

# Mallard Pass Solar Farm Community Webinar Stage Two Consultation Event

Friday 17 June 2022: 11:00 am – 1:00 pm

## Agenda

1. Welcome
2. Who we are
3. Our Stage Two proposals
  - Developed design
  - Mitigation measures and enhancement opportunities
  - Preliminary environmental information
4. Our consultation process
5. Contact us
6. Your questions

## Responses to unanswered questions

**Q: For biodiversity net gain, will areas of the site proposed for mitigation and enhancements and under continued arable use be subject to covenants/a contract?**

**A:** Yes – should our Development Consent Order (DCO) application be approved, Mallard Pass Solar Farm will be legally required to meet any commitments secured through the DCO.

This includes the project's commitment to achieving a minimum 10% biodiversity net gain and ensuring that any proposed landscape and ecological measures proposed are delivered and appropriately managed in order to fulfil the intended mitigation and enhancement outcomes.

Fields that we have excluded from the area of the site proposed for solar development at Stage Two will be retained as mitigation and enhancement areas whilst also continuing to be managed in arable use. The majority of the fields within areas we're proposing for mitigation and enhancements will continue to be farmed under arable rotation with additional measures to support skylarks. Some other mitigation and enhancement areas within the site, principally in the northwest, will be used for chalk grassland biodiversity enhancements, whilst for mitigation and enhancement areas adjacent to the West Glen River we are looking to enhance riparian habitats through planting and shallow scrapes for birds.

These proposed measures will form part of our Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (oLEMP), which will be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) as part of the DCO application. As part of our Stage Two Statutory Consultation, we have produced the framework of a draft oLEMP, in [Appendix 5.2](#) of the Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR).

The oLEMP will set out a plan for the creation and management of the landscape and ecological features of Mallard Pass. It will set out the framework of the management regime that would be put into place during the operational phase of Mallard Pass, while construction measures will be set out in an Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan (or oCEMP) to further ensure that landscape and ecological measures are managed appropriately to achieve the desired outcome.

Should our DCO application receive consent, we will then be required to submit a detailed Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (LEMP) and Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) for approval to the local planning authority. The LEMP and CEMP must be in accordance with the oLEMP and oCEMP as approved by PINS, and we would also be legally required to deliver a project that meets the commitments set out in both.

The content and detail of the oLEMP to be submitted as part of the DCO will be further developed following feedback received during our Stage Two Statutory Consultation. This is to ensure that our proposed measures (including the management of existing vegetation) are appropriately delivered and managed in order to fulfil the intended mitigation and enhancement outcomes, including ensuring that biodiversity net gain commitments are achieved.

**Q: Why are areas proposed for continued arable use included within the proposed boundary for Mallard Pass Solar Farm?**

**A:** Areas proposed to be retained for continued arable use are included in our proposed boundary for Mallard Pass because we are proposing to implement mitigation and/or enhancement measures in these areas, and it is important that these are secured through the Development Consent Order (DCO) application. Should our DCO application be approved, consent for Mallard Pass would therefore include these commitments, because they are included in the proposed boundary and form part of our plans.

During our Stage Two Statutory Consultation, we are proposing that approximately 420 hectares (ha) of the overall site area to be used for ecological mitigation and enhancement. The majority of the fields within these mitigation and enhancement areas will continue to be farmed under arable rotation with additional measures to support skylarks, with commitments as how this will be managed set out in the DCO application. We are specifically proposing to improve some of this retained agricultural land with plots for ground-nesting skylark, similar to those already existing in the area, to compensate for the loss of breeding nest sites.

**Q: How long does the new screening take to be effective? Does it take fifteen years, nearly 40% of the expected project lifetime?**

**A:** Proposed screening would not take fifteen years to become effective, as the continued growth of planting over time provides ever increasing levels of screening. The use of trees and hedgerows for screening is an important part of visual mitigation, and we are therefore proposing extensive new planting across the site, as well as the gapping up of existing hedgerows where necessary.

There are a number of factors that can influence growth rates of plants. Using standard growth rates from the Forestry Commission, one could reasonably expect new planting to reach a height of around 3.3 metres (m) (i.e., the maximum height of the solar panels we are proposing) by year 5, by year 15 reaching around 8 m.

Our visual mitigation strategy also includes proposals to plant some higher species of trees and hedgerows where these may be needed, which in some cases would be planted from day one in certain areas where residential properties are nearby. We are open to feedback on where more mature planting may be required, and highly welcome your views regarding where you think additional mature planting may be needed.

In the Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR), we provide visualisations from various local viewpoints that show the effect of landscaped screening at Years 1 and 15. Please [click here](#) to view visualisations 1 to 20, and [click here](#) to view visualisations 21 to 40. These viewpoints were decided in consultation with the relevant local planning authorities. In the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA), Year 1 is considered because it generally represents the 'worst case scenario / maximum impact' of the proposed development, essentially the point of highest potential visibility because planting has just gone in. Year 15 represents the potential 'residual impact,' when mitigation planting has had time to fully mature, providing an indication of the longer term effects of proposed mitigation planting.

The reason a Year 1 and Year 15 scenario is illustrated is because this is the general standard timeframe for undertaking a LVIA. It is not because it would take 15 years for the screening to become effective, as proposed hedgerows (for example, and as noted above) should be able to screen the panels by year 5. Further, to clarify that the planting should also continue to mature after Year 15, continuing to provide additional screening along with existing vegetation, which will be retained and managed to grow out more fully.

**Q: Will the solar panels last for forty years? Do they not degrade over time?**

**A:** The exact panel type to be used for Mallard Pass Solar Farm has yet to be decided, however, the current industry standard for the commercially viable life of solar panels is 25 years (or up to 35 years according to the UK Gov. Electricity Generation Cost Report of 2020<sup>1</sup>).

During our Stage Two Statutory Consultation, we are consulting on two options for the Mounting Structures to be used for the Mallard Pass solar panels, to allow for some flexibility in the type of photovoltaic (PV) technology that is to be used. This flexibility is in response to the many technological advancements and developments in the solar industry, helping us to ensure that we select the most effective and best-suited technologies for Mallard Pass Solar Farm, should our Development Consent Order (DCO) application be approved.

We are proposing ongoing management of the panels to be used for Mallard Pass, which includes operational monitoring and equipment maintenance. This means that should the Mallard Pass solar panels incur any degradation or damage, or should these require replacement for any other reason, we would need to ensure periodic maintenance requirements are able to be undertaken and that any maintenance required is properly identified and carried out. This will be done in accordance with an Operational Environmental Management Plan (OEMP) secured through the DCO.

Windel Energy and Canadian Solar are not seeking a time-limited consent. The operational life of Mallard Pass will not be specified within the DCO application. However, it is recognised that the electrical infrastructure will have an operational lifespan, after which it will need to be replaced or removed.

It is anticipated that, at the time of decommissioning, all the solar infrastructure including PV modules, mounting structures, cabling, inverters, transformers, switchgear, fencing, and ancillary infrastructure would be removed and recycled or disposed of in accordance with good practice following the waste hierarchy, with materials being reused or recycled wherever possible. The decommissioning of Mallard Pass will take place in accordance with a Decommissioning Environmental Management Plan (DEMP), which, should our DCO be approved, would need to be approved by the local planning authority.

<sup>1</sup> Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), Electricity Generation Costs. 2020. [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/911817/electricity-generation-cost-report-2020.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/911817/electricity-generation-cost-report-2020.pdf)

**Q: Is 350 megawatts (MW) the maximum capacity of the National Grid Ryhall Substation?**

**A:** A: National Grid own the Ryhall 400 kilovolts (kV) Substation at Uffington Lane, and are therefore the only entity able to speak to its capacity.

National Grid own the electricity transmission system in England and Wales, which consists of more than 300 substations ([NationalGrid.com, Network and infrastructure](#)). To find out whether additional capacity exists at Ryhall Substation, one would need to enquire with the National Grid directly.

The Ryhall Substation is where the electricity generated from Mallard Pass Solar Farm is proposed to connect to the national grid. Our proposed connection at Ryhall Substation has sufficient capacity to feed the renewable, low-cost electricity that Mallard Pass would generate directly to UK consumers wherever it is needed, helping support the urgent need to decarbonise our electricity system and increasing our national supply of reliable, sustainable home-grown energy.

**Q: Will the locals get free electricity as a compensation for having the site on their doorstep?**

**A:** No, because we cannot exclusively provide the energy generated by Mallard Pass to local residents. It is the responsibility of the system operator, National Grid ESO, to ensure that sufficient electricity can be transmitted to meet consumption, wherever and whenever that consumption is needed. As part of our Stage Two Statutory Consultation, we are closely consulting with the National Grid and its various relevant entities (National Grid Gas Plc, National Grid Electricity System Operator Ltd, National Grid Electricity Transmission Plc).

In the UK, energy transmission and distribution is undertaken by the private sector through your chosen energy supplier, National Grid Electricity Transmission and local distribution network operator (DNO). The relevant electricity DNO for Mallard Pass Solar Farm is Western Power Distribution and we are formally consulting with both of these organisations on our plans for Mallard Pass. Therefore, although energy generation is privatised, since the transmission of electricity is a regulated service undertaken on behalf of the state by National Grid Electricity Transmission and Western Power Distribution, we are not able to supply the energy generated by Mallard Pass to local residents.

There are benefits to exporting directly to our National Grid. By doing this, the electricity generated by Mallard Pass Solar Farm will deliver the biggest decarbonisation and cost benefit to the UK as a whole. Through its connection at the National Grid Ryhall Substation, Mallard Pass will increase our national supply of low-cost, home-grown renewable energy, helping further expand our country's energy independence and positively contributing to our national decarbonisation goals.

**Q: What about knock on rural crime for local residents?**

**A:** As described in Safe Site Facilities [Solar Farm Security Guide](#), professional security measures can actively prevent solar farm theft through the use of fencing and CCTV operations. The installation of CCTV is typically the most common way to secure solar developments. During our Stage Two Statutory Consultation, we are proposing pole-mounted internal facing CCTV systems around the perimeter of the operational areas, and these are proposed to use night-vision technology with a 50-metre range, would be monitored remotely and avoid the need for night-time lighting. CCTV will not overlook any public or private areas of land and be oriented towards the panels and equipment for Mallard Pass Solar Farm. Further, fencing enclosing the operational areas for Mallard Pass are also being proposed, likely to be a deer fence in either wood or metal, to help further secure the development.

These measures are being proposed to help ensure our proposals do not negatively impact the safety of local residents, as well as to secure the solar development (equipment, panels) itself. Further, as part of our consultation process, we are engaging with statutory organisations and stakeholders, including Lincolnshire and Rutland Police and Crime Commissioners, and host authorities, South Kesteven District Council, Rutland County Council and Lincolnshire County Council. These consultees are able to provide any comments they may have on the safety of our proposals for Mallard Pass, and we look forward to hearing their views, as well as any other comments, on this topic.

**Q: I have enquired about the project via email and have yet to receive answers to my questions. Will you endeavour to respond to all questions swiftly?**

**A:** Yes – we want to keep the community informed and hear views on our proposals for Mallard Pass Solar Farm. Although unique cases may take a bit longer, we endeavour to respond to stakeholder enquiries we receive as quickly as possible. We do, however, apologise for any untimely responses, and would like to thank stakeholders for their patience as we work through a high volume of enquiries about the project.

Following the close of our Stage Two Statutory Consultation, on Thursday 04 August 2022, we will carefully consider and have regard to all of the feedback we have received during this period. This includes any questions submitted to us via feedback forms, email, or letters during our Stage Two Statutory Consultation. All feedback we receive will form part of our Development Consent Order (DCO) application for the project to be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate (PINS). In this DCO, we must produce a Consultation Report that, among other elements, details the feedback and consultation responses we have received, and provides responses to this feedback, explaining how we have considered it and the way in which it has influenced our proposals for the Mallard Pass Solar Farm. In this way, it is guaranteed that all feedback received to our consultation for Mallard Pass is recorded and responded to.