



Meridian Solar Farm

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Other Documents

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Statement

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Executive Summary

This Grid Connection Statement supports Meridian Solar Farm Limited's application for a Development Consent Order (DCO) under the Planning Act 2008 for the Meridian Solar Farm. The Scheme is a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project comprising over 100 MW of solar generation, co-located battery storage, and approximately 13 km of new 400 kV overhead line to connect into National Grid's planned Weston Marsh B Substation. The Statement explains how the Scheme will connect to the National Electricity Transmission System (NETS) and identifies which parties will be responsible for the design and construction of each element of the grid connection.

Throughout 2025, the National Electricity System Operator (NESO) has undertaken significant reforms to the national grid connections process. As part of this reform, Meridian Solar Farm received a Gate 1 offer, indicating an initial connection year post-2035. The Applicant intends to reapply for Gate 2 status at future application rounds as NESO confirms the availability of further regional capacity, particularly as major network upgrades, including the Grimsby to Walpole reinforcement, progress.

There is no evident barrier to Meridian Solar Farm being granted a Gate 2 offer in future rounds. The National Grid Grimsby to Walpole project, which includes the new Weston Marsh Substations, continues to indicate a 2033 completion date, and the Applicant's progression through the planning process further demonstrates project readiness. NESO has also indicated that opportunities for Gate 2 reapplication will arise as additional capacity is confirmed, or as other projects withdraw. Reflecting this, the Environmental Statement assesses the Scheme based on a 2033 grid connection date, while incorporating flexibility through a seven-year post-consent construction window.

The Scheme will connect to the NETS via a single 400 kV overhead circuit running from the proposed Meridian 400 kV Substation northwards to Weston Marsh. This Grid Connection Route comprises primarily overhead line infrastructure, with a short underground section required to cross an existing 132 kV overhead line. The connection route includes pylons, underground cabling, cable sealing end compounds, and temporary construction areas, all of which have been assessed within the Environmental Statement.

As part of the wider Grimsby to Walpole project National Grid Electricity Transmission (NGET) is progressing the design of two new substations at Weston Marsh (A and B). The final siting of both substations remains subject to ongoing consultation and design coordination. The Applicant has therefore taken a proportionate and flexible approach, basing its design on the southern location (Weston March B) to minimise interaction with other major projects while retaining sufficient land within the Order Limits to accommodate a connection point once NGET finalises the substation layout. Should an

alternative connection point at Weston March A be put forward by NGET the Applicant would secure additional consents or a material change to the DCO as necessary.

As well as the 400 kV connection, depending on final arrangements with NGET, the Applicant may also be responsible for constructing elements of the generator bay infrastructure required to interface their Scheme with the substation, including sealing end connections and associated electrical equipment. NGET will design and construct the Weston Marsh Substations themselves and may deliver certain aspects of the generator bay works, subject to final agreements. The **Draft DCO** (Doc Ref. 3.1) provides both parties with the necessary powers to deliver the works for which they are responsible.

Land rights for the Solar Development Area have been largely secured through voluntary agreement, with remaining interests expected to complete in the near term. Along the Grid Connection Route, the Applicant continues to progress voluntary easements and access rights with landowners, supported by ongoing engagement and the issue of Heads of Terms. To ensure timely delivery and mitigate risks posed by third-party interests, the Applicant is seeking compulsory acquisition powers for any land, rights or interests that cannot be secured by negotiation. All discussions with affected landowners are recorded in the **Land Rights Tracker** (Doc. Ref. 4.4).

Through this Grid Connection Statement, the Applicant has confirmed that suitable arrangements are in place to enable the design and construction of the grid connection required for the Scheme. All necessary works fall within the Order Limits and have been assessed in the Environmental Statement. Connection arrangements continue to align with the parameters of the original grid offer and with National Grid's emerging design for the Weston Marsh B Substation. The Applicant is not aware of any reason why NGET will not secure the consents required for the substation infrastructure. Accordingly, the Scheme complies with the requirements of the Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedure) Regulations 2009 and the Planning Act 2008.

1. Introduction

1.1. Overview

- 1.1.1. This Grid Connection Statement forms part of an application by Meridian Solar Farm Limited to the Secretary of State under the Planning Act 2008 (the 'Act') for a Development Consent Order ('DCO') for the Meridian Solar Farm (the 'Scheme'). The DCO Application is for a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) comprising the construction, operation (including maintenance) and decommissioning of photovoltaic (PV) solar panels and up to 13 km of overhead line connection into National Grid's planned Weston Marsh substation. The Scheme also includes associated infrastructure, including co-located battery energy storage systems (BESS) and inter-array connections to link the land parcels where the solar panels are located. The BESS is associated development to ensure that energy can be stored when generated but not immediately required. The BESS will have a direct relationship with the solar PV panels and it will support the operation of this by storing electricity produced during times of peak capacity until it is needed.
- 1.1.2. The Scheme comprises a generating station exceeding 100 MW and the installation of above ground electric lines greater than two kilometres in length and a nominal voltage of 132 kV or greater. The Scheme therefore qualifies as an NSIP under sections 14(1)(a), 14(1)(b), 15(2) and 16 of the Act.
- 1.1.3. The purpose of this Grid Connection Statement is to set out who will be responsible for designing and building the connection to the electricity grid, in accordance with Regulation 6(1)(a)(i) of the Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedure) Regulations 2009 (the 'APFP Regulations').
- 1.1.4. The Grid Connection Statement is structured as follows:
- Section 2: Grid Connection Agreement
 - Section 3: Elements of Grid Connection
 - Section 4: Responsibilities for Designing and Building the Grid Connection
 - Section 5: Acquisition of Land Rights
 - Section 6: Conclusion
- 1.1.5. This Grid Connection Statement should be read alongside the other application documents and plans. References to "Work No." in this Statement correspond to the numbered works set out in Schedule 1 (Authorised Development) of the **Draft DCO** (Doc Ref. 3.1).

2. Grid Connection Agreement

- 2.1.1. From early 2025 onwards, the National Electricity System Operator (NESO) has undertaken a reform of the grid connections system across the UK (the Connections Reform). The outcomes of the Connections Reform supersede all previous unprotected grid connection offers.
- 2.1.2. From 8 December 2025, applicants were assigned results as either:
- Gate 1: A project did not meet the strategic alignment criteria at that stage. Applicants will receive a Gate 1 Agreement to Vary, but can apply again in future windows.
 - Gate 2 – Subject to Detailed Checks: A project must complete further checks before an offer can be made.
 - Gate 2 – Met Criteria for Detailed Checks: A project has met the readiness and strategic alignment criteria.
- 2.1.3. A number of factors were considered by NESO to determine the Gate results, including the status of land agreements, planning and strategic alignment with grid connection assets, including whether a project is reliant on future grid connection asset upgrades.
- 2.1.4. Applicants which receive a Gate 1 offer remain eligible to reapply for Gate 2 status at future application windows. The next application window is anticipated to be Q2 2026 or later.
- 2.1.5. The Applicant received a Gate 1 offer for the Meridian Solar Farm. This initially indicates a connection date post 2035 (as Gate 2 offers were made up to the period ending 2035). As noted above, an earlier connection may be possible within the 2031 to 2035 window should the Applicant be successful in reapplying through future Gate 2 application rounds. The offer did not include formal reasoning as to which of the factors noted in paragraph 2.1.3 were considered relevant or determinative to the Gate 1 offer received in this round.
- 2.1.6. For the avoidance of doubt, the Applicant intends to submit a Gate 2 application in future application rounds. The exact dates for future application rounds will be confirmed by NESO once there is greater clarity on the available connection capacity of the relevant grid infrastructure beyond 2030. In this context of Meridian Solar Farm, this will likely rely on the progress of known grid infrastructure upgrades including Grimsby to Walpole.

2.1.7. The Applicant is of the view that Meridian Solar Farm is a good candidate for a Gate 2 offer at future rounds for the following reasons:

- There has been no formal change by National Grid Electricity Transmission (NGET) to the completion date for the Grimsby to Walpole project which would provide the Point of Connection (the new Weston Marsh Substations) and the capacity for transmission from the Scheme. The date for completion of the Grimsby to Walpole project and associated substations is 2033. This provides confidence that the necessary grid infrastructure capacity will be available for the Scheme.
- Continued journey through the planning process further demonstrates readiness in support of future applications.
- NESO have indicated there will be further opportunities to reapply, as spare capacity is confirmed either due to grid infrastructure upgrades or project attrition (i.e. projects with Gate 2 status confirming they are no longer proceeding to construction and operation).

2.1.8. This demonstrates that there is no clear reason why a network connection (Gate 2 offer) could not be granted by NESO as part of future application rounds. It is anticipated such an offer will either provide for connection to align with the current proposed operation of Grimsby to Walpole (2033) or with a slight delay to a connection date post 2035.

2.1.9. The Applicant has used the 2033 connection date as the relevant milestone for assessment within the ES. However, as described in **Chapter 4: Overview of the EIA Process** (Doc Ref. 6.1) the ES has considered flexibility with regards to the construction and operational dates of the Scheme as part of its DCO Application, in order to reflect the uncertainty remaining as to the exact connection date, until the project receives a Gate 2 offer. A backstop of 7 years to commence construction post the grant of consent has been applied to appropriately confine that flexibility, and is considered reasonable in light of the context set out above.

2.1.10. The approach to proceed with the Application ahead of receiving a final Gate 2 offer is lawful. Specifically, paragraph 4.11.6 of EN-1 acknowledges such an approach may be taken, noting to proceed with an application for planning consent in advance of receiving a formal grid connection offer is simply assumed at the commercial risk of the Applicant.

2.1.11. In the absence of any confirmed specification by NESO, or any indication from NGET at this stage that the parameters being provided for under the Grimsby to

Walpole grid connection infrastructure have changed, the Applicant is progressing the application and design in accordance with the general terms of the original grid connection offer.

2.1.12. The following points summarise the original grid connection offer for the Scheme:

- The grid connection offer provided by NESO to the Applicant in November 2022 confirmed a connection would be facilitated by a spare bay within the design of a new Weston Marsh 400 kV Substation¹.
- The offer stipulated a 750 MW export and 350 MW import BESS capacity.
- The Applicant would be responsible for carrying out the works to facilitate the connection from the generating station to the bay at the Point of Connection (to be undertaken by Meridian Solar Farm Limited).

¹ Subsequent to the original agreement, NGET is now proposing two substations at Weston Marsh. The grid connection agreement was not varied to specify which substation the Scheme would connect to. Further detail is set out at Section 3.4 of this Grid Connection Statement.

3. Elements of Grid Connection

3.1. Overview

- 3.1.1. The electricity generated by the Scheme will be exported to the National Electricity Transmission System (NETS) via a new overhead line connection (Work No. 14). This overhead line will connect the Applicant's proposed 400 kV substation (Work No. 3A) to National Grid's planned Weston Marsh B Substation.
- 3.1.2. The overhead line will consist of a single 400 kV circuit, spanning up to 13km. All Work Nos. referenced in this document correspond to those set out in Schedule 1 of the **Draft DCO** (Doc Ref. 3.1). A full description of these works is provided in that Schedule.
- 3.1.3. The following sections summarise the elements required for the grid connection for the Scheme. A description of how these elements will be constructed is provided in **ES Chapter 2: The Scheme** (Doc Ref. 6.1).

3.2. The Meridian 400 kV Substation (Work No. 3A)

- 3.2.1. The Meridian 400 kV Substation (Work No. 3A) will convert electricity generated by the Solar PV (Work No. 1) and stored by the BESS Compound (Work No. 2) from 33 kV/132 kV to 400 kV for onward transmission to the NETS via the Grid Connection Route (Work No. 14).
- 3.2.2. The Meridian 400 kV Substation will also facilitate the import of electricity at 400 kV from the NETS for storage in the BESS Compound (Work No. 2).
- 3.2.3. The Meridian 400 kV Substation will comprise electrical infrastructure as required to facilitate the export and import of electricity between the Scheme and the NETS, including:
 - buildings housing control, offices, storage, workshop, security and welfare facilities;
 - monitoring and control systems for the substation and associated works;
 - 400 kV harmonic filter compound and 400 kV reactive power compensation compound; and
 - electrical and control cables, including connections to other relevant Work Nos.

3.3. Grid Connection Route (Work No. 14)

- 3.3.1. The Grid Connection Route (Work No. 14) will run from the Meridian 400 kV Substation (Work No. 3A) north towards Spalding and Weston, connecting to National Grid's proposed Weston Marsh B Substation, as shown on **ES Figure 2-4: Indicative Grid Connection Route Layout Plan** (Doc Ref. 6.2).
- 3.3.2. The connection will consist primarily of overhead lines, with a segment of underground cable where it crosses an existing 132 kV overhead line which is owned and operated by National Grid Electricity Distribution (NGED).
- 3.3.3. The Grid Connection Route will contain the following main components:
- A 400 kV overhead pylon route, approximately 13 km in length, connecting the Principal Site to the National Grid Weston Marsh Substation;
 - A 400 kV underground cable circuit (comprising three single-core cables) of approximately 350 m where it crosses an existing 132 kV overhead line, and associated cable sealing end compounds;
 - Cable ducts, cable protection, joint protection, and manholes;
 - Marker posts, underground cable markers, tiles and tape, communications chambers, fibre optic cables, lighting, and other works associated with cable laying;
 - Temporary construction and decommissioning laydown areas.
- 3.3.4. The construction, operation (including maintenance) and decommissioning (where relevant) have been assessed and reported in the relevant chapters of the **ES**.
- 3.3.5. The construction, operation (including maintenance) and (where applicable) decommissioning if all elements of the Grid Connection Route will be undertaken (respectively) in accordance with a detailed Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), Operational Environmental Management Plan (OEMP) and a Decommissioning Environmental Management Plan (DEMP). As per requirements in the DCO, these management plans will need to be prepared in substantial accordance with the **Outline CEMP** (Doc Ref. 7.10), **Outline OEMP** (Doc Ref. 7.11) and **Outline DEMP** (Doc Ref. 7.12) submitted with this Application.

3.4. The Weston Marsh B Substation

- 3.4.1. The proposed Weston Marsh B Substation will be consented and delivered by National Grid Electricity Transmission (NGET), separately from the Scheme, through the Grimsby to Walpole project.
- 3.4.2. NGET undertook a non-statutory consultation for the Grimsby to Walpole Project between January 2024 and March 2024, identifying a search area for a new substation at Weston Marsh. A second consultation was held in June 2025 and August 2025, confirming that there may be more than one substation at the Weston Marsh site and expanding the search area accordingly.
- 3.4.3. In November 2025, the NGET published the anticipated locations and layouts of the proposed Weston Marsh A and B substations as part of a targeted consultation. The targeted consultation also identified where new overhead line infrastructure could be located and where existing overhead lines would be reconfigured to facilitate the project.
- 3.4.4. As the Applicant's connection will approach from the south, the connection has been designed to the southernmost of the two substations (herein referred to as the Weston Marsh B Substation). This approach has been adopted to minimise the level of interaction with the other projects in this area, including Grimsby to Walpole, and to avoid approximately 2 km of further overhead line or underground cable to connect into the northern substation. The Applicant has included land surrounding the proposed location of Weston Marsh B Substation to provide sufficient working space to connect once the exact location is confirmed by NGET.
- 3.4.5. However, the Applicant acknowledges that the initial designs prepared by NGET for the Weston Marsh Substations provide for the Scheme to connect into the northern Weston Marsh A Substation. It is noted, as per the response received by NGET to the Scheme targeted consultation in January 2026 that the Grimsby to Walpole designs still reflect that approach. However, that consultation response also acknowledges that the parties are working to jointly develop a design which caters for the need of both project and which minimises effects. The Applicant and NGET continue to engage in design collaboration, including in respect of the final substation locations.
- 3.4.6. The Applicant does not consider it appropriate to delay and/or further change the Scheme at this stage when the final substation locations remain subject to consultation and further design refinement by NGET. In the event that the Scheme cannot be accommodated at Weston Marsh B Substation, or Weston

Marsh B Substation were to move, the Applicant shall seek to obtain further planning permission(s) and/or a material change to the DCO to bridge any gap between the current Order Limits and the final location of the substation for connection.

- 3.4.7. While noting the information available on the siting of the substations is subject to change, the Applicant considers it has taken a proportionate approach based on information available at the time of submission, and in the interests of presenting a scheme which minimises both direct and cumulative effects.
- 3.4.8. Work No. 14 shown on the **Works Plans - Section B: Grid Connection** (Doc Ref. 2.3) covers a broader area surrounding the Weston Marsh B Substation, with sufficient land to accommodate a connection from various directions. The Applicant will not exercise powers of compulsory acquisition over land that is not required to facilitate the connection, once the exact details are known and shared by NGET. This is an approach that was confirmed as acceptable by the Secretary of State as part of the Five Estuaries DCO Decision.

4. Responsibilities for Designing and Building the Grid Connection

4.1. Responsibilities of the Applicant

4.1.1. The Applicant and its appointed contractors will be responsible for designing and building the following elements of the grid connection:

- Meridian 400 kV Substation (Work No. 3A); and
- Grid Connection Route (Work No. 14), including all associated overhead and underground cabling, cable sealing end compounds, and related infrastructure up to the point of connection at the planned Weston Marsh B substation.

4.1.2. The Applicant may also be responsible for the construction of the relevant generator bay within the Weston Marsh B Substation, subject to the final substation design and agreement with NGET.

4.1.3. The works for which the Applicant may be responsible at the Weston Marsh B Substation are expected to comprise the termination of either the 400 kV overhead line to a gantry and associated substation equipment or if approaching as underground cable to above-ground cable sealing ends and associated substation equipment. The precise design and allocation of responsibility for constructing the substation bay works will depend on the substation design progressed by NGET and the ongoing interrelationships, contractual mechanisms, coordination and phasing of the two schemes.

4.1.4. Under the **Draft DCO** (Doc Ref. 3.1), the Applicant has proposed that NGET would also have the benefit of powers (in addition to the Applicant) in connection with the Grid Connection Route (Work No. 14). NGET may therefore also be responsible for constructing that part of the grid connection that connects into the Weston Marsh B Substation, depending on the final arrangements.

4.2. Responsibilities of National Grid Electricity Transmission

4.2.1. NGET will be responsible for the design and construction of the planned Weston Marsh B Substation, including works required to facilitate the connection of Meridian Solar Farm's grid connection cables within National Grid's Weston Marsh B Substation. NGET may also be responsible for the construction of the relevant generator bay within the Weston Marsh B Substation, subject to the final substation design and the division of works. The allocation of responsibility for

the generator bay works will be determined by agreement between the Applicant and NGET.

- 4.2.2. The Applicant understands the NGET will obtain planning permission for the design and construction of the Weston Marsh B Substation via its planned DCO Application for the Grimsby to Walpole project. It most recently shared its indicative location and layout for the substation as part of a targeted consultation for its Grimsby to Walpole project.

5. Acquisition of Land Rights

5.1. Solar Development Area and Inter-Array Connections

- 5.1.1. The Applicant has secured the majority of the land and rights required for the Solar Development Area through voluntary agreement with landowners. Negotiations are ongoing to secure any remaining interests by agreement wherever possible.
- 5.1.2. To ensure the timely delivery of the Scheme and to avoid any risk of third-party rights impeding construction, operation, or maintenance, the Applicant is seeking compulsory acquisition powers for any land, rights, or interests required for the Solar Development Area and for the installation of inter-array connections.
- 5.1.3. The Applicant is also seeking compulsory acquisition powers of temporary possession and permanent rights for the installation, operation, and maintenance of the Inter Array Connections.
- 5.1.4. The status of negotiations with affected landowners and occupiers is recorded in the **Land Rights Tracker** (Doc Ref. 4.4).

5.2. Grid Connection Route

- 5.2.1. The Applicant is actively progressing voluntary land agreements with affected landowners along the proposed Grid Connection Route required to facilitate the connection of the Scheme, to the National Electricity Transmission System (NETS). Engagement with land interests commenced at an early stage of project development and has continued throughout the pre-application period.
- 5.2.2. The Applicant has issued Heads of Terms for the necessary easements and access rights to all landowners and occupiers whose land is required to host the proposed overhead line and associated infrastructure. The Applicant continues to engage constructively with each affected party to address queries, agree accommodation measures, and seek mutually acceptable terms, where possible. The **Land Rights Tracker** (Doc Ref. 4.4) should be referred to for the description of the latest status of these discussions.
- 5.2.3. Notwithstanding the progress to date, it is necessary for the Applicant to seek compulsory acquisition powers to secure all land, rights and interests required for the Grid Connection Route. This is to ensure that any third-party interests or encumbrances affecting such land, rights and interests may be acquired,

overridden or extinguished pursuant to the **Draft DCO** (Doc Ref. 3.1), thereby ensuring that the Scheme can be constructed, operated and maintained.

- 5.2.4. The Applicant nevertheless remains committed to securing all necessary land and rights by negotiation where possible and will continue to engage with affected parties throughout the DCO process.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1.1. The Applicant is required to submit a statement pursuant to Regulation 6(1)(a)(i) of the APFP Regulations, confirming who will be responsible for designing and building the connection to the electricity grid.
- 6.1.2. This Grid Connection Statement provides confirmation to the Secretary of State of the following:
- The Applicant previously received and accepted a grid connection offer from NESO to connect the Scheme to the NETS. As part of the Connections Reform, the offer was revised to a Gate 1 offer, however, there is no obvious reason why a network connection (Gate 2 offer) could not be granted by NESO as part of future application rounds;
 - The Scheme is designed to connect to the planned Weston Marsh B Substation, at the location released in in the most recent round of consultation for Grimsby to Walpole. This will be via a 400 kV connection from the proposed Meridian 400 kV Substation, both of which form part of the authorised development.
- 6.1.3. All elements of the grid connection are within the Order Limits. The works required to deliver the grid connection are included in the authorised development described in Schedule 1 of the **Draft DCO** (Doc Ref. 3.1) and have been assessed in the Environmental Statement (Doc Ref. 6.1) submitted as part of this DCO application.
- 6.1.4. The Applicant has secured, or will have the ability to secure, all necessary land and rights to deliver the Grid Connection Route, either by agreement or through the compulsory acquisition powers sought in the **Draft DCO** (Doc Ref. 3.1). Planning permission / a development consent for the planned Weston Marsh B Substation will be sought by NGET. The Applicant is not aware of any reason why such permission should not be obtained.
- 6.1.5. The Applicant is therefore able to confirm that the necessary arrangements are in place to ensure the design and construction of the grid connection in accordance with the requirements of the APFP Regulations and the Act.

