

My name is [REDACTED] Mark Holmes. I have made previous submissions. I would like to recap a little & then expand more on Biodiversity & Stone Curlews.

I am a recently [REDACTED] with a lifelong interest in natural history & nature conservation. I am an elected fellow of the Linnean Natural History Society of London & a trustee of the Swallowtail & Birdwing Butterfly Trust. More importantly, I am a local resident having lived in Southacre for more than 30 years, AND for more than 30 years I have monitored & recorded the incredible & increasing biodiversity of the area of the planned Drovers industrial scale solar project.

In my May 2026 verbal submission, I listed some of the many mammals, birds, butterflies, other insects, orchids etc. that have been found or seen in the immediate vicinity of the Drovers site. I would (today) like to highlight just a few examples of what will be lost if this massive 2,800 acre Solar project was allowed to proceed.

I have seen Red Deer, nearly the size of a horse, galloping at 40 mph through the Drovers site - THAT would BE LOST !
I have witnessed a "bevy" (a family party) of up to 8 graceful Roe Deer bounding across this solar site - like a scene from the African savannah - that would also BE LOST !

This summer (2026), in the middle of a very productive irrigated Onion field, on the Drovers site, I had the great pleasure of seeing a female Oystercatcher with her fluffy black & white chicks - being successfully raised in this beautiful arable landscape - that would also BE LOST !

And now I come to arguably the most important resident/denizen of the Drovers site - the nationally rare & Schedule 1 protected Stone Curlew - aka the NORFOLK PLOVER (a much rarer bird than the larger Eurasian Curlew, which is also present & breeding in the area). Multiple sightings of the elusive Stone Curlew were made in the Drovers area in 2024 & 2025.

However, in 2025 there was good evidence of Stone Curlews breeding in the Drovers site, with a pair of birds seen in the Spring & an apparent family party of 4 birds seen in the Autumn - this is consistent with successful breeding of a bird species that is known to be highly elusive & secretive. Stone Curlews follow crop rotations & the current Drovers project would put a STOP to Stone Curlew breeding on this site.

The current AND very limited IGP mitigation proposals are in no way appropriate for THESE Stone Curlews. The Drove site is FUNCTIONALLY LINKED to the adjacent Breckland Special Protection Area AND this makes the possible location here, of a massive solar farm, all the more inappropriate.

To reiterate, Stone Curlews follow crop rotations, especially of spring-sown crops. Stone Curlews may therefore move with crop rotation & hence only be recorded at a particular site every 4 to 5 years.

I have previously stated that a minimum of 5 years of professional and LICENSED (as IT IS Schedule One protected) Stone Curlew recording work should be carried out to determine the Stone Curlew breeding status BEFORE any final decision is made on the Drovers solar project.

AND I therefore look forward to a verbal answer to this, at this final public hearing, either today or tomorrow.

With respect, I MUST also state that the RSPB, and others, have pointed out that the current ecological survey work previously arranged by IGP is inadequate & structurally "UNSAFE" to assess the status of Stone Curlews on this site. In addition AND very importantly for the ecology of the Drove's site, whole groups of insects (for which Breckland is renowned) do not appear to have been surveyed with appropriate multi-season physical survey work. (This is why I would strongly argue that Natural England have at this stage only given approval to IGP on the basis of inadequate survey information, largely based on now outdated 2024 survey work).

Like many other developed countries, we in the UK DO ALREADY have a biodiversity crisis (our British countryside is very nature depleted) AND the very latest research on large scale solar projects in China (just published in the Journal of Science, August 2026) shows a doubling...a doubling in the loss of bird biodiversity on these large solar sites (the only exception, not surprisingly, being for solar plants built in desert areas !)

Our British government has signed up to increasing, NOT decreasing, National biodiversity targets. These are enshrined in law in the Environment Act of 2021. This Environment Act includes halting species decline by 2030 & increasing species abundance by at least 10 percent between 2030 & 2042. So we have yet another reason for objecting to this massive Drovers solar project.

Hence, AND to finish my submission (today) , I am appealing to our examiner on the grounds of biodiversity loss & Stone Curlew loss (and FOR the many other valid objections that have raised by others) to PLEASE stop this industrial scale Drovers solar project - this is NOT an appropriate location. If indeed green energy is needed from this site, then the evidence presented by IGP does not appear to exclude the SITING of WIND TURBINES in the South-East area of the site, which would then be very near to the present large wind turbines just North of Swaffham, & well away from the RAF Marham flight path. This would then at the same time largely preserve current Biodiversity, preserve valuable arable farming land/rotations & maintain our future food security.

Thank you for your further consideration (today).