



Inception Meeting note

Project name	Windsock Solar Farm
Case reference	EN0110045
Status	Final
Author	The Planning Inspectorate
Date of meeting	05 August 2026
Meeting with	Meeting with Trio Windsock 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 the Find a National Infrastructure Project website.

Any section 51 advice given in connection with the application during the meeting would be duplicated in a section 51 Advice log. The s51 Advice Log would be updated with all s51 advice given in connection with the application to the applicant, and others, during the pre-application stage. The applicant is requested to use the s51 Advice Log to demonstrate regard to the advice given in connection with the application to it, and others, during the pre-application stage.

Any advice given under section 51 would not constitute legal advice upon which the applicant, or others, could rely.

The proposed development

A Development Consent Order (DCO) would be sought by Trio Windsock Solar Farm Limited (the applicant), a wholly owned subsidiary of Trio Power Limited, for a solar generating station with an anticipated generating capacity exceeding 100MW. The proposed development would comprise solar photovoltaic panels, a battery energy storage system (BESS), an on-site substation and associated infrastructure. The applicant explained that the development is currently anticipated to provide approximately 200MW of solar generation and 100MW of battery storage. The proposed development would also include habitat management and enhancement measures around the site perimeter.

The applicant explained that the proposed development is located immediately north of RAF Cranwell within the administrative area of North Kesteven District Council and Lincolnshire County Council. The site comprises predominantly arable farmland and is controlled by a single landowner. The applicant noted that the site contains existing hedgerows, forestry plantations and a bridleway crossing through the centre of the site. The applicant explained that the land is relatively poor-quality agricultural land due to limited water availability.

The applicant explained that grid connection options are currently being considered. Potential connection points include a future connection associated with the Trent Valley South refurbishment project and the proposed Navenby substation. The applicant stated they will submit the application without a grid connection.

Consenting programme and introduction to the pre-application programme document

The applicant is working to the indicative timescale below, subject to any changes needed:

- Inception Meeting – 05 August 2026
- EIA Scoping Report Submission – October 2026
- Technical Consultation – August – October 2026
- Community Consultation 1 – September – October 2026
- Community Consultation 2 – February – March 2027

- DCO Submission – September 2027

The applicant explained that its Programme Document has been prepared in accordance with the template set out within the Planning Inspectorate's Pre-application Prospectus, which will be published on the applicant's website before Scoping submission in October 2026. The applicant explained that the project is expected to formally launch during autumn 2026, with consultation activity anticipated during 2026 and 2027. The applicant currently anticipates submitting the DCO application in September 2027.

The Inspectorate emphasised the importance of maintaining an Issues Tracker throughout the pre-application stage and keeping it updated as issues emerge and are resolved. The Inspectorate noted that issues identified through engagement activities should inform subsequent project update meetings and the preparation of application documents.

The applicant explained that discussions have commenced with North Kesteven District Council regarding a planning performance agreement. However, the applicant advised that the precise form of any agreement has not yet been determined, and separate agreements may be required at different stages of the project.

In respect of changes to consultation under the Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025, the applicant said that it was continuing to follow the current requirements until the commencement regulations and new government guidance are enacted.

Engagement with statutory bodies and local authorities, and other stakeholder engagement to date

The applicant explained that it intends to engage with a range of statutory consultees including Natural England, Historic England, the Environment Agency, National Highways and the Ministry of Defence. Issues Trackers would be used to record areas requiring discussion and resolution.

The applicant explained that North Kesteven District Council and Lincolnshire County Council are the host authorities for the proposed development and that introductory meetings are expected to take place, alongside consideration of Planning Performance Agreements. Ongoing engagement is also planned with communities, landowners, elected representatives and other stakeholders throughout the pre-application period. The applicant noted that it had already met with the local Parish Council and a local Member of Parliament on 3 August 2026.

The applicant intends to undertake two phases of public consultation alongside ongoing stakeholder engagement supported by consultation materials, consultation events and project communications designed to facilitate stakeholder participation.

The Inspectorate emphasised the importance of ensuring consultation materials are clear, accessible and capable of informing all interested parties, including those with limited experience of the planning process, about the proposals, consultation objectives and opportunities for involvement. The applicant acknowledged the importance of effective early engagement and confirmed that the consultation activities would be adapted to meet community needs.

Environmental constraints and issues

The applicant identified a number of environmental constraints and matters requiring further assessment.

The Inspectorate sought further information regarding aviation constraints associated with RAF Cranwell. The applicant explained that the airfield remains an active training facility with residential accommodation, a gliding club and an operational runway. The applicant confirmed that aviation safeguarding considerations, including safety zones and glint and glare effects, would form a key part of the ongoing design and assessment process. The applicant advised that correspondence had commenced with the Ministry of Defence (MoD), although formal engagement is still at an early stage.

The applicant identified ecological constraints including ground nesting birds, badger setts, rare arable plant species and the presence of barbastelle bats within the wider area. The applicant stated that these issues would be considered as part of the ongoing design process and environmental assessment work.

The applicant explained that there are no designated landscapes within the vicinity of the site and that the site is not located within an area at risk of flooding. The applicant advised that environmental constraints identified to date include aviation safeguarding considerations, residential receptors, ecology, archaeology and agricultural land. Transport assessments are underway, although the applicant considered the existing quarry access arrangements and connection to the strategic road network to be favourable.

The Inspectorate asked about retention of landscape features within the site. The applicant explained that it intends to retain as many existing hedgerows as practicable within the final design and incorporate these features into the landscape and ecological strategy. The Inspectorate also highlighted the need for the project to have regard to evolving biodiversity net gain requirements, as detailed in the biodiversity gain statement for energy.

Scoping

The applicant indicated that an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Scoping request is anticipated during autumn 2026.

The Inspectorate reminded the applicant of the importance of early engagement with statutory consultees regarding survey methodologies and assessment approaches. The Inspectorate also highlighted recent guidance as the legislation changes are underway.

The Inspectorate advised the applicant that local authorities and statutory bodies should be provided with sufficient notice prior to the applicant submitting a scoping request (ideally at least 2 weeks) and that the GIS shapefile should be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate at least 10 days before submitting a scoping request. The applicant confirmed that a commitments register would be prepared and that any proposed scoping exclusions would be supported by clear evidence and justification.

The applicant advised that vibration, major accidents and disasters, heat and radiation, electric, magnetic and electro-magnetic fields, human health, material assets and water, water and transboundary effects are proposed to be scoped out of the assessment. This is

subject to appropriate justification being provided within the scoping report. The Inspectorate highlighted the need for this justification to be clear and well-evidenced.

Environmental surveys

The applicant explained that a range of surveys and assessments have been completed or underway. The ecological surveys undertaken so far have found no features of serious concern but highlighted management and mitigation considerations for bats, badgers, birds and arable weeds. The applicant also explained that geophysical surveys were underway.

The applicant highlighted that many Environmental Impact Assessment surveys are yet to be completed which include:

- agricultural land classification surveys
- traffic surveys
- noise surveys
- heritage walkover
- arboriculture surveys

The applicant confirmed that the results of these surveys will inform the scoping request and subsequent ES, and guide the development of appropriate mitigation measures.

The applicant has since confirmed the ornithological surveys, both breeding and wintering bird surveys have been completed. No additional ornithological surveys are proposed at this stage.

Draft Development Consent Order

The applicant explained that draft DCO documentation is expected to be prepared between April and August 2027. The applicant explained that the draft DCO will be prepared using drafting approaches established through recent solar projects and is currently expected to exclude the grid connection infrastructure. The applicant advised that supporting documents are likely to include a Policy Compliance Document, Design Approach Document and principal areas of disagreement summary statements.

The Inspectorate advised that the application should clearly demonstrate the evolution of the project design throughout pre-application and provide a clear rationale for design decisions.

Land and Rights

The applicant explained that the proposed development is currently located entirely within land controlled by two landowners from the same landownership family. The applicant advised that land discussions remain ongoing as the design evolves and the extent of land requirements becomes clearer.

The applicant explained that access to the site is anticipated to be taken via the existing quarry access arrangement, which connects to the A17. Transport assessments and access studies are planned to confirm the suitability of the proposed access strategy and

identify any additional land requirements associated with construction and operation of the proposed development.

The Inspectorate asked whether additional land may be required as the project develops. The applicant explained that the current red line boundary remains under review and could be amended where necessary, particularly in relation to highway access requirements, environmental mitigation measures and any future design changes. The applicant stated that a detailed understanding of required land rights would continue to emerge through environmental assessment, design refinement and engagement with relevant stakeholders.

The applicant advised that the proposed grid connection corridor is currently being developed separately by National Grid, from the main DCO application and therefore land requirements associated with the grid connection have not yet been finalised. The applicant explained that discussions with National Grid and ongoing National Energy System Operator processes will inform future decisions regarding the route, consenting strategy and any associated land requirements.

The Inspectorate reminded the applicant that any future compulsory acquisition powers would need to be clearly justified and supported by evidence demonstrating that the land and rights sought are required for the proposed development.

Submission date

The applicant stated that the anticipated submission date for the DCO application is September 2027.

The pre-application service offer

The applicant requested the Tier 1 Basic service offer. The applicant considered this proportionate to the project and its experience of renewable energy development projects. No concerns regarding the proposed service tier had been raised by affected statutory bodies at the time of the meeting. The Inspectorate outlined the features of the Tier 1 Basic service and confirmed that templates were available for key pre-application documents, including the Issues Tracker and Land and Rights Negotiations Tracker.

The applicant indicated that supplementary pre-application documents such as a Design Approach Document, Policy Compliance Document, and a Principal Areas of Disagreement Summary Statement (PADSS) may be prepared to support the application. The Inspectorate also explained that the Tier 1 Basic service does not include access to the draft documents review service.

Risks

The applicant identified several project risks including:

- EIA programme risks
- grid connection uncertainty
- stakeholder opposition
- technical and design issues
- political or policy changes

- administrative boundary changes.

The Inspectorate advised the applicant to continue monitoring risks and to update the Programme Document as the project evolves.

Practical arrangements and next steps

The Inspectorate explained that the requested pre-application service tier would be confirmed following the inception meeting and reminded the applicant of the requirements associated with cost recovery arrangements. The Inspectorate advised that arrangements would be made to establish the project's webpage on Find a National Infrastructure Project, and a dedicated project mailbox would be created. The Inspectorate advised that statutory instrument templates were available through existing application document guidance.

- Discussions were held around arranging the first project update meeting, and that the applicant would provide examples of projects where energy system reports had been used, following which the Inspectorate would provide further information on the level of detail recommended.

Annex A

Meeting attendees

Organisation	Name	Role
Planning Inspectorate	Chris White	Infrastructure 1 Operations Lead
Planning Inspectorate	Tracey Williams	Case Manager
Planning Inspectorate	Sasha Coke	Operations Manager
Planning Inspectorate	Emma Smith	Case Officer
Planning Inspectorate	Calan Hewing	Case Officer
Planning Inspectorate	Tom Oliver	Environmental Services - Operations Lead 2
BLC Energy		Partner
David Bell Planning		Planning Advisor
TLT		Partner
BLC Energy Development Management		Managing Director
BLC Energy Development Management		Project Manager
RSK Group		Environmental Consultant
David Bell Planning		Planning Advisor