

# Steeple Renewables Project

**Outline Decommissioning Plan** 

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## **Outline Decommissioning Plan**

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# **Outline Decommissioning Plan**

Steeple Renewables Project.

On behalf of RES Limited.

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### 1. Introduction

- 1.1. This document has been prepared by Pegasus Group on behalf of Steeple Solar Farm Limited (the 'Applicant'), in support of the Application for a Development Consent Order ('DCO') for Steeple Renewables Project (the 'Proposed Development'). It includes the proposed method for the removal of all the solar ('PV') panels, batteries, structures, enclosures, equipment, and all other apparatus associated with the scheme.
- 1.2. The scheme comprises the construction, operation, maintenance and decommissioning of a ground mounted solar photovoltaic generating station with a total capacity exceeding 50MW. The scheme also includes an Energy Storage Facility (for the purposes of the Application, this is assumed to employ battery technology and therefore referred to as a 'Battery Energy Storage System' or 'BESS' throughout the application). The generating station sites associated substation and BESS are to be connected to the National Grid at a substation at West Burton Power Station. Further details on the scheme are provided in the **Environmental Statement ('ES') Chapter 4 'Proposed Development' [EN010163/APP/6.2]**.
- 1.3. The Applicant has provided input into this outline Decommissioning Plan ('oDP'), prepared by Pegasus Group, as part of an Application for a DCO for the construction, operation and maintenance, and decommissioning of the Proposed Development.
- 1.4. Once the Proposed Development ceases to operate, the development will be decommissioned. The operational life of the scheme is anticipated to be up to 40 years. A 40-year period for the operational phase of the development has therefore been assessed in the ES which accompanies the DCO application.

### **Decommissioning Plan (DP)**

- 1.5. Prior to the commencement of the decommissioning phase of the scheme, a contractor will be appointed, and a Decommissioning Plan ('DP') (or multiple 'DPs') and a Decommissioning Traffic Management Plan ('DTMP') will be produced and approved for the scheme. Approval and implementation of the DP and the DTMP will be secured through a Requirement of the DCO.
- 1.6. The potential for significant effects associated with the decommissioning of the scheme is anticipated to be similar to that of construction. The DPs and DTMP will therefore include similar measures to those included in the outline Construction Environmental Management Plan ('oCEMP') (ES Appendix 4.1 outline Construction Environmental Management Plan) [EN010163/APP/6.3.4] and the detailed Construction Environment Management Plans ('CEMPs'), as well as the outline



Construction Traffic Management Plan ('oCTMP') **(ES Appendix 13.2 Outline Construction Traffic Management Plan) [EN010163/APP/6.3.13]** submitted with the application, covering issues such as transportation methods, pollution prevention, and noise management.

- 1.7. The DP(s) will adhere with regulations and guidance applicable at the time, but is expected to include:
  - An overview of the scheme, decommissioning activities, and programme;
  - Prior assessment of potential environmental impacts;
  - Mitigation measures to prevent or reduce potential adverse impacts;
  - Monitoring of effectiveness of mitigation measures; and
  - Links to other complementary plans and procedures.



### 2. Principles of Decommissioning and Environmental Considerations

### **Decommissioning Activities**

- 2.1. After decommissioning, land within the Site, defined by the **Order limits** plan **[EN010163/APP/2.4]**, will be returned to the respective landowners and to its original use. All above ground infrastructure will be carefully removed in accordance with the procedures and controls set out in the DP and DTMP.
- 2.2. Foundations and all other below ground infrastructure, which are not practicable to remove without major disturbances, will be cut to 1m below the surface to enable future ploughing. If any piles are used in construction, these will be removed at this stage too.
- 2.3. Whether or not the 400kV and 132kV cables are removed is dependent on the perceived environmental impact of this at the time, and they could be left in situ if required to limit these impacts. However, it is considered generally desirable to remove the cables where possible, for both recycling purposes and to leave the land as close to its previous state as possible.
- 2.4. To minimise surface disturbances, cables would be removed from the ducts without the subsequent removal of the ducts themselves.
- 2.5. Soil sourced on the Site, or supplemented by imported soil where required, will be used to backfill all excavations, using appropriate soil management techniques. Some soil profiling may be required, and the land will be contoured.
- 2.6. The soil resource within the Site will be managed through construction, operation, and decommissioning phases to enable restoration of the land to its pre-construction condition at the end of operation. An outline Soil Management Plan ('oSMP') is included in the DCO Application (ES Appendix 15.2 outline Soil Management Plan) [EN010163/APP/6.3.15] and identifies measures to be implemented to:
  - Ensure the protection and conservation of soil resources;
  - Maintain the physical properties of the soils through best practice; and
  - Provide on-Site reference on the management of soil resources for Site operators undertaking the works.



- 2.7. An Agricultural Land Classification Report has been included in the submission (ES Appendix 15.1 Agricultural Land Classification Report [EN010163/APP/6.3.15]) and will form the basis of how the land will be left at the end of the operational phase. Whilst the scheme is operational, some of the land will be used for lower intensity farming practices, such as for sheep grazing, and some will be left fallow. This means, by the end of the scheme's operational phase, it will have undergone up to 40 years of recovery time, so it is expected to be of better quality once decommissioned than it is at present.
- 2.8. If localised soil compaction occurs during construction, operation and or decommissioning, management measures can be implemented to alleviate compaction (e.g. through ploughing and aeration), to maintain soil structure and enable reinstatement of the land to its original use.
- 2.9. All roads and PRoWs are being retained as part of the Proposed Development and No.2 new permissive paths included. These will be managed up to decommissioning, with the timing of their removal, if required, to be confirmed within the DP.

### **Decommissioning Programme**

- 2.10. It is expected that the decommissioning of the Proposed Development will take 12 months to be completed.
- 2.11. The ES assesses the Proposed Development based on decommissioning taking place up to 40 years after operation, commencing no later than 2070.
- 2.12. The DP(s) will provide more details on the phasing of the decommissioning, which will be determined in consultation with the relevant Local Planning Authorities, prior to works commencing.



### 3. Environmental Mitigation and Management

**Table 3.1** below contains a summary of potential mitigation and management measures for the decommissioning period.

Table 3.1 - Decommissioning Mitigation and Management Measures

Mitigation and Management Measure	Effect
Climate Change  Suitable measures will be implemented to manage the heightened risks posed by flooding and extreme weather events. The safety of all members of staff will be paramount.  The same measures proposed for the construction phase (see oCEMP) ES Appendix 4.1 outline Construction Environmental Management Plan) [EN010163/APP/6.3.4] will also be adopted for the decommissioning phase in respect of Climate Change.	Minimise greenhouse gas emissions from activities and vehicles during decommissioning (e.g. the use of electric vehicles and equipment where possible).  Increase resilience to heightening flood risks resulting from climate change, during decommissioning and ensure Site personnel are protected and aware of potential risks.
The decommissioning works will be carried out in line with Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (or equivalent), the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, and The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (or equivalent). Standard management measures will be implemented to prevent pollution incidents, minimise effects on ecology from noise and vibration, prevent and minimise dust creation and air pollution. These management measures are likely to be the same as those in the oLEMP (ES Appendix 7.14 outline Landscape and Environmental	To minimise the loss of established habitats and protected species_and minimise impact on biodiversity within the Site.



### **Management Plan)**

[EN010163/APP/6.3.7]), but will include restrictions on working in proximity to important habitats (by buffering and protective fencing), precautions to take during periods of prolonged dry or wet weather, restrictions on the use and storage of chemicals, oils and fuels, and the avoidance of sediment runoff and use of sediment barriers near to ditches and watercourses. Precautionary working method statements concerning the above actions would be produced and implemented.

No more than twelve months prior to decommissioning commencing, the site will be visited by an appropriately qualified ecologist to identify any ecological constraints likely to arise from decommissioning activities. Further surveys, mitigation and/or compensatory measures may then be required. As a minimum, an extended Phase 1 Habitat survey (or equivalent) will be required to identify the potential presence of protected species and important habitats. Examples of likely mitigation measures to be adopted during decommissioning include:

### Ecological Clerk of Works ('ECoW')

The method statements to be detailed in the DP would be controlled and monitored through the direction of an appointed Ecological Clerk of Works who will be present on Site during decommissioning works. The ECoW would also ensure that pre-arranged mitigation is undertaken, and records are kept.



### **Nesting and Breeding Birds**

Measures will be implemented to mitigate for impacts to nesting and breeding birds. Where reasonably practicable, vegetation clearance works would be undertaken outside the bird breeding season (March-August inclusive).

### **Reptiles and Amphibians**

Reasonable avoidance measures would be used during habitat clearance suitable for reptiles, encouraging animals to move away from affected areas to adjacent suitable habitats.

### **Badgers**

Implementation of an appropriate buffer of between 10 and 30m around a badger sett during decommissioning works. If Solar PV panels fall within the buffer they will be removed as agreed with ecology consultant and responsible consultees at Decommissioning phase.

#### **Bats**

Implementation of an appropriate buffer of between 8 and 25m around trees with bat roost potential or identified bat roosts during decommissioning works. If Solar PV panels fall within the buffer they will be removed as agreed with ecology consultant and responsible consultees at Decommissioning phase.

### **Invasive Species**

The pre-decommissioning surveys will provide an update on the presence and location of any invasive species, which



will help to inform the production of a Biosecurity Management Plan (if required). If any future infestations of invasive non-native species are identified prior to any decommissioning works, exclusion zones will be established around them, and the ECoW contacted for advice as required.

### **Noise and Vibration**

Relevant standards of good practice for noise and vibration in BS 4142, WHO/BS 8233 and IEMA guidance (or subsequent guidance at Decommissioning phase) will be followed to minimise noise and vibration impacts from activities and vehicles. These include:

- Avoiding unnecessary revving of engines will be avoided, and switching off of equipment when not in use;
- Routing decommissioning traffic appropriately on public roads and along access tracks;
- Minimising drop heights of materials;
- Starting up plant and vehicles sequentially rather than all together;
- Using plant in accordance with manufacturers' instructions and undertaking regular and effective maintenance by trained personnel to keep plant and equipment working to manufacturer's specifications;

Minimise noise and vibration from activities and vehicles during decommissioning and ensure levels of noise and vibration do not exceed relevant guidance.



- Where possible, loading and unloading will be carried out away from noise-sensitive areas; and
- Localised screening of noise generating sources during noisy activities should be implemented to minimise any potential impacts on nearby noise sensitive receptors.

Working hours onsite are likely to be Monday to Friday 07:00 – 18:00 and between 08:00 and 3:30 on Saturdays. However, some activities may be required outside of these times (such as abnormal loads). Requirements for monitoring during the decommissioning stages will be set out and agreed in the DP. The noise monitoring scheme is expected to be similar to that for the construction phase.

Consideration will also be given in the DTMP to traffic routing, timing and access points to the DCO Site to minimize noise impacts at existing receptors.

### Water

Relevant Good Practice Guidance ('GPGs') and Pollution Prevention Guidance ('PPGs'), as well as additional good practice guidance for the water environment including British Standards and key Construction Industry Research and Information Association ('CIRIA') documents, will be followed for the water environment and flood risk during decommissioning.

Best practices will be incorporated into the safe storage of materials, including Minimise the risk of flooding, runoff, and pollution to waterbodies.



containment measures, bunding, drip trays installed as part of plant and machinery used and water suppression will be used to supress dust emissions.

A Water Management Plan will be developed as part of the DP (if required). The plan would detail management measures including any water quality monitoring measures.

If runoff from the decommissioning of the Site is treated on-Site, a Water Discharge Activity Permit will be acquired as necessary.

# Socio Economics, Tourism and Recreation

Support for temporary and permanent workforce will be directed to the primary healthcare facilities with the greatest capacity.

### **Soils and Agriculture**

A Soil Management Plan ('SMP') will be prepared (if required) in accordance with the **outline SMP (ES Appendix 15.2 [EN/010163/APP/6.3.15])**, setting out measures to manage the reinstatement of any soils and minimising soil disturbance and soil compaction when extracting the solar PV panels' supporting infrastructure.

It will be particularly important to avoid causing soil compaction during the decommissioning phase. For that reason, tracked plant and machinery will be equipped with low ground pressure tyres to reduce ground pressure.

No effects.

Protect and conserve soil resources on-Site wherever feasibly possible and maintain the physical properties of the soils through best practice for reinstatement.



In areas where soil may need to be reinstated (e.g. where buildings are demolished, or tracks taken up), Defra's Construction Code of Practice for the Sustainable Use of Soils on Construction Sites (PB13298) may provide useful guidance.

### **Transport**

A DTMP will be prepared to manage the associated traffic and will include measures to minimise the impact of construction traffic on surrounding roads, including disruption and risk of traffic accidents along local access roads and along Public Rights of Way ('PRoW'). Measures will include:

- Restricting movement of Heavy Goods Vehicles ('HGVs') to certain routes and time windows within the day;
- A monitoring system and Delivery Management System to record the route of HGVs to and from the Site and regulate their arrival times to ensure compliance; and
- Encouraging alternative travel arrangements for Site personnel, including car sharing and shuttle bus services in order to reduce the volume of vehicle trips required.

Minimise the impact of construction traffic on surrounding roads, including disruption and risk of traffic accidents along local access roads and along PRoW.

### **Air Quality**

Standards of good practice for air quality, as set out in the Institute of Air Quality Management ('IAQM') 'Guidance on the Assessment of Dust from Demolition and Construction' (or relevant guidance) will be followed to

Minimise dust emissions from activities and vehicles.



minimise dust from decommissioning activities and vehicles.

A Dust Management Plan may be required as part of the DP and would detail any dust monitoring required, including any relevant baseline dust monitoring to be undertaken before the activities commence.

### Landscape

#### **Tree Protection Measures**

All decommissioning works to be in line with Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (or equivalent).

Any hedgerow removal that may be required as part of decommissioning works are to be carried out in line with the provisions in the DCO and (where applicable) the latest regulations at the time of decommissioning (currently the Hedgerow Regulations 1997 and The Management of Hedgerows (England) Regulations 2024-Draft).

Any woodland felling that may be required as part of decommissioning works are to be done so in line with provisions in the DCO and (where applicable) Regulation 8a of the Forestry (Felling of Trees) Regulations 1979 or subsequent updates. Where felling work exceeds the volume contained within the Regulations a licence must be obtained prior to felling to avoid enforcement and restocking requirements.

A Tree Survey Report and Arboriculture Impact Assessment in line with BS 5837:2012 (Ref 3-4) or subsequent Protect trees and conserve landscape and biodiversity features.



update would be undertaken ahead of any decommissioning works.

Additional surveys may be required prior to the decommissioning phase as advised as necessary by the Applicant's arboricultural specialist, based on the findings of the Tree Survey Report and Arboriculture Impact Assessment.

An Arboricultural Method Statement (AMS) would be produced prior to decommissioning works, where decommissioning works are likely to affect trees. All works would be undertaken in line with the AMS.

Where works in close proximity to retained trees cannot be practically avoided, these works will be undertaken in accordance with current best practice, defined in British Standard BS 5837:2012.

Trees (or subsequent update) in relation to design, demolition and construction – Recommendations (Ref 3-4) or subsequent updates.

All necessary protective fencing will be installed prior to the commencement of any site clearance or decommissioning works.

All works affecting trees should be undertaken in accordance with best practice tree protection measures.

### Lighting

Standard good practice measures will be followed with regards to safe site lighting.



#### Waste

Suitable measures for the sustainable use of resources and waste management will be implemented during decommissioning. The contractor will seek to use material resources efficiently, reduce waste at source and that which requires final disposal to landfill, and apply the principles of the waste hierarchy.

PV panels and battery storage units will be removed and recycled as far as practical and in accordance with legislation and guidance applicable at the time, or if more suitable at the time, sold for refurbishment and reuse.

It is anticipated that waste products associated with the decommissioning process, would not need to be shipped as a result of decommissioning of the Proposed Development.

A Decommissioning Resource Management Plan ('DRMP') setting out how measures to manage the disposal of waste from the Site may be required in accordance with relevant legislative and policy requirements at the time of decommissioning.

The separation of the main waste streams on-site, prior to transport to approved, licensed third party waste facilities, including Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment ('WEEE') reprocessors, for recycling or disposal will take place.

The provision of prefabricated welfare units and construction site offices allows for the reduction of construction

Minimising unnecessary use of resources and waste production during decommissioning.

Minimising adverse impacts on waste handling facility capacity during decommissioning.



and demolition waste generated by the Proposed Development.

A Decommissioning Waste Management Strategy will be provided as part of the DP to ensure decommissioning waste streams are sent to waste recycling and handling facilities that have sufficient capacity to handle waste arisings from the Proposed Development without adversely impacting upon their capacity to handle waste arisings for all other waste streams in the authority area.

### **Ground Conditions**

Standards of good practice for ground conditions will be followed during decommissioning to prevent, contain, and remediate contamination. These will include the following:

- Good standards of personal hygiene, welfare facilities and the use of Personal Protective Equipment ('PPE'). Personnel will be required to wear PPE during decommissioning, such as dust masks and gloves;
- Workers to adhere to health, safety and environmental precautions to reduce the potential for any accidents and incidents. Workers to be made aware of the risks and the necessary precautions to take to minimise pollution;
- A 'Discovery Strategy' protocol to be enforced, ensuring any discovered contamination during decommissioning will be addressed and managed by a land contamination specialist;

Minimise the risk of decommissioning contamination.



- Dust suppression and management systems to control air-borne contaminants to be enforced, preventing migration. Methods include washing down of vehicle's wheels and dampening down materials;
- Fuels and chemicals to be stored appropriately within a secure, impervious bund (110% volume of container). Spill kits and Spill Response Plans to be developed and implemented; and
- Equipment to be regularly maintained to prevent leaks, with refuelling activities undertaken on impermeable surfaces and biodegradable oils prioritised in sensitive areas.

Environment Agency to be notified in the event of any suspected pollution incidents. Additional measures proposed for the construction phase will also be adopted for the decommissioning phase in respect of Ground Conditions (see ES Appendix 4.1 outline Construction Environmental Management Plan) [EN010163/APP/6.3.4].

### **Minerals**

During the decommissioning process, plant and structures will be removed to restore the baseline condition for the identified mineral resources. Where infrastructure is left in situ after decommissioning, such as cable ducts, these do not present any significant constraint to future mineral extraction.

To restore the baseline condition for the identified mineral resources.



### **Major Accidents and Disasters**

Various risk assessments and management plans will be undertaken prior to the works commencing to assess the risk of major accidents and disasters during decommissioning.

The works will be undertaken in accordance with relevant Health and Safety legislation and guidance with relevant emergency details publicised and communicated to all Site personnel.

Minimising the risk of major accidents and disasters and protecting Site personnel.

### **Cultural Heritage and Archaeology**

Activities associated with the decommissioning phases are not considered to cause any further impact to buried archaeological remains or beyond that which will occur during the construction phase.

Likewise, the decommissioning phase is not considered to cause additional indirect impacts to heritage assets to those caused during the commissioning or operational phases.

Temporary fencing will be erected around Scheduled Monuments during decommissioning to ensure no works are undertaken within a buffer zone of the Scheduled area. Banksmen must be aware of scheduled area buffer zones and will be responsible for ensuring no vehicle/plant movement occurs in these areas. Following decommissioning and removal of plant and structures, the baseline condition for the identified heritage assets will be restored.

No effects.



In line with Section 10 of the Outline
Written Scheme of Investigation for
Archaeological Works (ES Appendix 9.4
outline Written Scheme of
Investigation for Pre-Determination
Trial Trenching)
[EN010163/APP/6.3.9] and ES
Appendix 9.5 outline Written Scheme
of Investigation for PostDetermination Archaeological Works
[EN010163/APP/6.3.9]), a
Decommissioning Plan ('DP') will be
agreed with the Archaeological Advisor
to the relevant Local Planning Authority

Decommissioning Plan ('DP') will be agreed with the Archaeological Advisor to the relevant Local Planning Authority prior to decommissioning, which will be sufficient to safeguard any archaeological remains during the decommissioning phase.

### **Responding to Environmental Incidents and Emergencies**

3.1. Environmental Manager(s) will be designated by the Contractor(s) and they will be responsible for the implementation of the DP(s). This individual will be notified as soon as it is safe to do so following an environmental incident or emergency. A reporting procedure will be agreed with the local authority and any other statutory bodies such as the Environment Agency. Staff will be informed of this process and made aware that it is everyone's responsibility to call the emergency services, should this be needed.

### **Good Practice**

3.2. To assist in reducing pollution and nuisance from the Proposed Development, best practice measures will be employed. A strategy, such as Considerate Constructors Scheme ('CCS') (or equivalent scheme at the time), will be adopted that goes beyond statutory compliance, (where relevant to decommissioning).



### 4. Implementation and Operation

- 4.1. The DP(s) will set out all roles, responsibilities and actions required in respect of implementation of the mitigation measures, including:
  - An organogram showing team roles, names, and responsibilities;
  - Training requirements for relevant personnel on environmental topics;
  - Information regarding on-Site briefings and toolbox talks that will be used to
    equip relevant staff with the necessary level of knowledge to follow
    environmental control procedures;
  - Measures to advise employees of changing circumstances as work progresses;
  - Communication methods;
  - Document control;
  - Monitoring, inspections, and audits of Site operations; and
  - Environmental emergency procedures.



### 5. Monitoring and Reporting

- 5.1. Throughout the decommissioning phase, environmental monitoring of the Proposed Development and its impacts will be undertaken, and monitoring requirements will be detailed in the DP(s).
- 5.2. The Environmental Manager will observe Site activities and report any deviations from the DP(s) in a logbook, along with the action taken and general conditions at the time. The Applicant will be informed by the contractor(s) of any deviations from the DP(s) as soon as possible following identification of such issues. The Environmental Manager would also act as day-to-day contact with the local authority and other regulatory agencies, such as the Environment Agency.
- 5.3. During decommissioning, the Environmental Manager will conduct regular walkover inspections to ensure all requirements of the DP(s) are being met and any actions will be documented on an Environmental Action Schedule for implementation.



<u>Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)</u> Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004

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