

Steeple Renewables Project

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Environmental Statement – Volume 1

April 2025

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Planning Act 2008

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Chapter 1: Introduction

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 Steeple Solar Farm Limited (the “Applicant”) has commissioned this Environmental Statement (ES) that forms part of a suite of documents supporting an application under Section 37 of the Planning Act 2008¹ to the Secretary of State (SoS) for the Department of Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) for a Development Consent Order (DCO) for the Steeple Renewables Project, (hereafter referred to as “the Proposed Development”).
- 1.1.2 The Proposed Development constitutes a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) as it comprises the construction of a generating station (section 14 of the Planning Act 2008) in England that does not generate electricity from wind, is not an offshore generating station and has a capacity of more than 50 Megawatts (MW) (section 15(2) of the Planning Act 2008).
- 1.1.3 The Proposed Development also falls within the definition of ‘EIA development’ under the Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017² (hereafter referred to as “the EIA Regulations”), therefore requiring Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).
- 1.1.4 This ES presents the findings of the EIA of the Proposed Development in relation to a DCO application for the construction, operation, and decommissioning of a ground mounted solar photovoltaic (PV) electricity generation station with a capacity of over 50 Megawatts (MW) and associated development comprising of energy storage and grid connection infrastructure on land at Sturton le Steeple (hereafter referred to as “the Site”), in accordance with the EIA Regulations and the Planning Act 2008.
- 1.1.5 The Proposed Development will be located within the ‘Order limits’ (the land shown in **Figure 1.1- Site Location Plan [EN010163/APP/6.4.1]**).
- 1.1.6 This **Chapter 1- Introduction** is supported by the following appendices as part of ES Volume 2 – Appendices **[EN010163/APP/6.3.1]**:
- **Appendix 1.1 - Steeple Renewables Project EIA Scoping Report**
 - **Appendix 1.2 - EIA Scoping Opinion**

¹ HMSO (2008) The Planning Act 2008.

² HMSO (2017) The Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017

- **Appendix 1.3 - Environment Agency EIA Scoping Response**
- **Appendix 1.4 - EIA Statement of Competence**

1.1.7 This **Chapter 1- Introduction** is supported by the following figures as part of ES Volume 3 – Figures [EN010163/APP/6.4.1]:

- **Figure 1.1- Site Location Plan**

1.1.8 A glossary and list of abbreviations are defined in the **Chapter 19: Glossary** [EN010163/APP/6.2.19] of the ES.

1.1.9 This Chapter outlines the purpose and structure of the ES and provides an overview of the Applicant and the Proposed Development.

The Applicant

1.1.10 The Applicant, Steeple Solar Farm Limited is a wholly owned subsidiary of Renewable Energy Systems (RES) Limited, formed to create and develop the Steeple Renewables Project (Proposed Development).

1.1.11 RES Limited is the world's largest independent renewable energy company, working across 24 countries and active in wind, solar, energy storage, green hydrogen, transmission and distribution. As an industry innovator for over 40 years, RES has delivered more than 27GW of renewable energy projects across the globe and supports an operational asset portfolio exceeding 41GW worldwide for a large client base.

1.2 Consenting Regime and the Requirement for EIA

EIA Process

1.2.1 An EIA is a process for identifying the likely significance of environmental effects (beneficial or adverse) arising from a Proposed Development, by comparing the existing environmental conditions prior to development (the baseline) with the environmental conditions during/following the construction, operational and decommissioning phases of a development should it proceed. An ES is a document that sets out the findings of an EIA.

1.2.2 The baseline for the EIA assessment has been derived from surveys and studies within and around the Site. The ES has also considered measures to avoid, reduce, or mitigate any significant adverse effects on the environment and, where possible, enhance the environment. It has then identified 'residual' effects, which are defined as the effects that remain on receptors following the implementation of mitigation

measures. The potential for cumulative effects from the Proposed Development and other developments are also considered, as well as in-combination effects (multiple environmental effects from the Proposed Development combined to affect the same receptor or resource). The EIA is carried out prior to the submission of a planning application. The methodology and approach of the EIA process is explained in detail at **Chapter 2 - EIA Methodology and Public Consultation [EN010163/APP/6.2.2]**.

Planning Act 2008

- 1.2.3 The Planning Act 2008 dictates that the SoS is responsible for determining the application for a DCO, with the power to appoint the Planning Inspectorate to manage and examine the application. In this role, PINS will examine the application through an appointed Examining Authority for the Proposed Development and make a recommendation to the SoS who will then decide whether to grant a DCO which authorises and permits the Proposed Development.

The Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017

- 1.2.4 For NSIPs in England, the legislative requirements for EIA are set by the EIA Regulations and it is defined by Regulation 5 of the EIA Regulations as a process consisting of:
- a) “the preparation of an environmental statement or updated environmental statement, as appropriate, by the applicant;*
 - b) the carrying out of any consultation, publication and notification as required under these Regulations or, as necessary, any other enactment in respect of EIA development; and*
 - c) the steps that are required to be undertaken by the Secretary of State under regulation 21 or by the relevant authority under regulation 25, as appropriate.”*
- 1.2.5 EIA is not required for all developments. ‘Schedule 1’ developments of the EIA Regulations identifies development types that always require EIA. ‘Schedule 2’ developments identifies development types that require EIA if they are likely to lead to significant effects on the environment by virtue of factors such as their nature, size or location in accordance with Regulation 3(1). Schedule 3 of the EIA Regulations provides the selection criteria for reaching a conclusion on that judgement, a process known as ‘Screening’.

- 1.2.6 The Proposed Development would fall under Schedule 2, under Paragraph 3(a) of Schedule 2 of the EIA Regulations as it constitutes ‘industrial installations for the production of electricity, steam and hot water’.
- 1.2.7 The Applicant has confirmed to the Planning Inspectorate under Regulation 8(1)(b) of the EIA Regulations that an ES will be provided with the DCO application for the Proposed Development (as required by Regulation 5(2)(a) of the Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedure) Regulations 2009³ (hereafter referred to as the “APFP Regulations”).
- 1.2.8 The statutory requirements for carrying out an EIA, the contents of an ES, and procedures for determining DCO applications are set out within the EIA Regulations.

Scoping

- 1.2.9 On 19th April 2024, the Applicant submitted an EIA Scoping Request to the PINS on behalf of the Secretary of State. The issues that the Applicant considers the EIA will need to address were identified in the Steeple Renewables Project EIA Scoping Report (see **Appendix 1.1 – Steeple Renewables Project EIA Scoping Report [EN010163/APP/6.3.1]**).
- 1.2.10 PINS reviewed and consulted on the Scoping Report and published an EIA Scoping Opinion on 3rd June 2024 which included the formal responses received by PINS and other consultees (see **Appendix 1.2 – EIA Scoping Opinion [EN010163/APP/6.3.1]** and **Appendix 1.3 – Environment Agency EIA Scoping Response [EN010163/APP/6.3.1]**). All issues raised in the Scoping Opinion have been considered during the EIA process and are discussed in further detail in the technical chapters.

1.3 Site Location

- 1.3.1 The Site is located within the administrative area of Bassetlaw District Council (BDC) and is located approximately 5km to the south of Gainsborough and includes part of the existing West Burton Power Station site around the existing 400kV substation. Other settlements within the vicinity of the Site include:
- Sturton le Steeple, located adjacent to the eastern and western boundaries of the Site;

³ HMSO (2009) Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedure) Regulations 2009

- Knaith, which is located approximately 250m to the east of the Site on the opposite side of the River Trent;
- North Leverton with Habbleshthorpe and Fenton located adjacent to the southern boundary;
- South Leverton located approximately 1.1km to the south of the Site;
- Clarbrough located approximately 850m to the west; and
- North Wheatley and South Wheatley located approximately 1.3km and 1km to the north-west of the Site, respectively.

- 1.3.2 The Site is located approximately 10m to the west of (and not within) the administrative authorities of Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) and West Lindsey District Council (WLDC).
- 1.3.3 The location of the Proposed Development is shown on **Figure 1.1- Site Location Plan [EN010163/APP/6.4.1]**. The land within the Order limits that forms the subject of this ES extends to approximately 888.3 hectares (ha).
- 1.3.4 A detailed description of the Site together with the design iterations of the Proposed Development are within **Chapter 3 - Site Description, Site Selection and Iterative Design Process of this ES [EN010163/APP/6.2.3]**.
- 1.3.5 A breakdown of the field parcels within the Order Limits of the Site is shown on **Field Numbering Plan [EN010163/APP/2.5]** to assist with the identification of particular fields in relation to the EIA findings.

1.4 Overview of the Proposed Development

- 1.4.1 The Proposed Development would provide vital new energy infrastructure required to ensure security of supply to the UK, supporting the strategy of the DESNZ for responsible energy generation that provides a more sustainable, low carbon economy.
- 1.4.2 It is anticipated that the Proposed Development could create renewable energy to power 180,000 homes, with the intention of reducing carbon inputs into the atmosphere. Over the lifecycle of the Proposed Development, a total greenhouse gas emissions saving of 1,380,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent is anticipated, as stated in **Chapter 13: Climate Change [EN010163/APP/6.2.13]**.

- 1.4.3 Solar power plays an important role in moving the UK away from its reliance on fossil fuels. The Proposed Development is a Critical National Priority (CNP), which seek to deliver security of energy supply. Compliance with the Overarching National Policy Statement (NPS) for Energy (EN-1) and the NPS for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (EN-3) will be determined through examination.
- 1.4.4 The **Planning Statement [EN010163/APP/7.1]** demonstrates the clear need for the Proposed Development, as supported through national planning policy and energy strategy. The Proposed Development would contribute to the UK Government's legally binding target to reach net-zero emissions by 2050 and respond to the projected increase in demand for electricity, as well as improving UK energy security and resilience in line with national strategy.
- 1.4.5 The Proposed Development comprises the construction, operation (including maintenance) and decommissioning of ground-mounted solar PV and battery energy storage systems.
- 1.4.6 It is anticipated that the Proposed Development will include the following key components:
- Solar photovoltaic (PV) panels and associated infrastructure (e.g. PV module mounting infrastructure, inverters, transformers and switchgear);
 - Cable infrastructure (including high, medium, and low voltage power, earthing, communication, and control);
 - Substation compound housing an onsite substation and control buildings;
 - Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) compound house Battery Storage Enclosures (BSE) and associated infrastructure;
 - Fencing and security measures;
 - Internal access tracks and crane hardstandings;
 - Site entrances onto the highway;
 - Temporary construction areas, worker facilities, compounds, and infrastructure;
 - Landscaping including creation of new habitat areas;
 - Permissive paths; and
 - Biodiversity mitigation.

- 1.4.7 Subject to obtaining the necessary consents, construction of the Proposed Development is anticipated to commence at the earliest in 2027, and to be completed and the Proposed Development operational in 2029.
- 1.4.8 The Proposed Development is anticipated to be operational for a maximum of 40 years, at which point the decommissioning phase will commence (i.e., 2069).
- 1.4.9 Environmental impacts arising from the Proposed Development have been considered as part of the EIA process, and the results are presented within this ES. The baseline for the assessment has been derived from surveys and studies within and around the Site. The general methodology for the EIA is explained further in **Chapter 2 – EIA Methodology and Public Consultation [EN010163/APP/6.2.2]** and in the methodology section of each technical assessment chapter.
- 1.4.10 The Proposed Development is described further in **Chapter 4 - Proposed Development [EN010163/APP/6.2.4]** of this ES.

1.5 Structure of the ES

- 1.5.1 This ES comprises studies on each aspect of the environment that has been identified as likely to be significantly affected by the Proposed Development (the ‘technical chapters’), which are supported with Figures and Technical Appendices where appropriate. The only exception to this structure is **Chapter 17 - Miscellaneous Issues [EN010163/APP/6.2.17]** which presents assessments relating to topics where no individual chapter was considered to be needed, due to the brevity of the assessment or the relatively small impact with regard to the Proposed Development.
- 1.5.2 The structure of the ES is outlined below in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1 Structure of the ES

Structure of the ES	
ES Volume 1 – Chapters	
This volume includes ‘general’ chapters that describe the EIA context, provide a description of the Proposed Development, and sets out the scope of the ES, followed by the ‘technical’ chapters containing topic-by-topic environmental information and concluding with a summary and glossary.	
Chapter 0	Contents
Chapter 1	Introduction
Chapter 2	EIA Methodology and Public Consultation
Chapter 3	Site Description, Site Selection and Iterative Design Process
Chapter 4	Proposed Development
Chapter 5	Planning Policy
Chapter 6	Landscape and Visual Impact and Residential Amenity
Chapter 7	Ecology and Biodiversity
Chapter 8	Hydrology, Hydrogeology, Flood Risk and Drainage
Chapter 9	Cultural Heritage
Chapter 10	Socio-Economics
Chapter 11	Noise and Vibration
Chapter 12	Climate Change
Chapter 13	Transport and Access
Chapter 14	Air Quality
Chapter 15	Land Use and Agriculture
Chapter 16	Glint and Glare
Chapter 17	Miscellaneous Issues
Chapter 18	Summary
Chapter 19	Glossary

ES Volume 2 – Technical Appendices

This volume includes the technical reports and data that accompany the technical assessments in Volume 1.

ES Volume 3 – Figures

This volume includes all the figures that are referenced; however, some figures are integrated into the Chapters.

Non-Technical Summary

This is a standalone report which summaries the findings of the EIA, written in non-technical language.

1.5.3 For continuity, the figures and appendices are arranged and presented using the same reference numbers as the chapters as a means of providing supportive background and technical information.

1.5.4 **Appendix 2.1 - Schedule 4 Requirements of the Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017, as amended [EN010163/APP/6.3.2]** sets out information to be included in the ES and identifies where this information can be found within this ES.

1.6 EIA Project Team

1.6.1 The team responsible for the production of this ES has been coordinated and managed by Pegasus Group. Pegasus Group is accredited under the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (“IEMA”) ‘Quality Mark’ scheme which is a mark of excellence in EIA co-ordination and management. Pegasus Group have extensive experience of undertaking EIA work across a range of projects and development types.

1.6.2 The consultants who have contributed to the preparation of this ES are set out in Table 1.2 below.

Table 1.2 Consultant Team

Topic	Consultant
EIA Coordination	Pegasus Group
Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment	
Residential Visual Amenity	
Cultural Heritage	
Socio-Economics	
Transport and Access	
Miscellaneous Issues	
Ecology and Biodiversity	BSG Ecology
Hydrology, Hydrogeology, Flood Risk and Drainage	RSK
Noise and Vibration	RES
Air Quality	Hoare Lea
Land Use and Agriculture	Kernon Countryside Consultants Roberts Environmental Ltd
Glint and Glare	Pager Power
Climate Change	LUC
Cumulative Effects and Inter-relationships	EIA Project Team

- 1.6.3 Regulation 14(4)(a) of the EIA Regulations require that the ES is prepared by ‘competent experts’. The EIA is being led by Pegasus Group on behalf of the Applicant. Pegasus Group has been awarded the EIA Quality Mark from the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) demonstrating competency in EIA preparation.

- 1.6.4 A Statement of Competence setting out the relevant expertise of each of the topic authors is provided in **Appendix 1.4 - Statement of Competence [EN010163/APP/6.3.1]** of this ES.

1.7 Availability of the ES and Comments

- 1.7.1 Copies of the ES may be obtained via the contact details set out on the website of the Proposed Development (www.steeplerenewablesproject.co.uk), the costs for which are set out below:

- Main Text and Technical Appendices – 0.35p per sheet to cover printing costs;
- Non-Technical Summary (“NTS”) – £15; and
- Digital copies of the above documents on a CD or pen drive - £15.

- 1.7.2 Postage is payable on all orders. For copies of any of the above please contact Pegasus Group (quoting reference P22-1144) at the following address:

Pegasus Group
Pavilion Court
Green Lane
Garforth, Leeds
LS25 2AF

- 1.7.3 The ES and other DCO application material will also be available to view on the National Infrastructure Planning Website –
<http://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/>

- 1.7.4 The website is managed by the Planning Inspectorate, the Government agency responsible for examining applications for NSIPs.