



6 August 2026

Dear Sir/Madam,

PINS REFERENCE NO: EN010168

DESCRIPTION: Development consent to construct, operate, maintain and decommission a solar photovoltaic (PV) generating station, with a generating capacity of more than 50 megawatts (MW) and associated infrastructure

LOCATION: Lime Down Solar Park, Wiltshire

This response comprises the Cotswolds National Landscape Board's ('the Board's') Written Representations for submission at Examination Deadline 5- 7 August 2026. These representations are made in response to the Examining Authority's Second Written Questions ('ExQ2').

The Board's responses to the Examining Authority's Second Written Questions and requests for information

The Examining Authority issued its Second Written Questions and requests for information (ExQ2) on 27 July 2026, two of which were directed to the Board along with other parties. These two comprised:

ExQ2 LV2.1: Time Limited Enhancements

The applicants stated in its response to ExQ1 LSF1.1 [REP3-128] that there are no significant permanent effects on agricultural land, as all land will be returned to its original use and condition as far as practicable following decommissioning. The creation of wildflower meadows within fields A1, C1, C6, C8, C9 and B12 and the creation of wildflower meadow verges in A11, A12 and C10 are relied on by the applicant as beneficial effects to further the purposes of the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL). The ExA understands that these enhancement measures are therefore time limited and removed at decommissioning.

The Applicant:

- 1) The applicant is asked to confirm if the ExA's understanding is correct.

The Applicant, Wiltshire Council, Natural England and the CNLB:

- 2) The parties are asked to comment on whether a time limited enhancement can be relied on to seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the national landscape under section (s) 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (as amended) (CRoW Act)?
- 3) If enhancements are removed at decommissioning, would that then be considered a harm to the purposes of the Cotswolds National Landscape at decommissioning?

CNLB Response:

- 2) If the ExA's understanding is correct, it is disappointing that land proposed for wildflower meadow creation will be returned to its original use and condition following decommissioning.



However, the Board considers that a time-limited enhancement can be relied upon to seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the CNL under section 85 of the CRoW Act as there is no specific requirement within the wording of the Act or supporting DEFRA guidance for enhancements to be permanent. Notwithstanding, the weight that the Secretary of State (as the 'Relevant Authority') should attribute to such measures should be reduced compared to a permanent habitat enhancement. Assessment of proposed mitigation and enhancement measures should still consider whether they actively, reasonably, appropriately and proportionately further the statutory purpose of the CNL during their lifespan.

In coming to this conclusion, the Board has had regard to the wording of section 85 of the CRoW Act, DEFRA's 'Guidance for relevant authorities on seeking to further the purposes of Protected Landscapes' (published 16 December 2024) and the briefing note published by the National Landscapes Association 'Applying the CRoW Act section 85 duty to 'seek to further the purpose' in National Landscapes (AONBs)' (published May 2025).

The wording of the DEFRA guidance states that in seeking to further the statutory purpose of a National Landscape, the 'relevant authority' should seek measures that are active, appropriate, reasonable and proportionate as well as forming an evidence-based approach to landscape and nature recovery, informed by the relevant Protected Landscape Management Plan. Whilst the Board considers that permanent enhancements should be sought, nothing in the wording of the statute or supporting guidance requires measures to be permanent structural changes. However, the Secretary of State must be able to rationally demonstrate why a time-limited enhancement satisfies their active duty to further the statutory purpose under the CRoW Act in this specific context.

Separately, in assessing the planning balance, we recommend that the Secretary of State should weigh the temporary nature of any enhancements against any temporary or permanent impacts of a proposal on the CNL and its setting.

3) The Board considers that if there is certainty that the enhancements will be removed at decommissioning, this then would constitute a harm to the setting of the CNL, which should be weighed in the planning balance.

ExQ2 LV2.4: Matters Raised at Issue Specific Hearing 2

The ExA understands that as a result of action point 8 from ISH2 [[EV8-010](#)], a meeting was held between the applicant and CNLB on 13 July 2026. The CNLB are asked to confirm if there is agreement with the applicant in relation to:

- 1) The extent of the setting of the CNL as set out in the applicant's response to ExQ1 LV1.9 [[REP3-128](#)] (Annex E).
- 2) The proposed layout of panels in field A1 as shown in the Works Plans [[REP3-004](#)].
- 3) Whether there is sufficient information in the control documents to mitigate impacts to the dark skies special quality of the CNL.



CNLB Response:

1) The Board notes the submission by the applicant of a plan showing what is, in their view, the extent of the setting of the CNL (Annex E LV1.9 – Spatial Extent of the Setting of the Cotswold National Landscape (PDF page 603) [REP3-128]). At the meeting with the applicant on 13 July 2026, the applicant's landscape consultants explained that the applicant's recognition of the Setting of the CNL has been derived following on site examination of intervisibility between the Scheme and the CNL and through an assessment of the Special Qualities of the CNL and Landscape Character within the LVIA.

The Annex E plan shows the setting of the CNL extending to cover an area c.300m from the CNL boundary in fields A1, A11 and A12, in field B12 c.600m from the CNL boundary and areas of fields C1, C6, C8, C9 and C10 within c.400m of the CNL boundary. These are all areas where intervisibility with the CNL is possible.

The Board does not agree with the applicant's assessment and considers the setting of the CNL to be more extensive than that showed in the Annex E plan.

Whilst intervisibility is one aspect of setting, the Board concurs with the view expressed by the Inspector in a recent appeal decision concerning a solar farm in Suffolk, within the setting of the Suffolk Coast & Heaths National Landscape ('SC&H NL', appeal ref. APP/D3505/W/25/3370515, decision date 15 July 2026). At paragraph 105 of her decision she states: *"The parties agree that there is no intervisibility between the appeal site and the SC&H NL. However, setting is about more than direct intervisibility. Being in close proximity to the SC&H NL boundary, I am mindful that functional connectivity to a NL can be important. In this case that approach is significant, with access routes through the landscape including footpaths, bridleways ... All of the landscape witnesses acknowledged that harm to sequential views through this landscape could adversely affect its setting through harm to the approach to the SC&H NL"* (emphasis added).

LUC defines the landscape setting of a place as *"the surroundings that add to the significance and experience of a defined place"* and is clear that setting is more than just views; it includes the experience of the landscape (<https://landuse.co.uk/thoughts/landscape-setting-in-practice/>).

This point is relevant in respect of the Lime Down proposal and particularly given the presence of the Fosse Way and other PRow in the locality which pass in and out of the CNL whilst running through or along the boundary of the site. The Fosse Way runs through the CNL for between 30 and 35 miles of its total length and is highlighted within Section 11 of the Cotswolds AONB Landscape Character Assessment as a notable historic feature. Natural England's guidance for assessing landscapes for designation as National Landscapes highlights cultural heritage (including the historic environment) as one of several factors that contribute to the natural beauty of a National Landscapes.

Having now ascertained that the applicant does not consider the entire area of Lime Down sites A, B and C to fall within the CNL, the Board notes and agrees with Wiltshire Council's position expressed in its



response to ExQ1 LV1.9 [REP3-142] that the setting of the CNL extends beyond its designated boundary in this area, particularly in relation to the Fosse Way corridor and the land to its north-west.

The National Landscape boundary follows the northern edge of the DCO Order Limits at Foxley, passes south of Sherston, and continues along the western edge of the boundary at Alderton.

The Fosse Way runs north-east to south-west through the National Landscape, with a gap of around 5 km where it leaves the designation near Foxley (at the northern end) before re-entering it between Alderton and Grittleton. As well as being a heritage asset, this corridor is well used for recreation and functions as a recognised route through the wider National Landscape.

The Board agrees with Wiltshire Council's assessment that the land adjacent to and north-west of the Fosse Way shares much of the rural character and some of special qualities and wider landscape associations of the National Landscape and is complimentary to it. Due to the route providing an important recreational connection both within the designated area and into the surrounding countryside, we agree with the Council that the Fosse Way and the land to its north-west form part of the setting of the Cotswolds National Landscape.

2) The Board had understood that the Scheme included the avoidance of panels in southern part of field A1, however the applicant stated at the Examination Hearing ISH2 that this was a typographical error in the draft Statement of Common Ground with the Board. The latest iteration of the Works Plans [REP3-004] show that the southern part of field A1 is proposed to feature solar panels.

Having reviewed the Works Plans and photomontages provided by the applicant, the Board does not support the location of panels within the southern part of Field A1 and recommends that they should be removed from the scheme.

At its closest point, the area proposed to feature panels would be around 300m from the boundary of the CNL. The key viewpoint in this regard is Viewpoint 6 at the junction of the bridleway which runs along the eastern edge of Field A1, the unnamed road that marks the boundary with the CNL and Bustlers Hill. The northern part of Field A1 is proposed as wildflower meadow, however this would not aid in screening the development from this viewpoint and therefore the only screening between the receptor and the panels would be a narrow belt of new planting across the middle of Field A1 which in itself would comprise an artificially created boundary as there is no current boundary planting or features between the northern and southern parts of the field.

The REV 3 photomontages provided by the applicant at Deadline 2 [Figure 8-14-6, REP2-010] show that the panels in the southern part of Field A1 would be highly visible in Year 1 from the boundary with the CNL (Viewpoint 6) and also likely for a significant length of the bridleway running south from the CNL boundary along the field edge. The panels would remain visible at Year 15 through the screening in wintertime and would possibly also be visible in summer at Year 15 for receptors travelling along the bridleway past the site on journeys to or from the CNL.



Compared to the baseline situation of an arable field devoid of development, locating panels in the southern part of Field A1 would in our view give rise to major adverse residual visual effects at Year 1 and moderate adverse residual visual effects at Year 15 (i.e. significant at both Year 1 and Year 15). Accordingly, the Board recommends that panels should be removed from the southern part of Field A1 to conserve and enhance the landscape and scenic beauty of the CNL and its setting.

3) The Board considers that there is sufficient information in the control documents to provide assurance that impacts upon the dark skies of the CNL will be mitigated.

At the meeting between the applicant and the Board on 13 July 2026, the applicant explained that there is no lighting associated with the solar infrastructure and referred to their full response to LV1.16 in The Applicant's Response to the Examining Authority's First Written Questions [REP 3-128] and the Outline Operational Environmental Management Plan, the latest version of which is Rev 5 (Clean) [REP4-051].

The Board understands that Section 3.4 of the Outline OEMP [REP4-051] and paragraph 8.7.62 of ES Volume 1 Chapter 8 Landscape and Visual [APP-060] confirms that permanent lighting is not required within the Solar PV Arrays for the operational phase of the Scheme. Motion sensing security lighting will be provided within substations and within the BESS Area, to be used only for maintenance and security purposes. A sensitive lighting strategy as part of the detailed OEMP will specify how this artificial lighting will be installed and used. The closest substation to the CNL is within Site C and is around 600m from the CNL boundary and if controlled through a detailed OEMP, security lighting of this nature is unlikely to have a significant adverse effect on the CNL's dark skies. The Board would wish to be consulted on the detailed OEMP.

Nighttime lighting will be required for some maintenance activities for the Solar PV Sites. As stated within paragraph 2.7.2 of the Outline OEMP [REP4-051], all routine maintenance activities, except panel cleaning, would be scheduled for daylight hours as far as practicable. Therefore, it is anticipated that focussed task specific lighting would only be required in the event of emergency works/ equipment failure requiring night-time working or panel cleaning operations. Paragraph 2.7.1 of the Outline OEMP [REP4-051] notes that this level of lighting is similar to lighting required for night-time agricultural activities carried out in the area. Again, if controlled through a detailed OEMP, temporary lighting of this nature is unlikely to have a significant adverse effect on the CNL's dark skies.

Table 2 of the Outline CEMP [REP4-049] states that temporary site lighting during construction will be required to enable safe working during construction and decommissioning during hours of darkness and will be designed as far as reasonably practicable to minimise potential for light spillage outside the Sites and Cable Route Corridor, particularly towards houses, traffic and ecological habitats. It is understood that night-time working will not be employed apart from specific activities including the delivery of abnormal loads and HDD. Requirement 13 of the DCO requires that No part of the authorised development may commence until a construction environmental management plan for that part has been submitted to and approved by the relevant planning authority in consultation with the Environment





Agency. The construction environmental management plan must be substantially in accordance with the outline construction environmental management plan. Again, the Board would wish to be consulted on the detailed CEMP.

Declaration of Use of Artificial Intelligence

The Board confirms there has been no use of AI in authoring these representations.

ENDS



