



Meridian Solar Farm

EN010169

Volume 6

Environmental Statement

6.1 ES Chapter 1:
Introduction

APFP Regulation 5(2)(a)

Infrastructure Planning (Applications:
Prescribed Forms and Procedure)
Regulations 2009

March 2026

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background

- 1.1.1. Meridian Solar Farm Limited (hereafter referred to as 'the Applicant') has prepared this Environmental Statement ('ES') as part of its application for a Development Consent Order ('the DCO Application') for the construction, operation and decommissioning of the proposed Meridian Solar Farm ('the Scheme').
- 1.1.2. The DCO Application is for a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project ('NSIP') comprising the construction, operation (including maintenance) and decommissioning of a solar photovoltaic (PV) electricity generating station with associated infrastructure, including co-located Battery Energy Storage System (BESS), Inter-Array Connections to link the land parcels that form the Solar Development Areas, and an up to 13 kilometres (km) overhead line Grid Connection (with one short undergrounded section) which would run north towards a point of connection (PoC) at the proposed Weston Marsh B National Grid Electricity Transmission (NGET) substation, to the north of Weston.
- 1.1.3. The Scheme comprises a generating station of more than 100 megawatts (MW) and the installation of above ground electric lines greater than two kilometres in length. The Scheme therefore qualifies as an NSIP under sections 14(1)(a), 14(1)(b), 15(2) and 16 of the Planning Act 2008 ('PA 2008')¹.
- 1.1.4. The DCO Application is submitted to the Planning Inspectorate, with the decision whether to grant the DCO being made by the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero (the 'Secretary of State'). The DCO, if granted, would provide the main necessary authorisation and consent for the construction, operation (which includes maintenance and repair) and decommissioning of the Scheme, and associated infrastructure for connection to the National Electricity Transmission System ('NETS').
- 1.1.5. The Scheme falls within the definition of 'EIA development' under the Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017² ('the EIA Regulations') requiring an EIA to be prepared as part of the DCO Application. The ES presents the

¹ The Planning Act 2008. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/29/contents> [Accessed 15 September 2025].

² The Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2017/572/data.pdf>. [Accessed 15/09/2025]

findings of the EIA undertaken for the Scheme in accordance with the EIA Regulations and PA 2008.

- 1.1.6. A glossary and list of abbreviations are provided in **ES Glossary and Abbreviations** (Doc Ref. 6.1).

1.2. The Scheme

- 1.2.1. The location of the Scheme is shown in **ES Figure 1-1: Scheme Location** (Doc Ref 6.2). The key components of the Scheme include:

- The 'Solar Development Area', comprising land parcels A, B, C and D, which would host the ground-mounted solar PV generation facilities (and associated supporting infrastructure), BESS and On-Site Substation Compounds (including one 400 kilovolt (kV) substation and BESS compound at Land Parcel B, facilitating connection to the 400kV overhead line, and three 132kV substations compounds at the other land parcels). **ES Figure 1-2: Solar Development Area Field Numbers** (Doc Ref. 6.2) provides a further breakdown of the fields that make up the Solar Development Area land parcels;
- The 'Inter-Array Connections', comprising underground cabling with an operating voltage of 132kV between Land Parcels A and B and a 132kV overhead line between Land Parcels C and D; and
- The 'Grid Connection', predominantly a 400kV overhead line (via steel lattice style pylons), with one section of underground cable and associated cable sealing end compounds, to the planned NGET Weston Marsh B Substation, east of Spalding.

- 1.2.2. The Scheme includes the construction, operation, maintenance and decommissioning of the infrastructure listed above.

- 1.2.3. The Site constitutes the total land area under consideration for the Scheme, including the Solar Development Areas, Inter-Array Connections and Grid Connection Route. The total area of the Site within the Order Limits is approximately 1,616³ha.

- 1.2.4. For the purposes of the ES, it is assumed that construction would commence in 2029, with operation from 2033. The Scheme would have an operational life of

³ Note the sum of parts for the areas of the Scheme exceeds the total area of the Order Limits due to an overlap of the Grid Connection Route with Solar Development Area Land Parcel B.

40 years. Information regarding the connection date with the proposed NGET Weston Marsh B substation can be found in the **Grid Connection Statement** (Doc Ref. 7.5).

- 1.2.5. Further information on the Scheme and the assessment years is included in **ES Chapter 2: The Scheme** (Doc Ref. 6.1).

1.3. Structure of the Environmental Statement

1.3.1. Environmental impacts arising from the Scheme have been studied systematically as part of the EIA process, and the results are presented within this ES. The baseline for the assessment has been derived from surveys and studies within and around the Site. This is explained further in **ES Chapter 4: Overview of the EIA Process** (Doc. Ref. 6.1), and in the methodology section of each technical assessment chapter (**ES Chapters 5 to 16** (Doc. Ref. 6.1)).

1.3.2. The EIA process has assessed the potential environmental effects of the Scheme during construction, operation (including maintenance), and decommissioning, identifying measures to avoid, reduce, or mitigate likely significant effects and, where possible, enhance the environment. Residual effects remaining after mitigation are also reported. Where appropriate, the technical assessments in **ES Chapters 5 to 16** (Doc. Ref. 6.1) identify mitigation measures forming part of the Proposed Development, alongside additional economic, environmental, and social enhancements providing further benefits across the DCO Site.

1.3.3. In addition, an **Environmental Mitigation and Commitments Register** (Doc Ref. 7.7) has been produced as a standalone document, submitted with the DCO Application, which sets out the environmental mitigation and commitment measures presented in this ES which will be adopted during the construction, operation, and decommissioning phases of the Scheme, and identifies how these measures are secured.

1.3.4. The structure of the ES is outlined in Table 1-1 below.

Table 1-1: ES Structure

Volume	Chapter	Description
Volume 6.1	Non-Technical Summary (NTS)	The NTS is presented in a separate document and provides a concise description of the Scheme, the alternatives considered, EIA methodology, baseline assessment, likely significant environmental effects and proposed mitigation measures. It

Volume	Chapter	Description
		is designed to provide information on the Scheme in a widely accessible format using non-technical language which can be understood by a wide audience and assist interested parties with their familiarisation of the Scheme.
Volume 6.1	Glossary and Abbreviations	The Glossary and abbreviations chapter provides definitions of technical terms and explanations of acronyms used throughout the ES.
	Chapter 1: Introduction	This chapter presents the Scheme, outlines the structure of the ES, provides legislative background, and details consultation activities undertaken as part of the environmental assessment process.
	Chapter 2: The Scheme	This chapter describes the Site and Scheme in detail, including its purpose, key components, design features, and location, while outlining the construction methodology and anticipated operational activities.
	Chapter 3: Alternatives and Design Evolution	This chapter outlines the alternatives considered during the development of the Scheme and explains the design evolution process, highlighting how environmental, technical, and consultation inputs influenced the final design.
	Chapter 4: Overview of the EIA Process	This chapter provides an overview of the EIA process, explaining the methodology, key stages, and approach used to identify, assess, and mitigate potential environmental effects of the proposed scheme.
	Chapter 5: Agriculture and Soils Chapter 6: Air Quality	These chapters of the ES consider the impacts of the Scheme in relation to a number of identified topics, which may

Volume	Chapter	Description
	Chapter 7: Climate Change	result in significant environmental or socio-economic effects. Each topic is presented in a separate technical chapter and reports the results of the assessment, likely significant effects arising from the Scheme, and proposed mitigation measures. The chapters also present information on likely cumulative effects with other developments.
	Chapter 8: Cultural Heritage	
	Chapter 9: Ecology and Biodiversity	
	Chapter 10: Human Health	
	Chapter 11: Hydrology and Flood Risk	
	Chapter 12: Landscape and Visual	
	Chapter 13: Noise and Vibration	
	Chapter 14: Socio-Economics and Land Use	
	Chapter 15: Traffic and Access	
	Chapter 16: Other Environmental Topics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electric and Magnetic Fields; • Glint and Glare; • Major Accidents and Disasters; • Materials and Waste. 	
	Chapter 17: Effect Interactions	This chapter provides an assessment of the likely significant effects resulting from multiple impacts identified within ES Chapters 5 to 16 (Doc Ref 6.1) impacting on the same receptor (referred to as 'effect interactions' or 'interrelationship effects'). Cumulative effects with other developments

Volume	Chapter	Description
		are identified and assessed in each technical chapter.
	Chapter 18: Summary of Likely Significant Effects	This chapter provides an overall summary of the likely significant residual effects of the Scheme (including cumulative effects) that have been identified to remain following the implementation of all mitigation measures.
Volume 6.2	Figures	Volume 6.2 provides a set of figures that accompany the ES to help aid the reader’s understanding.
Volume 6.3	Technical Appendices	Volume 6.3 provides appendices including further detail on assessments presented in Volume 6.1. The appendices comprise technical reports, tables and survey results, as appropriate.

1.4. Legislative and Planning Policy Context

Legislative Context

- 1.4.1. The Scheme is defined as an NSIP under Sections 14(1)(a), 14(1)(b), 15(2) and 16 of the PA2008, as an onshore generating station in England exceeding 100 MW and due to the proposed installation of two above ground electric lines greater than two kilometres in length. This means that permission to construct the Scheme must be sought via a DCO application.
- 1.4.2. The Secretary of State is responsible for determining the application for a DCO and will appoint a single person or a panel to manage and examine the DCO Application (referred to as the 'Examining Authority'). In its role, the Examining Authority will examine the Application and make a recommendation to the Secretary of State, who will then decide whether to grant the DCO for the Scheme.
- 1.4.3. In accordance with Section 104(2) of the PA 2008, the Secretary of State is required to have regard to the relevant National Policy Statements ('NPSs'), amongst other matters, when deciding whether or not to grant a DCO.
- 1.4.4. The Overarching NPS for Energy (EN-1), the NPS for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (EN-3) and the NPS for Electricity Networks (EN-5) are the relevant national policy statements with respect to the Scheme.
- 1.4.5. In addition, the Secretary of State must have regard to any Local Impact Reports, any prescribed matters, and any other matters which the Secretary of State considers are both 'important and relevant' to their decision.
- 1.4.6. Section 115 of the PA 2008 states that a DCO can include consent for 'associated development', which is development that is not an NSIP in its own right but is functionally associated with the NSIP. This may be development that supports the construction, operation or decommissioning of the NSIP; which helps to address the impacts of the NSIP; or is of a type normally brought forward with the NSIP. For example, this includes the BESS, which is functionally linked to the generation of energy.

Consideration of Planning Policy in EIA

- 1.4.7. The ES describes the national and local planning policies relevant to the assessment of the Scheme with a summary provided for each environmental topic. The ES does not assess the Scheme against planning policy, which is undertaken and set out in the **Planning Statement** (Doc Ref. 7.1).

1.4.8. The purpose of considering planning policy in EIA is twofold:

- To identify policy that could influence the sensitivity of receptors (and therefore the significance of effects) and any requirements for mitigation; and
- To identify planning policy that could influence the methodology of the EIA. For example, planning policy that may require the assessment of an impact or the use of a specific methodology.

1.4.9. A summary of national and local planning policy relevant to each technical assessment is provided for each environmental topic (**ES Chapters 5 to 16** (Doc Ref. 6.1)) within the corresponding Legislation, Policy and Guidance appendices of this ES (Doc Ref. 6.3).

National Policy Statements

1.4.10. The Secretary of State must have regard to any relevant national policy statements when deciding the DCO Application. The EIA has been undertaken with reference to the following NPSs, which are relevant to the Scheme:

- Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy (NPS EN-1)⁴;
- National Policy Statement for Renewable Energy (NPS EN-3)⁵; and
- National Policy Statement for Electricity Networks Infrastructure (NPS EN-5)⁶.

1.4.11. A summary of the relevant considerations from the above NPSs for each technical assessment is provided for each environmental topic (**ES Chapters 5 to 16** (Doc Ref. 6.1)) within the corresponding Legislation, Policy and Guidance appendices of this ES (Doc Ref. 6.3). A full policy analysis is provided in the **Planning Statement** (Doc Ref. 7.1).

⁴ DESNZ (2025). Overarching NPS for Energy (NPS EN-1). Available at: <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/695d1015f41883f4e50ed9ab/overarching-national-policy-statement-for-energy-en-1-web-accessible.pdf> [Accessed 21 January 2026]

⁵ DESNZ (2025). NPS for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (NPS EN-3). Available at: <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/695d1368b5c46330350ed9a2/national-policy-statement-for-renewable-energy-infrastructure-en-3-web-accessible.pdf> [Accessed 21 January 2026]

⁶ DESNZ (2025). NPS for Electricity Networks (NPS EN-5). Available at: <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/695d12e1b5c46330350ed9a1/national-policy-statement-for-electricity-networks-infrastructure-en-5-web-accessible.pdf> [Accessed 21 January 2026]

EIA Regulations

- 1.4.12. The EIA Regulations specify which developments are required to undergo an EIA and schemes relevant to the NSIP planning process are listed under Schedule 1 or Schedule 2. The developments listed in Schedule 1 require an EIA, while developments listed in Schedule 2 only require an EIA, if they are considered “likely to have significant effects on the environment by virtue of factors such as its nature, size or location”. The criteria on which this judgement must be made are set out in Schedule 3. The Scheme is a Schedule 2 development under Paragraph 3(a) of Schedule 2 of the EIA Regulations as it constitutes “industrial installations for the production of electricity, steam and hot water”.
- 1.4.13. On 23 April 2025 the Applicant confirmed to the Planning Inspectorate under Regulation 8(1)(b) of the EIA Regulations that an ES is being provided with the Application. Due to the size, nature and location of the Scheme, it is likely to have significant effects on the environment and, therefore, it is considered to constitute an EIA development.
- 1.4.14. The issues that the Applicant considers the EIA will need to address were identified in the EIA Scoping Report submitted to the Planning Inspectorate on 31 May 2024 and provided in **ES Appendix 1-1: EIA Scoping Report** (Doc Ref. 6.3). The EIA Scoping Report was developed following initial consultation with a number of statutory consultees and was informed by the EIA team’s experience working on a number of other solar farm projects.
- 1.4.15. The Planning Inspectorate reviewed and consulted on the EIA Scoping Report and subsequently published a Scoping Opinion on 10 July 2024 (the ‘Scoping Opinion’) which included the formal responses received by the Planning Inspectorate from consultees, provided in **ES Appendix 1-2: EIA Scoping Opinion** (Doc Ref. 6.3). All key issues raised in the Scoping Opinion were considered during the EIA process. Each ES Chapter summarises the key matters raised within the Scoping Opinion relevant to the technical topic and how they have been addressed.

National Planning Policy Framework

- 1.4.16. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)⁷, last updated in February 2025, sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are to be applied. It is a material consideration in planning decisions under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990⁸.
- 1.4.17. Paragraph 5 of the NPPF makes it clear that the document does not contain specific policies for NSIPs and that applications in relation to NSIPs are to be determined in accordance with the decision-making framework set out in the PA2008 and relevant NPSs, as well as any other matters that are considered both important and relevant. However, Paragraph 5 goes on to confirm that the NPPF may be a matter that is both important and relevant for the purposes of assessing DCO applications. The EIA for the Scheme has therefore had regard to the relevant policies of the NPPF and Planning Practice Guidance as part of the overall framework of national policy relevant to solar development and overhead lines.
- 1.4.18. The NPPF is currently undergoing a process of revision, with a draft version published for consultation⁹. The consultation period is set to close on 10 March 2026¹⁰. While the draft NPPF published for consultation seeks to update and refine national planning policies, it is not anticipated to introduce material changes that would alter the requirements or scope of this ES. The preparation of this ES has been undertaken in accordance with the current NPPF, and any future updates to the framework will be monitored to ensure continued compliance with national planning policy requirements.

⁷ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) (2025). National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67aafe8f3b41f783cca46251/NPPF_December_2024.pdf [Accessed 15 September 2025]

⁸ The Town and Country Planning Act 1990. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1990/8/contents> [Accessed 15 September 2025]

⁹ MHCLG (2025) National Planning Policy Framework – draft text for consultation. (December 2025). Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6941965758a21370f58f304e/Draft_NPPF_December_2025.pdf [Accessed 21 January 2026]

¹⁰ MHCLG (2025) National Planning Policy Framework: proposed reforms and other changes to the planning system (2025). Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/national-planning-policy-framework-proposed-reforms-and-other-changes-to-the-planning-system> [Accessed 21 January 2026]

Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025

1.4.19. During the preparation of this ES, the Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025¹¹ was passed by the Parliament in December 2025, introducing a series of reforms intended to streamline the planning and consenting process for NSIPs, including energy infrastructure. The Act seeks to improve the efficiency and timeliness of the DCO regime, support the delivery of clean energy infrastructure, and provide greater clarity within the decision-making framework. While these legislative changes represent an evolution of the planning system, most of the NSIP-related provisions will require secondary legislation, commencement regulations and associated guidance before they take full effect. As such, the Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025 does not materially alter the assessment requirements for the Scheme and therefore does not change the scope or conclusions of this ES.

Local Planning Policy

1.4.20. Policies in Local Plans are considered ‘important and relevant’ matters and can influence the content of Local Impact Reports (which the Local Planning Authorities will produce following submission of the DCO Application), and which the Secretary of State must have regard to in its decision making in accordance with the PA 2008.

1.4.21. The Scheme is located within the administrative areas of Lincolnshire County Council (‘LCC’) and South Holland District Council (‘SHDC’). The local planning policy relevant to the Scheme therefore consists of the following:

- South East Lincolnshire Local Plan (‘SELLP’)¹² (adopted March 2019);
 - Policy 2: Development Management;
 - Policy 3: Design of New Development;
 - Policy 4: Approach to Flood Risk;
 - Policy 5: Meeting Physical Infrastructure and Service Needs;
 - Policy 6: Developer Contributions;

¹¹ Planning and Infrastructure Act (2025). Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2025/34/contents/enacted> [Accessed 21 January 2026]

¹² South East Lincolnshire Joint Strategic Planning Committee (2019) South East Lincolnshire Local Plan 2011-2036. Available at: <https://www.southeastlincolnlocalplan.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Local-Plan-text-March-2019.pdf> [Accessed 15 September 2025]

- Policy 28: The Natural Environment;
- Policy 29: The Historic Environment;
- Policy 30: Pollution;
- Policy 31: Climate Change and Renewable and Low Carbon Energy;
- Policy 32: Community, Health and Well-being;
- Policy 33: Delivering a More Sustainable Transport Network; and
- Policy 36: Vehicle and Cycle Parking.
- Lincolnshire Minerals & Waste Local Plan (adopted June 2016)¹³.

Other Relevant Policy

1.4.22. Other policies which are likely to be important and relevant matters to the Secretary of State's decision and are considerations for the EIA include:

- The UK Government's 'A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment' (published in 2018), commonly referred to as 'The 25 Year Environment Plan'¹⁴ and its update, the Environmental Improvement Plan 2023¹⁵;
- The Energy White Paper: Powering our Net Zero Future (2020)¹⁶; and
- The UK Government's policy paper 'Powering Up Britain'¹⁷.

1.4.23. The 25 Year Environment Plan set out the Government's 25-year plan to improve the environment within a generation. It defined 10 goals and provided a framework and vision for how these were to be achieved. The goals included: achieve clean air; achieve clean and plentiful water; achieve thriving plants and

¹³ Lincolnshire County Council (2016) Lincolnshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan: Core Strategy and Development Management Policies. Available at: <https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/downloads/file/2361/core-strategy-and-development-management-policies> [Accessed 15 September 2025]

¹⁴ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) (2018) 25 Year Environment Plan. Open Government Licence, London, 2018. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/25-year-environment-plan> [Accessed 15 September 2025]

¹⁵ DEFRA (2023); Environmental Improvement Plan: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1133967/environmental-improvement-plan-2023.pdf [Accessed 18 June 2025].

¹⁶ DESNZ and Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (DBEIS) (2020). Energy White Paper: Powering our Net Zero Future. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5f6c61e2d3bf7f3a3bdc8cbf/201216_BEIS_EWP_Command_Paper_Accessible.pdf [Accessed 15 September 2025]

¹⁷ DESNZ (2023). Powering up Britain. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/powering-up-britain> [Accessed 15 September 2025]

wildlife; reduce risk of harm from environmental hazards like flooding and drought; use resources from nature more sustainably and efficiently; enhance beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment; mitigate and adapt to climate change; minimise waste; manage exposure to chemicals; and enhance biosecurity. In accordance with the Environment Act 2021¹⁸, the 25-year plan is to be reviewed and updated every five years and the Environmental Improvement Plan 2023 is the first of these updates. It reinforces the intent of the 25 Year Environment Plan and sets out the progress made against all ten goals, the specific targets and commitments made in relation to each goal, and the Government's plan to continue to deliver these targets and the overarching goals.

- 1.4.24. The Energy White Paper, published in December 2020, sets out how the UK will reach net zero emissions by 2050. It identifies the Government's aim for a fully decarbonised, reliable and low-cost power system by 2050 and highlights the Government's commitment to solar energy alongside wind to achieve net zero.
- 1.4.25. In March 2023, the UK Government published the Mission Zero Independent Review of Net Zero¹⁹, which aimed to determine how the UK can "*deliver on its net zero commitments by demonstrating how to deliver and implement most effectively and efficiently a plan for our future energy transition*". The review highlights "*the importance of delivering future energy security through the greater use of domestically generated renewable and clean sources of power*" and Objective 11: 'Accelerating Renewables' recommends that a taskforce and deployment roadmaps are set up in 2023 for solar energy generation to reach up to 70 gigawatts (GW) by 2035 (i.e., 70,000MW).
- 1.4.26. In March 2023, the UK Government also published a policy paper on Powering Up Britain²⁰. It emphasises the importance of energy security and the new Department for Energy Security and Net Zero's aim to replace the reliance on fossil fuels with "*cheaper, cleaner, domestic sources of energy*". The policy states that is the goal "*to quintuple our solar power by 2035*".

¹⁸ Environment Act 2021 c. 30. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/30/contents/enacted> [Accessed 18 June 2025].

¹⁹ Rt Hon Chris Skidmore MP, Mission Zero Independent Review of Net Zero (2023). Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1128689/mission-zero-independent-review.pdf [Accessed 15 September 2025]

²⁰ Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (2023). Powering up Britain. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/powering-up-britain/powering-up-britain> [Accessed 15 September 2025]

1.4.27. In December 2024, the UK Government published the Clean Power 2030 Action Plan²¹, which describes the pathway to a clean power system by 2030. The report addresses the challenges of creating an affordable and secure energy source, creation of new energy industries and reducing harmful emissions which contribute to climate change. Page 28 of the report references how a clean power system will require the mass deployment of offshore wind, onshore wind and solar. Page 73 of the report illustrates how the current installed capacity of solar is at 16.6 GW, and the target is 47 GW by 2030 and 45-69 GW by 2035.

1.5. Consultation and Engagement

- 1.5.1. Consultation is integral to the preparation of DCO Applications and to the EIA process. The views of consultation bodies and the local community serve to focus the environmental studies and to identify specific issues that require further investigation, as well as to inform aspects of the design of the Scheme. Consultation is an on-going process, and the publication of the Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEI Report) formed an important part of that process.
- 1.5.2. The PA2008 requires applicants to carry out pre-application consultation on their proposals. The **Consultation Report** (Doc Ref 5.1) provides detail on how the consultation must be undertaken.
- 1.5.3. Each technical chapter of the ES includes details on any topic-specific consultation and engagement undertaken to date.
- 1.5.4. An informal, non-statutory public consultation in relation to the Scheme was undertaken from May to July 2024. A Non-Statutory Consultation Summary Report has been prepared and is published on the Scheme's website²².
- 1.5.5. Statutory consultation was undertaken between 24 April 2025 to 8 June 2025, during which time the Applicant hosted a number of in-person events. The statutory consultation included the publication of the PEI Report, the feedback on which has been considered within this ES.
- 1.5.6. Following the review of feedback from the statutory consultation and further design development and assessment work, a number of minor changes to the

²¹ DESZN (2025) Clean Power 2030 Action Plan. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/clean-power-2030-action-plan#full-publication-update-history> [Accessed 15 September 2025]

²² Meridian Solar (2024) Non-Statutory Consultation Summary Report. Available at: <https://www.meridiansolarfarm.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Meridian-non-statutory-consultation-summary.pdf>. [Accessed 15 September 2025]

Order Limits of the Scheme were identified. These changes were subject to targeted consultation, which ran from 24 September 2025 to 22 October 2025. A second round of targeted consultation was run from 8 January 2026 to 5 February 2026, following the extension of the Grid Connection Route to the confirmed location of the NGET Weston Marsh B Substation.

- 1.5.7. The issues that were raised through all stages of consultation and how these have been considered and addressed within the design evolution of the Scheme and the EIA are set out in each of the technical chapters (**ES Chapters 5 to 16** (Doc Ref 6.1)) and **ES Chapter 3: Alternatives and Design Evolution** (Doc Ref. 6.1).
- 1.5.8. The pre-application consultation undertaken by the Applicant is also documented within the **Consultation Report** (Doc Ref 5.1) which is provided as a separate document as part of the DCO Application. This includes a separate section on EIA related consultation, as recommended within the Planning Inspectorate's Advice on the Consultation Report²³ on the preparation of consultation reports.
- 1.5.9. Technical engagement with relevant statutory stakeholders has also been undertaken throughout the preparation of the ES, as further explained in the technical chapters (**ES Chapters 5 to 16** (Doc Ref. 6.1)).

1.6. The PEI Report

- 1.6.1. The Preliminary Environmental Information (PEI) Report was prepared and published in April 2025 as part of the Applicant's statutory consultation to satisfy the requirement of the EIA Regulations as discussed above. 'Preliminary environmental information' is defined in the EIA Regulations as information "*which (a) has been compiled by the applicant; and (b) is reasonably required for the consultation bodies to develop an informed view of the likely significant environmental effects of the development (and of any associated development)*".
- 1.6.2. Planning Inspectorate Advice Note Seven (EIA: Process, Preliminary Environmental Information, and Environmental Statements)²⁴ notes: "A good PEI

²³ PINS (2025). Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects: Advice on the Consultation Report. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/nationally-significant-infrastructure-projects-advice-on-the-consultation-report#format-and-content-of-the-consultation-report> [Accessed 15 September 2025]

²⁴ PINS (2025). Advice Note Seven: Environmental Impact Assessment: Process, Preliminary Environmental Information and Environmental Statements. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nationally-significant-infrastructure-projects-advice-note-seven-environmental-impact-assessment-process-preliminary-environmental-information-an> [Accessed 15 September 2025]

document is one that enables consultees (both specialist and non-specialist) to understand the likely environmental effects of the Scheme and helps to inform their consultation responses on the Scheme”.

- 1.6.3. In order to enable consultees to understand the likely environmental effects of the Scheme, the PEI Report presented preliminary findings of the environmental assessments undertaken up to that point in time. This allowed consultees the opportunity to provide informed comments on the Scheme, the assessment process, and preliminary findings prior to the finalisation of the DCO Application and this ES.
- 1.6.4. The Applicant sought the views of consultees on the information contained within the PEI Report, and there was an opportunity within the process up to submission of the DCO Application for both the EIA and the project design to have regard to comments received. These comments were incorporated into the ES and the design of the Scheme, where appropriate. Further information on how comments have been taken into account are provided within **ES Chapter 3: Alternatives and Design Evolution** (Doc Ref. 6.1), which outlines the evolution of the Scheme’s design and the consideration of alternatives. Each of the technical chapters of the ES (**ES Chapters 5 to 16**, Doc Ref. 6.1) also explains any notable changes in effects or design between the PEI Report and the ES, highlighting both positive and adverse effects. Further information on how the comments have been taken into account is set out within **Consultation Report** and its associated **Consultation Report Appendices** (Doc Ref. 5.1), which document the consultation process and responses received during the development of the Scheme.

1.7. ISEP Quality Mark

- 1.7.1. AECOM Ltd has undertaken the EIA on behalf of the Applicant. AECOM is an Institute of Sustainability and Environmental Professionals (ISEP) (formerly known as IEMA) Registered Impact Assessor and holds the ISEP EIA Quality Mark as recognition of the quality of our EIA product and continuous training of our environmental consultants. An EIA Statement of Competence is included within **ES Appendix 1-3: Statement of Competence** (Doc Ref. 6.3) outlining the relevant expertise or qualifications of the experts who prepared the ES.

1.8. Requirements of an Environmental Statement

1.8.1. Part 1 of Schedule 4 of the EIA Regulations sets out the information for inclusion in the ES. Table 1-2 below summarises where the requirements of Schedule 4 of the EIA Regulations have been addressed in this ES.

Table 1-2: Requirements of Part 1 of Schedule 4 of the EIA Regulations

Requirement	Location in this ES
1. Description of the development, including in particular: (a) A description of the location of the development.	ES Chapter 2: The Scheme (Doc Ref. 6.1)
1(b) A description of the physical characteristics of the whole development including, where relevant, requisite demolition works, and the land-use requirements during the construction and operational phases.	ES Chapter 2: The Scheme (Doc Ref. 6.1)
1(c) A description of the main characteristics of the operational phase of the development (in particular any production process), for instance, energy demand and energy used, nature and quantity of the materials and natural resources (including water, land, soil and biodiversity) used.	ES Chapter 2: The Scheme (Doc Ref. 6.1)
1(d) An estimate, by type and quantity, of expected residues and emissions (such as water, air, soil and subsoil pollution, noise, vibration, light, heat, radiation and quantities and types of waste produced during the construction and operation phases.	ES Chapter 2: The Scheme (Doc Ref. 6.1) ES Chapter 6: Air Quality (Doc Ref. 6.1) ES Chapter 7: Climate Change (Doc Ref. 6.1) ES Chapter 11: Hydrology and Flood Risk (Doc Ref. 6.1) ES Chapter 13: Noise and Vibration (Doc Ref. 6.1) ES Chapter 15: Traffic and Access (Doc Ref. 6.1) ES Chapter 16: Other Environmental Topics (Doc Ref. 6.1)
2. A description of the reasonable alternatives (for example in terms of development design, technology, location, size	ES Chapter 3: Alternatives and Design

Requirement	Location in this ES
<p>and scale) studied by the developer, which are relevant to the proposed project and its specific characteristics, and an indication of the main reasons for selecting the chosen option, including a comparison of the environmental effects.</p>	<p>Evolution (Doc Ref. 6.1)</p>
<p>3. A description of the relevant aspects of the current state of the environment (baseline scenario) and an outline of the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the development as far as natural changes from the baseline scenario can be assessed with reasonable effort on the basis of the availability of environmental information and scientific knowledge.</p>	<p>ES Chapters 5 to 16 (technical assessments) Baseline Conditions sections (Doc Ref. 6.1)</p>
<p>4. A description of the factors specified in regulation 4(2) likely to be significantly affected by the development: population, human health, biodiversity (for example fauna and flora), land (for example land take), soil (for example organic matter, erosion, compaction, sealing), water (for example hydromorphological changes, quantity and quality), air, climate (for example greenhouse gas emissions, impacts relevant to adaptation), material assets, cultural heritage, including architectural and archaeological aspects, and landscape.</p>	<p>ES Chapters 5 to 16 (technical assessments) Baseline Conditions and Assessment of Likely Impacts and Effects sections (Doc Ref. 6.1)</p>
<p>5. A description of the likely significant effects of the development on the environment resulting from: (a) the construction and existence of the development, including, where relevant, demolition works; (b) the use of natural resources, in particular land, soil, water and biodiversity, considering as far as possible the sustainable availability of these resources; (c) the emission of pollutants, noise, vibration, light, heat and radiation, the creation of nuisances, and the disposal and recovery of waste; (d) risks to human health, cultural heritage or the environment (for example due to accidents or disasters); (e) the cumulation of effects with other existing and/or approved projects, taking into account any existing environmental problems relating to areas of particular environmental importance likely to be affected or the use</p>	<p>ES Chapters 5 to 16 (technical assessments) Assessment of Likely Impacts and Effects sections (Doc Ref. 6.1); ES Chapter 17: Effect Interactions (Doc Ref. 6.1)</p>

Requirement	Location in this ES
of natural resources; (f) the impact of the project on climate (for example the nature and magnitude of greenhouse gas emissions) and the vulnerability of the project to climate change; (g) the technologies and the substances used.	
6. A description of the forecasting methods or evidence, used to identify and assess the significant effects on the environment, including details of difficulties (for example technical deficiencies or lack of knowledge) encountered compiling the required information and the main uncertainties involved.	ES Chapters 5 to 16 (technical assessments) Assessment Methodology and Assessment Assumptions and Limitations sections (Doc Ref. 6.1)
7. A description of the measures envisaged to prevent, reduce or, if possible, offset any significant adverse effects on the environment and, where appropriate, of any proposed monitoring arrangements (for example the preparation of a post-project analysis).	ES Chapters 5 to 16 (technical assessments) Embedded Mitigation and Additional Monitoring, Mitigation and Enhancement Measures sections (Doc Ref. 6.1)
8. A description of the expected significant adverse effects of the development on the environment deriving from the vulnerability of the development to risks of major accidents and/ or disasters which are relevant to the project concerned.	ES Chapter 16: Other Environmental Topics Major Accidents and Disasters section (Doc Ref. 6.1)
9. A non-technical summary of the information provided under paragraphs 1 to 8 of this Part.	Non-Technical Summary (Doc Ref. 6.1)
10. A reference list detailing the sources used for the descriptions and assessments included in the environmental statement.	ES Chapters 5 to 16 (technical assessments) footnotes throughout chapters (Doc Ref. 6.1)

