



Inception Meeting note

Project name	Leoda Solar Farm
Case reference	EN0110016
Status	Final
Author	The Planning Inspectorate
Date of meeting	5 December 2024
Meeting with	Meeting with Leoda Solar Farm Limited
Venue	Microsoft Teams
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 proposed development

A Development Consent Order (DCO) will be sought by Telis Energy UK (the Applicant), a subsidiary of the Telis Energy Group and the investment firm the Carlyle Group, for a solar farm comprising ground mounted solar PV modules and mounting structures, an on-site Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) and substation, ancillary infrastructure works including boundary treatments, earthworks, surface water management and landscaping, habitat management and biodiversity enhancement, and highway works to facilitate vehicular access to the site.

The Applicant explained that the project is in the region of Lincolnshire and the land is located to the west of Leadenham, Welbourn and Wellingore, the east of Brant Broughton and to the north of the A17 road within North Kesteven District Council. The project has a targeted output of 500 to 600MW (Megawatts) with a planned connection to the proposed national grid substation at Navenby, approximately 7km (kilometres) to the northeast of the site with a 400kV (kilovolt) connection via underground cables. The route selection for the underground cables is still under consideration with two preferred routes and one optional route at present.

The Applicant explained that consent for the new substation in the Navenby area is being sought under a separate application by National Grid, following its own programme timescale. However, the Applicant will hold discussions with National Grid, with relevant information informing the selection of the connection corridors for the Solar DCO application.

There is approximately 930 hectares of land under agreement. The project area contains hedgerows, field boundaries and public rights of way. The Applicant advised that currently the site is mostly arable agricultural land.

The Inspectorate asked how the Applicant is planning on managing the area under the panels while in operation. The Applicant replied that it is keeping all options open for this.

Consenting programme

The Applicant noted that engagement with National Grid will be undertaken within the pre-application process.

Early engagement with statutory bodies, local authorities, and stakeholders

The Applicant confirmed that it has had pre-application engagement with North Kesteven District Council and Lincolnshire County Council with Planning Performance Agreements to be entered into. The Applicant has also commenced engagement with the Environment Agency.

The Inspectorate referred the Applicant to the recently published good design advice page [Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects: Advice on Good Design](#) and stressed the importance of explaining the evolution of the project's design from inception to submission (through a Design Approach Document or equivalent), how it has responded to community feedback and its understanding of the features and assets of the local area and how they are used, and any benefits or mitigation devised by the scheme.

Environmental constraints and issues

The Applicant noted that there are no significant ecological designations within the proposed site or within the immediate vicinity of the site, such as Ramsar or Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). However, the Lincoln Cliff situated near to the site is an important landscape feature which will require appropriate offsetting to be considered as part of the project's design. It further added that there are a couple of badger sets within the site and some of the site is within Flood Zones 1, 2 and 3.

The Inspectorate advised the Applicant to consider whether any functionally linked land to European sites is located within the red line boundary in developing their assessments. The Inspectorate asked about the proposed heights of the solar panels that would form part of scoping, whether a fixed or tracker system would be proposed, and whether the panel areas would be situated within the flood risk areas. The Applicant replied that the optionality on panel heights and systems were still being considered at this stage as part of the overall design options but that no built development other than potential solar PV modules is being considered in areas located in Flood Zones 2 and 3.

The Applicant also noted that there are listed building and conservation areas within the surrounding settlements.

EIA Scoping

EIA scoping is anticipated in late January 2025. The Inspectorate advised that it usually recommends that scoping does not overlap with the Applicant's non-statutory consultation period to avoid confusion and to give statutory bodies more time to respond.

The Applicant confirmed that it will submit the GIS Shapefile by the middle of January, 10 working days in advance of its scoping request. The Inspectorate asked if the Applicant could confirm the dates for submission of the shapefile and the scoping request as soon as possible to enable it to plan appropriate resources.

The Inspectorate referred to advice on scoping for solar development which had recently been published - [Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects: Technical Advice Page for Scoping Solar Development](#) – and asked if the Applicant had any feedback on whether this was useful. The Applicant will discuss with their EIA team and provide feedback to the Inspectorate at a later date.

The Inspectorate advised that the pre-application fee will need to be paid before any work can commence on scoping and that the Applicant should seek to have agreements in place with relevant statutory consultees beforehand to facilitate consultation and the scoping process.

Environmental surveys

The Applicant noted that the Agricultural Land Classification survey is scheduled to commence in January 2025 including Best and Most Versatile surveys.

The Applicant also noted that surveys are underway including Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, breeding birds, wintering birds and other species-specific surveys.

Preparing the draft Development Consent Order, including any novel approaches to drafting

The Inspectorate advised the Applicant to look through recently made DCOs in particular with regard to cumulative effects.

The Applicant noted that it is aware of other Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects in the area such as Springwell Solar Farm and Fosse Green Energy and it is engaging with the applicants for these projects and considerations of cumulative impacts is proposed to be undertaken during the pre-application stage.

Land rights

The Applicant confirmed that there is no Crown land within or near the proposed Order Limits.

Consultation (statutory and non-statutory)

Non-Statutory Consultation is anticipated to be undertaken between January and March 2025 with Statutory Consultation scheduled for late-August to October 2025.

The Applicant confirmed that its primary consultation zone is circa 3,000 properties which are 2km from the site and 1km from the cable corridor. The PCZ is being reviewed with North Kesteven District Council and may be subject to change prior to project launch.

Submission date

Submission of the DCO application is anticipated in Q1-Q2 2026.

The pre-application service offer

The service tier requested by the applicant, including justification

The Applicant confirmed that it is requesting the basic service tier. The Inspectorate advised that the service tier will be confirmed shortly after the meeting and the Applicant will receive an invoice for the pre-application service.

The Inspectorate asked the Applicant to inform it when future project update meetings may be required and made suggestions that these meetings could be held following the non-statutory consultation and statutory consultation stages and a few weeks prior to submission. Though the basic tier only allows for three pre-application meetings per year, the Applicant will still be able to communicate with the Inspectorate's case team should it have any queries or needs to provide updates.

Project email account

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Contacts

Website: <https://telisenergy.co.uk/>
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Next steps

The Inspectorate will assign a Case Manager to the project shortly, who will be the Applicant's main point of contact at the Inspectorate for the project going forward. A project mailbox and project page on the Inspectorate's website will also be set up in due course.

The Inspectorate will also provide feedback on the Programme Document and asked that the Applicant let it know if it has any comments. The Inspectorate confirmed that the Applicant can provide updates via updating its Programme Document and also by contacting the case team. The Inspectorate noted it is best for the Applicant to provide updates on changes to the programme as early as it can.

The following actions were agreed:

- The Inspectorate to confirm the service tier to the Applicant and the Applicant will receive the invoice for pre-application fees which will need to be paid before scoping is carried out.
- The Applicant to confirm dates for scoping and submission of shapefile.
- The Inspectorate to provide feedback on the Programme Document.
- The Applicant to provide the Inspectorate with dates for future meetings.
- The Inspectorate to assign a Case Manager to the project.
- The Applicant to provide any feedback on the Inspectorate's recent advice published on scoping for solar developments.

Feedback on the applicant's initial Programme Document (post meeting note)

The Applicant supplied the Inspectorate with its initial Programme Document before the Inception Meeting in line with our request under the Inspectorate's 2024 Pre-application Prospectus. Having reviewed the document, the Inspectorate considers that it covers most of the expected content as set out in the government's pre-application guidance at paragraph 10, such as providing enough detail about the proposed development, timetable and activities for the pre-application process at this early stage (which is to be supplemented by an Issues Tracker), as well as the Applicant's approach to early engagement with statutory consultees and other parties.

It would be helpful, however, if the Applicant could include an outline of the risks it has identified (in addition to its proposed monitoring and mitigation measures), any likely dates for holding project update meetings with the Planning Inspectorate, information on whether other licences or consents will be sought, whether the Programme Document has been shared with relevant statutory bodies for their views on its proposed programme, whether any targeted consultation will be needed, and the dates for the consultation period on the draft SoCC and its publication as well as the Adequacy of Consultation Milestone. The Programme Document will need to be published on the applicant's website as soon as practicable once the project has been launched.