



Meeting note

Project name	Lostrigg Solar
File reference	EN0110004
Status	Final
Author	The Planning Inspectorate
Date	30 May 2024
Meeting with	RWE Renewables UK Solar and Storage Ltd
Venue	Microsoft Teams
Meeting objectives	Project Inception Meeting
Circulation	All attendees

Summary of key points discussed, and advice given

The Planning Inspectorate (the Inspectorate) advised that a note of the meeting would be taken and published on its website in accordance with section 51 of the Planning Act 2008 (the PA2008). Any advice given under section 51 would not constitute legal advice upon which applicants (or others) could rely. The Inspectorate explained that the publication of the meeting note could be delayed up to six months, or until a formal scoping request had been submitted.

Introduction to the Project

The Applicant provided an introduction to the proposed development of a 100MW AC solar farm and co-located battery energy storage system. The Applicant advised that the development would comprise three panel areas with solar Photovoltaic modules and co-located battery storage in addition to inverters, transformers and switchgears. The development would also incorporate one 132kV on site-substation with connection on-site into the existing Cumbria Ring distribution network, along with underground on-site cabling between the panel areas. In addition, the Applicant advised that the proposed development would include environmental enhancements and mitigation, temporary construction lay-down areas, and internal access tracks. The Applicant stated that there would be a requirement to use the Rochdale Envelope approach due to uncertainty regarding the precise location of infrastructure and regarding the replacement of existing pylons within the development area which is subject to ongoing discussions with the Distribution Network Operator (DNO).

The Applicant provided an overview of the proposed site of 480ha which lies 3 kilometres (km) from Workington and 5km from the Lake District National Park. The Applicant advised that the site currently included more than double the actual area required for solar panels due to a large area of land, currently within the draft Order Limits to allow flexibility for the cable corridor options. The site sits south of Bridgefoot and Little Clifton and North of Lillyhall Industrial Estate. The Applicant advised that a wooded area sits between the site

and Bridgefoot and Little Clifton. The Applicant advised that consultation will be important in understanding the site's context to the surrounding areas.

The site lies in close proximity to the River Derwent and Tributaries Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and the River Derwent and Bassenthwaite Lake Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The Applicant advised that they are aware of two scheduled ancient monuments on the banks of the River Maron along with an ecologically sensitive area at the centre of the site. The Applicant stated that the site is a former open cast mine. The Inspectorate were informed that the majority of the site lies within Flood Zone 1 and is mostly classed as Grade 4 agricultural land, with surveys underway to confirm this.

Stakeholder engagement

The Applicant provided an overview of the engagement undertaken to date including outlining engagement which it had undertaken with Cumberland Council, The Environment Agency and National Highways. The Applicant outlined that they propose to undertake engagement with a number of statutory consultees over the coming months.

The Applicant informed the Inspectorate that all panel areas are subject to agreed options to lease. Further to undertaking work on options to lease the Applicant has undertaken initial contact with key statutory consultees. The Applicant further advised that they have been undertaking Environmental surveys across the site and preparation has begun on the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) scoping report.

Project Programme

The Applicant provided an overview of the consenting programme that has been undertaken to date along with the stages that remain ongoing. The Applicant stated that a change to the scheduled consenting programme was required due to the announcement of a general election. The Applicant provided the Inspectorate with two proposed outline programmes it is considering. The Applicant advised that programme 1 provided for a non-statutory consultation being held between September and October 2024 ahead of statutory consultation between February and March 2025 and a Development Consent Order (DCO) submission in September 2025. Programme 2 was outlined to the Inspectorate with a public launch and engagement period occurring between August and October 2024 ahead of a statutory consultation in December 2024 and January 2025 with a DCO submission in July 2025.

The Inspectorate advised that programme 1 provided for a clear non-statutory consultation period which would assist the Applicant in shaping the project proposals. The Inspectorate further stated that a statutory consultation period between February and March 2025 avoids consultation taking place over periods where consultees may struggle with resourcing to provide responses. The Applicant was advised that engagement alongside EIA scoping should be avoided along with consideration being given to other projects in the area which may be running consultation at similar times.

EIA Scoping

The Applicant stated that EIA scoping is currently ongoing with an anticipated submission of a request for a Scoping Opinion in mid-June 2024. The Applicant advised that its

scoping request will be based upon the draft order limits as a whole which will be refined ahead of statutory consultation. The Applicant provided an overview of topics which are intended to be scoped into its EIA along with the topics that it proposes to scope out. The Applicant further provided an overview of standalone assessments proposed to be submitted.

The Applicant provided an outline of the ecological and environmental surveys that have been completed to date and the surveys proposed to be undertaken going forward.

The Inspectorate advised the Applicant that evidence should be provided in the scoping report for the topics which are proposed to be scoped out, including any discussion or agreement with statutory consultation bodies. The Inspectorate further advised the Applicant to have regard to Advice Note 7 for practical considerations.

The Inspectorate advised the Applicant that changes had been made to the Applications Prescribed Forms and Procedures Regulations in relation to bodies which are required to be consulted. The Inspectorate advised that the Applicant look into the changes and ensure that any consultation undertaken was compliant with the amended regulations.

Compulsory Acquisition

The Applicant stated their intention to include temporary or permanent Compulsory Acquisition (CA) powers as part of the DCO application. The Applicant advised that they expect to have the cable corridor for the southern panel area subject to easement options in the coming months. The Applicant advised that all voluntary agreements will accommodate the inclusion of CA powers.

Actions

The following actions were agreed:

- The Inspectorate to publish a project webpage once the project is formally launched.
- The Applicant to provide an updated GIS Shapefile for scoping in accordance with the requirements set out in Advice Note 7.