C) and (O)	<p>We advise that it should be ensured that any fencing or hedgerows between the mitigation areas and footpaths are sufficiently robust to prevent the movement of dogs and people between the permissive footpaths and the wintering/breeding bird mitigation areas.</p> <p>Natural England would encourage the use of 'positive' signage, highlighting the reasons for any fencing used, including, for example, pictures of the relevant bird species, in order to improve public engagement.</p> <p>We highlight that alternative 'dog run' areas away from the bird mitigation areas may also be effective at reducing impacts and enabling public enjoyment of the site. We therefore suggest that it may be appropriate to consider whether there are other areas within the site design that would be suitable for dogs to be off lead and incorporate relevant signage.</p>		
NE1c	International designated sites <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Humber Estuary SPA Humber Estuary Ramsar 	<p>Potential loss of functionally linked land (FLL) for the relevant qualifying bird features of the listed SPA/Ramsar sites.</p> <p>(C) and (O)</p>	<p><u>Hydrology of the proposed mitigation areas</u></p> <p>Natural England agree that this point is now resolved, based on the additional information provided at Deadline 4 and the commitment to implement appropriate measures to 'ensure the bird scrapes hold water during the winter and accomplish their purpose', with the scrapes monitored and maintained to ensure suitable wetland habitat.</p>		'Green'

Table 1: Natural England's Written Representations					
NE key issue ref	Topic	Issue summary (C) – construction phase (O) – operational phase	NE commentary and advice on the further information required to enable assessment.	Natural England comment on the mechanism for securing mitigation/compensation measures in the DCO	Risk Red/ Amber/ Green/ Grey
NE1d	International designated sites <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Humber Estuary SPA Humber Estuary Ramsar 	Potential loss of functionally linked land (FLL) for the relevant qualifying bird features of the listed SPA/Ramsar sites. (C) and (O)	<p><u>Management of the proposed mitigation areas</u></p> <p>Natural England welcome the following updates to the proposed management of the mitigation areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The maximum target winter sward height within the proposed mitigation areas (Areas 9, 11 and 13) will be 10cm. Should monitoring indicate a decline in bird numbers below the pre-construction baseline, site level factors such as habitat management will be considered in the assessment. Bird monitoring surveys will be undertaken once a month from November to March, with these surveys occurring annually for years 1-3, followed by monitoring at two-year intervals for years 3-10 and at five year intervals subsequently. Tables 15-3 and 16-3 of the oLEMP [REP3-032] have been updated to include examples of remedial measures. We recommend that the remedial measures in 15-3 and 16-3 of the oLEMP [REP3-032] should be revised to incorporate 'appropriate measures to increase invertebrate numbers', such as muck spreading, grazing animals or other locally appropriate methods. Muck spreading relies upon a suitable source of livestock manure, so other options to increase invertebrate numbers should be explored where necessary. However, this clarification is unlikely to make a material difference to our advice or the outcome of the decision-making process. A monitoring report will be produced following each of the completed surveys, with Natural England consulted if the site is failing to meet its targets. 		'Green'

Table 1: Natural England's Written Representations					
NE key issue ref	Topic	Issue summary (C) – construction phase (O) – operational phase	NE commentary and advice on the further information required to enable assessment.	Natural England comment on the mechanism for securing mitigation/compensation measures in the DCO	Risk Red/ Amber/ Green/ Grey
			Natural England agree that this point is now resolved.		
NE1e	International designated sites <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Humber Estuary SPA Humber Estuary Ramsar 	Potential loss of functionally linked land (FLL) for the relevant qualifying bird features of the listed SPA/Ramsar sites. (C) and (O)	<u>Bird surveys</u> Based on the updated information provided, overall, Natural England agrees that pink-footed geese will not be significantly affected by disturbance/displacement from functionally linked land within the grid connection corridor during construction. This is due to factors including the short-term nature of the construction works within the grid connection corridor and the highly mobile nature of pink-footed geese. The agreed non-breeding bird mitigation areas will also provide additional feeding areas for this species during this period. We do not agree with the conclusion that the grid connection cable route is not considered to constitute functionally linked land for pink-footed geese. However, due to the factors outlined above, we advise that significant effects on this species can be ruled out in this case.	Further information required.	'Yellow'
NE1g	International designated sites <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Humber Estuary SPA Humber Estuary Ramsar 	Potential loss of functionally linked land (FLL) for the relevant qualifying bird features of the listed SPA/Ramsar sites. (C) and (O)	<u>In combination impacts</u> Natural England welcome the updates to the in-combination assessment provided in the sHRA [REP3-014]. We agree that this point is now resolved. Natural England note that application 25/00275/STPLF will be required to complete an in-combination assessment with this development.		'Green'

Table 1: Natural England's Written Representations					
NE key issue ref	Topic	Issue summary (C) – construction phase (O) – operational phase	NE commentary and advice on the further information required to enable assessment.	Natural England comment on the mechanism for securing mitigation/compensation measures in the DCO	Risk Red/ Amber/ Green/ Grey
NE2a	International designated sites <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Humber Estuary SPA Humber Estuary Ramsar 	Potential noise and visual disturbance impacts to functionally linked land for relevant qualifying bird features of the listed SPA/Ramsar sites. (C)	<p><u>Noise and visual disturbance impacts to functionally linked land for relevant qualifying bird features of the listed SPA/Ramsar sites during construction</u></p> <p>Natural England welcome the clarification provided in the applicants <i>Response to Deadline 2 submission</i> [REP3-039] that the measures included in the oCEMP [REP3-026] will be implemented to mitigate the effect of disturbance/displacement or relevant bird features of the Humber Estuary SPA/Ramsar within and adjacent to the Order Limits, including the grid connection cable route.</p> <p>We agree that this point is now resolved.</p>		'Green'
NE5	International designated sites <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Humber Estuary SAC Humber Estuary Ramsar 	Potential water quality impacts - construction (C)	<p><u>Horizontal Directional Drilling - Bentonite breakout</u></p> <p>We welcome that Natural England will be consulted as a statutory consultee on the bentonite breakout procedures included in the CEMP, prior to construction commencing.</p> <p>We agree that this point is now resolved.</p>		'Green'
NE8b	Protected species	Protected species - Badger	<p><u>Badger</u></p> <p>Natural England notes the additional information provided at Deadline 3 regarding badger. We advise that the oCEMP should include avoidance of works within 30m of badger setts in the first instance. Where this is not possible, the mitigation/licence requirements detailed</p>	Further information required.	'Amber'

Table 1: Natural England's Written Representations					
NE key issue ref	Topic	Issue summary (C) – construction phase (O) – operational phase	NE commentary and advice on the further information required to enable assessment.	Natural England comment on the mechanism for securing mitigation/compensation measures in the DCO	Risk Red/ Amber/ Green/ Grey
			should be implemented. The applicant has agreed to include this update in the oCEMP. Subject to the agreed amendments, this point will be resolved.		
NE8c	Protected species	Protected species - Bats	<p><u>Bats</u></p> <p>Natural England welcome the measures secured for bats in the oCEMP [REP3-026] and oOEMP [REP3-030].</p> <p>We welcome that, where reasonably practicable, double row Heras fencing with either camouflage netting over the top or filled with brash is suitable where sections of hedgerow are to be removed. Natural England would welcome brash as the preferable option, and advise that should netting be used, the use of netting on both sides of the fencing as well as across the top would be welcomed.</p> <p>We agree that this point is now resolved.</p>		'Green'
NE8d	Protected species	Protected species – Breeding birds	<p><u>Breeding birds</u></p> <p>Natural England welcome the clarification provided regarding how national trends will be considered in the assessment of bird numbers and 'success' of the mitigation areas. We welcome that should monitoring indicate a decline in bird numbers below the pre-construction baseline, site level factors, such as habitat management, will also be considered in the assessment.</p> <p>Please refer to NE1B for our outstanding comments regarding permissive footpaths in the proposed mitigation areas.</p>	Further information required.	'Yellow'

Table 1: Natural England's Written Representations					
NE key issue ref	Topic	Issue summary (C) – construction phase (O) – operational phase	NE commentary and advice on the further information required to enable assessment.	Natural England comment on the mechanism for securing mitigation/compensation measures in the DCO	Risk Red/ Amber/ Green/ Grey
NE10	Soils and best and most versatile agricultural land	Comments on <i>Appendix 10.2: Agricultural Land Classification Report</i>	<p>Natural England notes that a detailed ALC and soil survey has not been undertaken of the grid connection cable route at this stage, with a detailed soil/land quality survey of the grid connection cable route to be undertaken post-consent/pre-construction.</p> <p>Natural England recommends a bespoke soil-investigation programme agreed at an early stage, proportionate to the site's scale and complexity. Agreeing a truncated survey now and postponing comprehensive sampling risks under-estimating local soil variability, agricultural sensitivity and reinstatement challenges and it undermines the integrity of the eventual Soil Management Plan.</p> <p>We advise, however, that if the ExA determine that the proposed approach is acceptable, micro siting of the cable route should be informed by any surveys undertaken.</p>	N/A	'Grey'
NE11	Soils and best and most versatile agricultural land	Comments on the <i>Outline Soil Management Plan</i>	<p>Natural England welcome that the Outline Soil Management Plan covers the full order limits, including the grid connection cable route.</p> <p>Natural England recommend that all soils should only be handled in a dry and friable condition. Natural England welcome the confirmation provided in the Outline Soil Management Plan (oSMP) [REP1-062] that soil handling will be principally confined to the period April to October.</p> <p>Natural England welcome that 'All soil trafficking and handling operations will be undertaken under the supervision of an</p>	N/A	'Grey'

Table 1: Natural England's Written Representations					
NE key issue ref	Topic	Issue summary (C) – construction phase (O) – operational phase	NE commentary and advice on the further information required to enable assessment.	Natural England comment on the mechanism for securing mitigation/compensation measures in the DCO	Risk Red/ Amber/ Green/ Grey
			<p><i>appropriately trained and experienced person, who will advise on and supervise soil handling, including identifying when soils are dry enough to be handled</i>. Given the high quality of the agricultural land, we recommend that this should include supervision of soil handling by a competent soil specialist.</p> <p>Natural England welcome that all storage bunds intended to remain in situ for more than 6 months, or over the winter period, will be grassed over, with weed control and other necessary maintenance carried out.</p> <p>Natural England welcome the commitment in section 10 of the oSMP [REP1-062] to provide information on the grid connection corridor in a Soil Management Plan, and to restore the land to the same ALC grade after installation of the cable and restoration of the works.</p>		
NE12	Ancient woodland and ancient/veteran trees	Ancient woodland and ancient/veteran trees - General	<p>Natural England notes that, as a result of Change 9, veteran tree T381 is no longer within or adjacent to the Order Limits and will not be impacted by the Proposed Development, and that consequently there are no longer any veteran/ancient trees within the Order Limits.</p> <p>We note that there are two locations where veteran trees are located adjacent to proposed access tracks.</p> <p>Natural England advises that it should be determined whether the proposed approach is in line with Natural England's <u>standing advice</u> for ancient woodland, which should be referred to. Natural England is not providing bespoke advice on the ancient woodland information provided in the ES for this project. Any further information provided</p>	The requirement for mitigation has not been assessed by Natural England.	'Grey'

Table 1: Natural England’s Written Representations

NE key issue ref	Topic	Issue summary (C) – construction phase (O) – operational phase	NE commentary and advice on the further information required to enable assessment.	Natural England comment on the mechanism for securing mitigation/compensation measures in the DCO	Risk Red/ Amber/ Green/ Grey
			<p>has not been assessed by Natural England. We note that further detailed will be provided in an Arboricultural Method Statement, which will be produced prior to construction. We advise that the Local Planning Authority Ecology team should be consulted on this document.</p> <p>The requirement for mitigation/compensation has not been assessed by Natural England.</p>		