

Steeple's Renewables Project - ENO10163

Written Submission Following ISH2 - 11th and 12th February 2026 - Submitted on Behalf of Fields For Farming.

agenda item 6.) Biodiversity and Ecology.

I would like a further response from the applicant regarding on what basis do they assume that the hare population will thrive in and around the solar infrastructure. I accept I made a mistake by referring to hare being a protected species, indeed they are a priority species. I can find no research from this country where hare have been found to thrive in an area of landscape of approximately 1,866 acres that was previously open and ideal habitat but has then turned to solar. In fact this is because this has not yet occurred. The chief ecologist on behalf of the applicant states the hare will be able to thrive on the swathes of land at the field edges and within the fenced areas of solar arrays. However, this must be an assumption.

Our concern at FFF is based on common sense. The fox is the main predator of hare and hare survives because it likes to be in the middle of open fields where it grazes and constantly looks up and around to check for predator and if he is at risk he runs and has plenty of open space to famously out run the fox. If the hare is confined behind fencing with perhaps just a handful of gaps in the fencing his chances of escape are much reduced and foxes being very clever will likely work out how to block the gaps. Furthermore, if the hare is grazing, resting etc in the swathes at the edges the fox has perfect cover in the hedgerow and will be able to get close to the hare to pounce. The hare will have the long length to run but not the width. Leverets in both situations will be easy prey. We note that each field given to solar isn't just a handful of fields as per other smaller solar 'farms' where hare has the option of shifting his territory a few acres along. This development covers a huge area. Common sense informs us hare will struggle to thrive and become a biodiversity net loss. Of course the other main threat to hare apart from fox is human!

We ask kindly for the examiners to ask the applicant again to evidence his claim that hare will not be affected.

I also would like to ask about the project manager's statement that the top soil that has been farmed will be removed and taken away and stored for future reinstatement on the land for farming. How is this done?, can soil be stored for 40 years and be kept healthy for farming? Is there research and evidence to show this can be done? This was a very surprising statement.

Thank you,

Kind regards,

Karen Hodgson - on behalf of Fields for Farming.

