
Steeple Renewables Project

Statement of Common Ground between Applicant and Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust

March 2026

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1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of this document

- 1.1.1 This Statement of Common Ground ('SoCG') has been prepared to support the Examination of the Development Consent Order ('DCO') application for the Steeple Renewables Project (the 'Proposed Development').
- 1.1.2 The SoCG has been prepared jointly by Steeple Solar Farm Limited (the 'Applicant') and Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust ('NWT') to clarify the current position of the relative parties on specific matters that are, or have been, under discussion. It seeks to confirm to the Examining Authority ('ExA') where there are points of agreement between the parties and where agreement has not been reached to date. It therefore aids the ExA in identifying any specific issues that may need to be addressed during the Examination and provides a structure to any further discussions for the parties engaged in the SoCG.
- 1.1.3 This document has been prepared in response to a specific request from the ExA as per the Rule 6 Letter Issued 10th October 2025.

1.2 Terminology

- 1.2.1 Section 2 of this document sets out the relevant matters raised through discussion between the parties. It provides a summary of the position of each party and identifies the status of discussion on each matter:
- "Agreed" means that a matter has been resolved between the parties and is not anticipated to be subject to further discussion:
 - "Under discussion" means that a matter remains in active dialogue between the parties and a final position has not been reached:
 - "Not Agreed" means that the parties have established a final position that they cannot resolve the matter and will remain a point of difference.
- 1.2.2 In accordance with the request from the ExA in the Rule 6 Letter, a **Low**, **Medium** and **High** 'traffic light' (also known as a RAG system) is applied to each matter to indicate the likelihood of their resolution during the Examination period.

1.3 Status of this document

- 1.3.1 This document is currently at draft stage. Matters engage are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1 – Matters engaged in this SoCG

Ecology Survey Areas	Designed in Mitigation Measures	Clarborough Tunnel SSSI	Local Wildlife Sites	Shadow Habitat Regulation Assessment	Biodiversity Mitigation Areas	Biodiversity Net Gain	Protected species licences
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2 Current Position

- 2.1.1 Table 2 on the next page provides a summary of the current position of the Applicant and NWT in relation to specific matters that have been under discussion to date.
- 2.1.2 Where a matter is not represented in the table, it should be assumed that it is either: (i) agreed between the parties and has never required detailed discussion; or (ii) not relevant to the discussion between the parties.
- 2.1.3 Appendix A of this document provides a record of engagement undertaken between the parties in relation to the Proposed Development. This is limited to engagement which is materially relevant to the contents of this SoCG and does not seek to include every correspondence between the parties (e.g. that which was primarily administrative).

Table 2 – Current position of matters relevant to the parties’ discussions

Row ID	Topic	Applicants Position	NWT’s Position	Status
NWT 1	Ecology Survey Areas	ES Chapter 7: Ecology & Biodiversity [REP3-009] includes an assessment of the Proposed Development’s impact on ecological receptors supported by extensive survey work to confirm the designated sites, and the habitats and species that are likely to be affected by the Proposed Development.	ES Chapter 7: Ecology & Biodiversity [APP-065] summarises the baseline biodiversity interest of the Site and biodiversity features within the Proposed Development’s Zone of Influence (ZoI) based on information available at the time of writing. It also provides an assessment of the potential effects of the proposed development during construction, operation and decommissioning in relation to Ecology and Biodiversity. It assesses the likely significant effects on ecology arising from the proposed development and considers measures to minimise these to determine the likely significance of the residual biodiversity effects of the Proposed Development. We are satisfied that the baseline is evaluated in accordance with industry guidance.	Agreed

NWT 2	Designed-in and Mitigation Measures	<p>ES Chapter 7: Ecology & Biodiversity [REP3-009] confirms the Proposed Development will minimise impacts on protected species and habitats. Appropriate habitat will be provided during operation of the Proposed Development impact for species (where necessary) through mitigation, compensation and enhancement.</p> <p>A skylark mitigation strategy is presented in ES Appendix 7.13 [APP-115], which shows further details and the locations of the measures at the Site.</p> <p>The dedicated skylark compensation will mitigate approximately 55% (against the 2023 total of 105 territories) to 64% (against the 2024 total of 90 territories) of the territories likely to be displaced from the Proposed Solar Areas. Further information has since been provided in response to Nottinghamshire County Council (Applicant's Comments on Relevant Representations [REP1-008]), that shows that other habitats across the site are also likely to contribute to additional compensation for skylark, such that an estimated 60- 71% of the displaced territories will be compensated. Note that this is a conservative estimate (based on only considering a select few areas of suitable habitat enhancements).</p> <p>Applicant considers that the original conservative estimate of 55-64% compensation for displacement (which is increased through consideration of other habitats across the Site to 60-71%) strikes an appropriate balance between mitigating the impact raised and continuing to provide for an efficient use of land for the generation of renewable electricity.</p>	<p>It is estimated that the further mitigation measures could increase the skylark nesting densities in the Eastern and Western Biodiversity Mitigation Areas by 58 territories; this will mitigate approximately 55% (against the 2023 total of 105 territories) to 64% (against the 2024 total of 90 territories) of the territories likely to be displaced from the Proposed Solar Areas. Due to the shortfall, we expect the applicant to consider additional mitigation measures that consist of implementing management practices on suitable land which have the aim of increasing the carrying capacity further to 'absorb' a significant proportion of territories from the site. We note that the applicant has stated that there may be other habitats that compensate for loss of skylark territories , but this this still does not represent adequate compensation for habitat that would be lost for this Red List BoCC.</p> <p>NWT wish to see a robust monitoring plan with review of habitat management and actions undertaken as necessary if the skylark territories fall below 71% .</p>	Under Discussion
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	<p>It is noted that several similar DCO schemes in North Nottinghamshire and West Lincolnshire have recently been consented and, in each case, the consent was granted with greater proportionate loss of skylark territories than is calculated for the Steeple Renewables Project.</p> <p>At a meeting between the Applicant and NWT on 16/01/2026, NWT re-stated that they want to see more plot provision provided. Applicant reiterated the conservative approach to calculating numbers provided for, and worst-case starting point of all territories lost. NWT accepted the plots could provide two broods per year due to the control of crop management in the mitigation areas, and that the scheme will provide planting that is more beneficial to skylark (i.e. providing greater foraging success than currently takes place). These will be for the duration of the 40 year scheme.</p> <p>Provision for relevant management and monitoring is set out in Table 11 of the outline Landscape Ecological Management Plan (oLEMP) [APP-116] (pp. 51-52) including “<i>Review management methods (Project 9-1) if targets are not being met</i>”.</p> <p>Buildings and trees with bat and barn owl suitability will be retained, thereby avoiding direct impacts upon potential bat roosts and the need for roost characterisation surveys.</p> <p>ES Appendix 4.1 outline Construction Environment Management Plan (oCEMP) [REP3-011] includes provisions for undertaking updated great crested newt surveys prior to construction, and to complete purely precautionary checks for amphibians when</p>	<p>NWT is satisfied with this approach.</p>	<p style="background-color: yellow; text-align: center;">Agreed</p>
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		<p>undertaking any clearance of suitable vegetation within 250 m of a pond.</p> <p>Requirement 7 (CEMP) of the dDCO [REP3-005] secures further CEMP details.</p> <p>Existing hedgerows, trees and woodland to be retained will be buffered from the development and habitat diversity will be managed as set out in the ES Appendix 7.12 outline Landscape and Ecological Mitigation Plan (oLEMP) [APP-116]. Widths of the buffers vary according to the value of trees and hedgerows, possible bat roosts etc.</p> <p>Requirement 6 (LEMP) of the dDCO [REP3-005] secures further LEMP details.</p>	NWT is satisfied with this approach.	<p>Agreed</p>
NWT 3	Clarborough Tunnel SSSI	<p>An assessment of the potential impacts of the Proposed Development on relevant nationally designated statutory sites (including Clarborough Tunnel) and the need for further mitigation is included in ES Chapter 7: Ecology & Biodiversity [REP3-009]. Due to the nature of the Proposed Development and the separating distance from any areas of development within the Site, no direct or indirect impacts on the interest of Clarborough Tunnel SSSI are anticipated. No mitigation towards Clarborough Tunnel SSSI is necessary.</p> <p>Clarborough Tunnel SSSI has also been considered within the Construction Dust Risk Assessment in ES Appendix 14.1(C) - Air Quality Appendices [APP-130]. This SSSI is classified as a medium</p>	NWT is satisfied that no direct or indirect impacts on the interest of Clarborough Tunnel SSSI are anticipated and therefore, no mitigation towards Clarborough Tunnel SSSI is necessary.	<p>Agreed</p>

		<p>sensitivity receptor to dust but when combined with distance from the source of dust emission is defined as having a low area sensitivity, in line with IAQM guidance.</p> <p>Nevertheless, the Applicant has committed to producing a Dust Management Plan when detailed construction information is available, as secured within ES Appendix 4.1 outline Construction Environmental Management Plan [REP3-011] and requirement 7 of the dDCO [REP3-005]. This will detail how to practically implement the mitigation measures proposed, including monitoring, during construction when dust emissions are most likely to be generated by the Proposed Development.</p>	<p>NWT supports the production of a Dust Management Plan</p>	<p>Agreed</p>
NWT 4	Local Wildlife Sites (LWS)	<p>ES Chapter 7: Ecology & Biodiversity [REP3-009] confirms five LWS are within the Site, and two LWSs are within 100 m of the Site.</p> <p>LWS at the Application Site will be retained and protected by designed-in measures. Further enhancement to those within the Application Site will be delivered by improved management where possible, detailed in ES Appendix 7.14 - Outline Landscape Ecological Management Plan [APP-116] and secured by Requirement 6 (LEMP) of the dDCO [REP3-005]. Adverse effects to the LWS's are not expected.</p> <p>Formal proposals regarding enhancement of LWS within the Site have not been outlined specifically – but the measures in ES Appendix</p>	<p>LWS at the Application Site will be retained and protected by designed-in measures. We are satisfied that adverse effects to the LWSs are not anticipated. Further enhancement to those within the Application Site will be delivered by improved management where possible, detailed in ES Appendix 7.14 - Outline Landscape Ecological Management Plan [APP-116] and secured by Requirement 6 (LEMP) of the draft DCO [APP-041]. To date, we are not aware of formal proposals to enhance LWS within the application site and so this matter remains under discussion. We ask that a contribution to the management of West Burton Meadow is made by Steeple Renewables Project.</p> <p>NWT note the further information provided on the proposed management of LWS within and immediately adjacent to the site.</p>	<p>Under Discussion</p>

	<p>7.14 - Outline Landscape Ecological Management Plan (oLEMP) [APP-116] are intended to result in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blue Stocking Lane, Clarborough LWS – notified for its botanical interest, will be subject to monitoring and hay-cut style mowing (as per Feature 1 in the oLEMP [APP-116]), which will diversify the sward and control scrub encroachment. • High House Road Verges, Sturton le Steeple LWS – notified for its grassland verges, will also be subject to monitoring and mowing to diversify the sward (as per Feature 1 in the oLEMP [APP-116]). • Mother Drain, Upper Ings LWS – notified for its aquatic invertebrate assemblage, will have larger riparian offsets, and new shallow ponds and planting of scrub and hedges nearby to provide satellite habitat for the aquatic invertebrates as shown on Figure 6.9 oLEMP [APP-160]. NB: direct changes to the drain were not possible due to flood risk implications (see further information in RR-052/2 of Applicant’s Comments on Relevant Representations [REP1-008]). • Thornhill Lane Drain, Littleborough LWS – notified for its aquatic invertebrate assemblage, will also have a larger riparian offset from agricultural activities, shown on Figure 6.9 oLEMP [APP-160], which is anticipated to improve the quality of aquatic habitats. • Littleborough Lagoons LWS – notified for its bird and botanical assemblage will not be directly altered, but will be subject to revised management aimed at making the mosaic of habitats accord more 	<p>Habitat management is proposed for High House Road Verges, LWS which lies along the site boundary, but not for West Burton Meadow which is almost wholly bordered by the site boundary , NWT therefore expect support for the management of West Burton Meadow LWS to ensure consistency in the treatment of LWS.</p> <p>NWT note that High House Verges LWS is in fact directly impacted by the development, which was not clear from the documents submitted by the applicant but has now been clarified. Therefore any impacts should be remediated.</p> <p>West Burton Meadow NR is immediately adjacent to this large development site and NWT would expect the applicant to support this important habitat as a matter of good practice in supporting nature recovery networks and the principles of the Lawton approach.</p>	
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	<p>the definition of the priority habitat: Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh (as per Feature 10 in the oLEMP [APP-116]).</p> <p>Regarding contribution to the management of West Burton Meadow LWS, the Applicants position is this not necessary bearing in mind Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust accept adverse effects to the LWS's are not anticipated, further enhancement to those within the Application Site will be delivered by improved management where possible, detailed in ES Appendix 7.14 - oLEMP [APP-116] and secured by Requirement 6 (LEMP) of the dDCO [REP3-005].</p> <p>It is noted that High House Road Verges LWS will be partly impacted by an access track and this LWS is within the Proposed Development Area – the new access track will make use of an existing farm access way, but will require a wider T-junction to be created for vehicles, which is likely to impact the verge. For this reason, it is proposed that the remaining parts of High House Road Verges that are within the Site will be enhanced. West Burton Meadow is wholly outside the Site and will not be impacted and therefore the Applicant does not consider a contribution for the management of the West Burton Meadow to be necessary.</p> <p>At a consultation meeting between the Applicant and NWT on 16/01/2026 it was agreed that High House Verge LWS is onsite and will be impacted. As described in the ES chapter 7 [REP3-010] there is likely to be an impact on the High House Verge LWS and the Applicant explained that this is likely to be a temporary surface for construction,</p>		
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		such as infilling potholes but that this would be finalised once the detailed condition of the track was understood before construction.		
NWT 5	Shadow Habitat Regulation Assessment (sHRA)	<p>The Information to Inform Habitats Regulation Assessment (sHRA) [REP2-016] concludes the Proposed Development is not likely to have a significant effect on any of the following designated sites either alone or in-combination:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birklands and Bilhaugh SAC. • Hatfield Moor SAC. • Humber Estuary SPA. • Humber Estuary Ramsar. • Humber Estuary SAC. • Thorne and Hatfield Moors SPA; and, • Thorne Moor SAC. <p>There is no requirement to progress to Stage 2 of the appropriate assessment process (the test of ‘adverse effect on integrity’).</p>	We are satisfied with the conclusion that the Proposed Development is not likely to have a significant effect on any of the listed designated sites.	Agreed
NWT 6	Biodiversity Mitigation Areas	Design and maintenance details of the Biodiversity Mitigation Areas is outlined in ES Appendix 7.14 - Outline Landscape Ecological Management Plan (oLEMP) [APP-116] and the full Landscape Ecological Management Plan (secured by Requirement 6 (LEMP) of the dDCO [REP3-005]) will include detailed measures for habitat creation and management, including stocking densities/mowing	NWT looks forward to seeing detailed measures in the full Landscape Ecological Management Plan for habitat creation and management, including stocking densities/mowing frequencies grasslands, dimensions of ditches to be created, as well as more detailed cropping plans regarding skylark plots. In addition to those detailed measures, we encourage the applicant to look at	Agreed

		<p>frequencies grasslands, dimensions of ditches to be created (which will take on board, where possible, advice on land management provided by NWT); as well as more detailed cropping plans regarding skylark plots.</p> <p>The existing main ditches within the mitigation areas are subject to management by the Trent Valley Internal Drainage Board (IDB), and changes to the channel or vegetation management have been ruled out by the IDB as not preferable due to the possible implications for water conveyance and flood risk (see further information in RR-052/2 of Applicant’s Comments on Relevant Representations [REP1-008]). As an alternative, and to avoid altering the flood conveyance function of any existing ditches, a series of new (standalone) ditches, ponds and scrapes has been proposed to provide enhancement in the Trent floodplain, as shown on Figure 6.9 oLEMP [APP-160].</p> <p>At a meeting between the Applicant and NWT on 16/01/2026 Following an on-screen review of the provision for new ditches that is proposed in the Eastern Biodiversity Mitigation Area, NWT confirmed that they are content with new ditch creation. NWT agreed to forward to the Applicant details of recently employed two-stage channel designs that could be adopted in. NWT also requested more sinuosity to the ditch layout and the Applicant confirmed that this possibility will be reviewed in production of the final landscape plans, and more detail will of channel profile will be provided.</p>	<p>the topography and see, for example, where small watercourses and main ditches could be re-naturalised to create water vole features and high quality riparian margins, wet grassland, scrapes, ponds and marsh habitats etc, as that should be a key habitat creation opportunity in the Trent floodplain and adjacent areas.</p>	
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<p>NWT 7</p>	<p>Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)</p>	<p>Sections 5 and 6 of the Planning Statement [REP2-040] set out the Environment Act 2021 will make it mandatory for NSIPs to deliver 10% BNG, but this is not yet applicable for NSIPs.</p> <p>ES Appendix 7.12 Biodiversity Net Gain Report [APP-114] sets out the results of the Proposed Development’s BNG assessment and concludes an overall net gain of at least 10%.</p> <p>Requirement 6 (LEMP) of the dDCO [REP3-005] sets out how a minimum of 10% biodiversity net gain will be achieved.</p> <p>With reference to the Nottinghamshire supplementary planning document “Biodiversity Net Gain” (September 2025): this document states (para. 2.5) that “...<i>Nottinghamshire County Council and its Local Planning Authority partners support an aspirational target of 20% BNG where feasible...</i>” [and that] “<i>All developments should aim to exceed the statutory minimum where possible, particularly for strategic sites and large-scale developments</i>”.</p> <p>There is currently no legislative requirement for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) to deliver 10% net gain [as calculated by a biodiversity metric].</p> <p>Notwithstanding this, in advance of there being a mandatory requirement, the Applicant has applied the biodiversity gain approach and committed to delivering a 10% biodiversity gain as calculated through the Statutory Metric. It is nonetheless estimated that the Proposed Development is capable of generating a surplus</p>	<p>This is an ambitious project, and NWT believes that the target for BNG should also be ambitious. The aim in Nottinghamshire is 20% BNG and so we believe that further discussion on this matter is required as to how this may be achieved. Aiming for more species-rich grassland within the solar panel fields, not just round the edges, would contribute to maximising biodiversity gains for the project. We acknowledge that shading is a consideration, but we believe that more species would survive the light/shade conditions than thought.</p> <p>We note the subsequent comments by the applicant about BNG requirements, and maintain the view that there are other opportunities to deliver habitat gain, which the applicant has confirmed in their latest comments. We would, however, expect these to be conditioned or secured by some form of legal agreement, otherwise they cannot be relied upon and carry no weight in any determination.</p> <p>Other solar sites and NSIPs are delivering BNG in excess of 10% and NWT expect the applicant to undertake to deliver this to be consistent with other NSIPs in the County.</p>	<p>Under Discussion</p>
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		<p>gain of +951.97 habitat units more than the 10% gain that has been committed to by the Applicant - this is equivalent to more than 50% gain in total for “area habitats”. It is anticipated that this surplus gain will not be mandated through any requirements or legal mechanisms associated with the DCO application.</p> <p>The Applicant's Biodiversity Net Gain Report [APP-114] presents the Applicant's analysis of what BNG would likely be realised as a result of the Scheme. This finds that the Scheme would likely realise BNG results in excess of 10%. However, the Applicant does not wish to be held to account for these units.</p> <p>As a result, the Applicant is not proposing to commit to a greater than 10% gain for BNG. The ExA would be capable of considering the 10% gain in their planning balance, given there is no legislative requirement to deliver this, but the Applicant has specifically asked that any excess gain over 10% <i>is not taken into account by the ExA</i>. It would not be appropriate for the ExA to take into account that which the Applicant is not committed to and therefore the Applicant would request that the ExA take into account only the committed 10%.</p> <p>At a meeting between the Applicant and NWT on 16/01/2026, the Applicant noted NWT's acknowledgement that there is no legal requirement for the Applicant to provide any BNG.</p>		
NWT 8	Protected species licences	The need for protected species licences is considered within ES Chapter 7: Ecology and Biodiversity [REP3-009] . The outcome is that licences for bats and great crested newts are not likely to be	NWT is happy for the applicant to deal with Natural England on this matter.	Agreed

	<p>required. A badger development licence is likely to be required for temporary impacts to a small number of setts.</p> <p>Table 1 part 7 of the Consents and Agreement Position Statement [REP1-006] confirms the Applicant proposes to submit a draft badger licence application to Natural England.</p> <p>The draft licence application will assess the realistic worst-case impacts to badgers and their setts to identify the activities that may require licence and agree appropriate mitigation so that Natural England may issue a Letter of No Impediment regarding protected species licencing.</p>		
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A1 Record of Engagement

Date	Method of Engagement	Purpose/Description
20/01/2025 to 03/03/2025	Statutory consultation – technical meetings with specialists and/or correspondence via email	Effects to local wildlife sites, design and mitigation proposals, habitat creation and enhancement, impacts to skylark, and the approach to ground nesting birds mitigation. Various interim and draft documents provided. Dormouse surveys at the Site scoped out.
13/02/2025	Microsoft Teams Meeting	Introduction to the project.
28/02/2025	Email	Meeting minutes from 13/02/2025 plus copy of draft Barn Owl Report and Badger Report shared for comment.
10/03/2025	Email	Nottinghamshire Dormouse Distribution.
11/11/2025	Email	SoCG emailed to Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust
25/11/2025	Email from Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust	Requested clarification on the wording of the SoCG
25/11/2025	Email	Clarification provided
26/11/2025	Email from Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust	Thanked clarification provided. Returned date confirmed 26.11.2025
26/11/2025	Email	Appreciated update
27/11/2025	Email from Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust	Comments on SoCG provided attached to email. Apologised for the delay.
18/12/2025	Email	SoCG version 2 issued via attachment to email
24/12/2025	Email from Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust	Comments on SoCG provided attached to email (revision 3 of the document).
16/01/2026	Microsoft Teams Meeting	Discussion of the points not yet agreed in the SoCG
16/01/2026	Email	Clarifying were in the ES Chapter 7 were LWS are addressed

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19/01/2026	Email	Rev 5 SoCG emailed via attachment to NWT
20/01/2026	Email from Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust	Comments on the SoCG
20/01/2026	Email	Request Rev 5 of the SoCG is signed
30/01/2026	Email	Confirming applicant is still will to engage on the SoCG
30/01/2026	Email from Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust	Signed SoCG returned via attachment to email
02/02/2026	Email	Clarifying applicants position on Skylark (NWT 2)
06/02/2026	Email	Chasing up NWT on the applicant's position regarding Skylark (NWT 2)
06/02/2026	Email from Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust	Agreed to change the RAG for Skylark (NWT 2) from red to orange.
11/02/2026	Email	Rev 6 SoCG issued to NWT via attachment to email
16/02/2026	Email	Chasing up Rev 6 SoCG
03/04/2026	Email	Chasing up Rev 6 SoCG
04/03/2026	Email from Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust	Returned Rev 6 SoCG signed via attachment to email
09/03/2026	Email	Issued clean version of Rev 6 SoCG with tracked changes accepted
09/03/2026	Email from Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust	Confirmed clean version of Rev 6 SoCG is agreed

A2 Signing Sheet

Duly signed and authorised on behalf of
Steeple Solar Farm Limited (the 'Applicant')

Name:	██████████
Job Title:	DCO Lead Developer
Date:	13/03/26
Signature:	██████████

Duly signed and authorised on behalf of
Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust

Name:	██████████
Job Title:	Head of Nature Recovery (North)
Date:	04/3/26
Signature:	██████████