

---

# Steeple Renewables Project

**Letter of No Impediment (LoNI)**

March 2026

Document Reference: EN010163/EX/8.55

Revision: 1

Planning Act 2008

The Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010 – Rule 8(1)(b)



## Letter of No Impediment (LoNI)

Document Properties		
<b>Prepared By</b>	The Steeple Renewables Project Consultant Team	
Version History		
Version	Date	Version Status
Examination (Deadline 5)	March 2026	Rev 1

Date: 23 March 2026  
Our Ref: 484969  
UDS Ref: UDS-A015327



[REDACTED]  
DCO Lead Developer  
Renewable Energy Systems Limited

Customer Services  
Hornbeam House  
Crewe Business Park  
Electra Way  
Crewe  
Cheshire  
CW1 6GJ  
0300 060 3900

*Sent by e-mail only*

Dear [REDACTED],

CC [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

**DRAFT MITIGATION LICENCE APPLICATION STATUS:** Initial Draft Licence Application

**LEGISLATION:** The Protection of Badgers Act 1992 (As Amended)

**NSIP:** Steeple (Solar) Renewables Project

**SPECIES:** Eurasian Badger (*Meles meles*)

Thank you for your draft badger mitigation licence application in association with the above NSIP site, received in this office on the 29<sup>th</sup> January 2026. As stated in our published guidance, once Natural England is content that the draft licence application is of the required standard, we will issue a 'Letter of No Impediment'. This is designed to provide the Planning Inspectorate and the Secretary of State with confidence that the competent licensing authority sees no impediment to issuing a licence in future, based on information assessed to date in respect of these proposals.

### Assessment

Following our assessment of the resubmitted draft application documents, I can now confirm that, on the basis of the information and proposals provided, **Natural England sees no impediment to a licence to derogate for impacts to badgers being issued**, should the DCO be granted. Please see the following general comments, including comments that will require addressing before the licence application is formally submitted.

### Application Form

Natural England will expect that the eventual proposed Named Ecologist will be suitably qualified and experienced with respect to badger licensing and managing large projects. From a review of the relevant information submitted in support of the draft badger licence application for this NSIP project, the information and detail presented would be sufficient to evidence David Stiles' suitability to act as the Named Ecologist for this licence proposal.

### Survey Information

The survey effort undertaken to date aligns with Natural England's expectations regarding survey baselines and adherence to best practice. Section 1.8 of the draft Method Statement document notes that the future formal licence application will be made based on more up to date badger survey information. Natural England welcomes this recognition and commitment to undertake further survey effort as required closer to the formal licence submission.

Relatedly, for the formal licence submission, a survey figure depicting the locations of relevant setts relative to the proposed works and clearly highlighting the number and location of sett entrances for each sett structure should be provided.

### **Impact Assessment and Mitigation Measures Approach**

The proposed mitigation strategy clearly aligns with Natural England's expectations and requirements for mitigating impacts to badgers and their setts. The proposed approach demonstrates a robust avoidance-first approach as required by the Mitigation Hierarchy, and incorporates appropriate measures with respect to the planned sett protections areas and associated buffers, and with regards to the required temporary and permanent closure of some sett structures. Although it currently noted that no main setts are anticipated to be lost and therefore require the provision of artificial setts, should the impacts of the scheme change such that main setts are proposed to be closed and destroyed and as such artificial setts are required, then appropriate information to confirm the siting of any new artificial setts as being within the same clan territory areas as the setts to be lost must be provided. This should either be presented via bait marking survey data, or, appropriate and robust contextual data to clearly reason and evidence that such new setts will be in the same territory area.

---

### **Next Steps**

Should the DCO be granted then the mitigation licence application must be formally submitted to Natural England. At this stage any modifications to the timings of the proposed works, e.g. due to ecological requirements of the species concerned, must be made and agreed with Natural England before a licence is granted.

If other minor changes to the application are subsequently necessary, e.g. amendments to the work schedule/s then these should be outlined in a covering letter and must be reflected in the formal submission of the licence application. These changes must be agreed by Natural England before a licence can be granted. If changes are made to proposals or timings which do not enable us to meet reach a 'Satisfied' decision, we will issue correspondence outlining why the proposals are not acceptable and what further information is required. These issues will need to be addressed before any licence can be granted.

I should also be grateful if an open dialogue can be maintained with yourselves regarding the progression of the DCO application so that, should the Order be granted, we will be in a position to assess the final submission of the application in a timely fashion and avoid any unnecessary delay in issuing the licence.

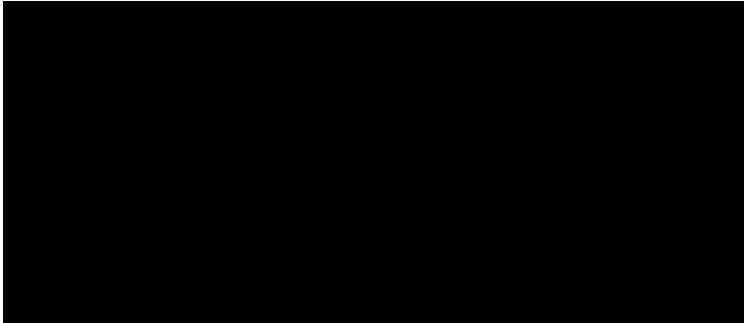
---


The advice provided within the Discretionary Advice Service is the professional advice of the Natural England adviser named below. It is the best advice that can be given based on the information provided so far. Its quality and detail is dependent upon the quality and depth of the information which has been provided. It does not constitute a statutory response or decision, which will be made by Natural England acting corporately in its role as statutory consultee to the competent authority after an application has been submitted. The advice given is, therefore, not binding in any way and is provided without prejudice to the consideration of any statutory consultation response or decision which may be made by Natural England in due course. The final judgement on any proposals by Natural England is reserved until an application is made and will be made on the information then available, including any modifications to the proposal

made after receipt of discretionary advice. All pre-application advice is subject to review and revision in the light of changes in relevant considerations, including changes in relation to the facts, scientific knowledge/evidence, policy, guidance or law. Natural England will not accept any liability for the accuracy, adequacy or completeness of, nor will any express or implied warranty be given for, the advice. This exclusion does not extend to any fraudulent misrepresentation made by or on behalf of Natural England.

I hope the above has been helpful. However, should you have any queries then please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



  
Principal Officer (Principal Adviser) – National Delivery  
Wildlife Licensing – Chargeable Advice and Strategic Casework  
Natural England Wildlife Licensing Service

 [@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto: [redacted]@naturalengland.org.uk)