



**POWER  
FOR GOOD**

# Chapter 1: Introduction

Preliminary Environmental Information Report

**Volume 1**

**Steeple Renewables Project**

Land at Sturton le Steeple, Nottinghamshire

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 RES Limited (the “Applicant”) has commissioned this Preliminary Environmental Information Report (“PEIR”) in relation to an application for a Development Consent Order (“DCO”) for the construction, operation, and decommissioning of a ground mounted solar photovoltaic (“PV”) electricity generation station with a capacity of over 50MW and associated development comprising of energy storage and grid connection infrastructure (hereafter referred to as “the Proposed Development”).
- 1.1.2 The application for the DCO will be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate (“PINS”), with the decision whether to grant to the DCO being made by the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero (hereafter referred to as the “Secretary of State”) pursuant to the Planning Act 2008.
- 1.1.3 A DCO would provide the necessary authorisations and consents for the construction, operation and decommissioning of the Proposed Development and associated infrastructure for connection to the National Grid.
- 1.1.4 The Proposed Development falls within the definition of ‘Environmental Impact Assessment development’ under the Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (“the EIA Regulations”), therefore requiring an Environmental Impact Assessment (“EIA”).
- 1.1.5 Under Regulation 12 of the EIA Regulations, the Applicant is required to set out in its Statement of Community Consultation (“SOCC”) how it intends to publicise and consult on preliminary environmental information relating to the Proposed Development. Regulation 12(2) of the EIA Regulations states that the purpose of the PEIR is to provide sufficient information to enable stakeholders to develop an informed view of the likely significant effects of the Proposed Development. Advice Note 7 from PINS<sup>1</sup> (Section 8) explains that the PEIR need not constitute a complete assessment and is a compilation of the environmental information available at the point in time that it is produced.

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<sup>1</sup> Planning Inspectorate (2020) Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects - Advice Note Seven: Environmental Impact Assessment: process, preliminary environmental information and environmental statements [online] available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nationally-significant-infrastructure-projects-advice-note-seven-environmental-impact-assessment-process-preliminary-environmental-information-an> [last accessed 13th November 2024].

1.1.6 Environmental impacts arising from the Proposed Development have been studied systematically as part of the EIA process, and the initial results are presented within this PEIR. The baseline for the assessment has been derived from surveys and studies within and around the Site (which will go on to form the future ‘Order Limits’). This is explained further in Chapter 2 ‘EIA Methodology and Public Consultation’ of this PEIR, and in the methodology section of each technical assessment chapter.

1.1.7 This PEIR therefore presents the preliminary findings of the EIA undertaken for the Proposed Development for the purposes of statutory consultation in accordance with the Planning Act 2008.

## **1.2 The Applicant**

1.2.1 RES is the world’s largest independent renewable energy company and is active in onshore and offshore wind, solar, energy storage, green hydrogen, transmission and distribution. As an industry innovator for over 40 years, RES has delivered more than 23GW of renewable energy projects across the globe and supports an operational asset portfolio exceeding 12GW worldwide for a large client base. Understanding the unique needs of corporate clients, RES has secured over 1.5GW of corporate Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs) enabling access to energy at the lowest cost.

## **1.3 Site Location**

1.3.1 The Site is located within the administrative area of Bassetlaw District Council (“BDC”) and is located approximately 5km to the south of Gainsborough and includes part of the existing West Burton Power Station site, covering the area around the existing 400kV substation. Other settlements within the vicinity of the Site include:

- Sturton le Steeple, located adjacent to the eastern and western boundaries of the Site;
- Knaith, which is located approximately 250m to the east of the Site on the opposite side of the River Trent;
- North Leverton with Habbleshthorpe and Fenton located adjacent to the southern boundary;
- South Leverton located approximately 1.1km to the south of the Site;

- Clarborough located approximately 850m to the west; and
  - North Wheatley and South Wheatley located approximately 1.3km and 1km to the north-west of the Site, respectively.
- 1.3.2 The Site is located approximately 10m to the west of (and not within) the administrative authorities of Lincolnshire County Council (“LCC”) and West Lindsey District Council (“WLDC”).
- 1.3.3 The Site is shown on Figure 1.1. The Site and its context are further described in Chapter 3 ‘Site Description, Site Selection, and Iterative Design Process’ of this PEIR.

## **1.4 Overview of the Proposed Development**

- 1.4.1 The Proposed Development comprises the construction, operation (including maintenance) and decommissioning of ground-mounted solar PV and energy storage technologies. As technologies are rapidly advancing, and the detailed design of the Proposed Development will take place post-consent, a series of project parameters are therefore required to maintain the flexibility and allow an assessment of the likely ‘worst-case’ as far as is reasonable.
- 1.4.2 The Proposed Development would include:
- Areas for solar panels and associated development (e.g. PV module mounting infrastructure, Inverters and Transformers);
  - Cable infrastructure;
  - Substation, Battery Energy Storage System (“BESS”) and associated infrastructure; and
  - Biodiversity mitigation.
- 1.4.3 Subject to obtaining the necessary consents, construction of the Proposed Development is anticipated to commence at the earliest in the year of 2027, and to be completed and operational in the year of 2029.
- 1.4.4 The Proposed Development is anticipated to be operational for approximately 40 years, at which point the decommissioning phase will commence (i.e., 2069).
- 1.4.5 The Proposed Development would provide vital new energy infrastructure required to ensure security of supply to the UK, supporting the strategy of the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (“DESNZ”) for responsible energy generation that provides a more sustainable, low carbon economy.

- 1.4.6 It is anticipated that the Proposed Development could create renewable energy to power homes, with the intention of reducing carbon inputs into the atmosphere. Further detail will be provided within the subsequent ES.
- 1.4.7 Solar power plays an important role in moving the UK away from its reliance on fossil fuels. The Proposed Development is a Critical National Priority (“CNP”), which seek to deliver security of energy supply. Compliance with the Overarching National Policy Statement (“NPS”) for Energy (EN-1)<sup>2</sup> and the NPS for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (EN-3)<sup>3</sup> will be determined through examination.
- 1.4.8 The Site covers an area of 898 hectares (“ha”), the nearest settlement being Sturton le Steeple, located in the centre (and excluded) from the eastern and western portions comprising the Site.
- 1.4.9 The Proposed Development is described further in Chapter 4 ‘Proposed Development’ of this PEIR.

## **1.5 Consenting Regime and the Requirement for Environmental Assessment**

### **Consenting Regime**

- 1.5.1 The Proposed Development comprises a significant planning project and is defined as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (“NSIP”) in accordance with the Planning Act 2008. The Proposed Development falls within the definition of an onshore generating station in England exceeding 50 megawatts (“MW”) and therefore represents an NSIP under Sections 14 and 15 of the Planning Act 2008.
- 1.5.2 The Planning Act 2008 dictates that the Secretary of State is responsible for determining the application for a DCO, with the power to appoint PINS to manage and examine the application. In this role, PINS will examine the application through an appointed Examining Authority for the Proposed Development and make a recommendation to the Secretary of State who will then decide whether to grant a DCO which authorises and permits the Proposed Development.

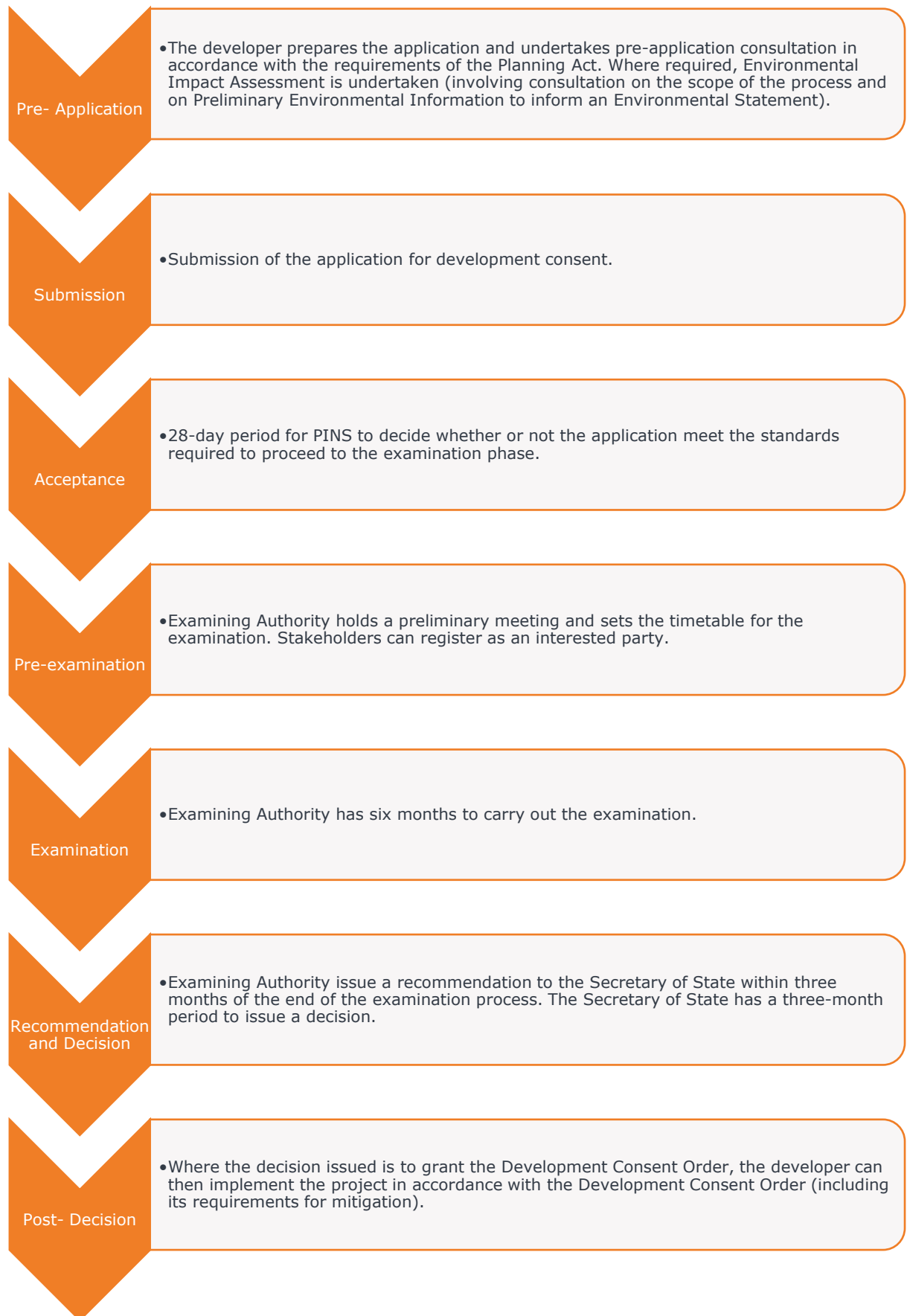
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<sup>2</sup> Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (2023) Overarching National Policy Statement for energy (EN-1) [online] available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/overarching-national-policy-statement-for-energy-en-1> [last accessed 13th November 2024].

<sup>3</sup> Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (2023) National Policy Statement for renewable energy infrastructure (EN-3) [online] available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-policy-statement-for-renewable-energy-infrastructure-en-3> [last accessed 13th November 2024].

- 1.5.3 The Planning Act 2008 defines the key stages in the application process for NSIPs. These are summarised in **Diagram 1.1.** on the following page. The Project is currently at this pre-application stage.

Diagram 1.1: Overview of Application Process



## Need for EIA

- 1.5.4 EIA is the process of identifying and assessing the significant effects (beneficial or adverse) likely to arise from a project. This requires consideration of the likely changes to the environment, where these arise as a consequence of a project, through comparison with the existing and projected future baseline conditions during/following the construction, operational and decommissioning phases of a development should it proceed.
- 1.5.5 For NSIPs in England, the legislative requirements for EIA are set by The Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (referred to in this report as “the EIA Regulations”).
- 1.5.6 EIA is not required for all developments. Schedule 1 of the EIA Regulations identifies development types that always require EIA. Schedule 2 identifies development types that require EIA if they are likely to lead to significant effects on the environment by virtue of factors such as their nature, size or location.
- 1.5.7 The Proposed Development would fall under Schedule 2, under Paragraph 3(a) of Schedule 2 of the EIA Regulations as it constitutes ‘industrial installations for the production of electricity, steam and hot water’. Taking into account the nature and scale of the development proposed, EIA is being undertaken for the Proposed Development.

## Scoping

- 1.5.8 On 19<sup>th</sup> April 2024, the Applicant submitted an EIA Scoping Request to the PINS on behalf of the Secretary of State. The issues that the Applicant considers the EIA will need to address were identified in the Steeple Renewables Project EIA Scoping Report (see **Appendix 1.1 – Steeple Renewables Project EIA Scoping Report**).
- 1.5.9 PINS reviewed and consulted on the Scoping Report and published an EIA Scoping Opinion on 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2024 which included the formal responses received by PINS and other consultees (see **Appendix 1.2 – EIA Scoping Opinion** and **Appendix 1.3 - Environment Agency EIA Scoping Response**). All issues raised in the Scoping Opinion have been considered during the EIA process and are discussed in further detail in the technical chapters.

## 1.6 Purpose of this Report

- 1.6.1 This PEIR provides details of the Proposed Development, together with an overview of the alternatives considered to date. For each environmental topic, details of the



approach to assessment, the existing and likely future environmental conditions, and the preliminary findings regarding the likely significant effects of the Proposed Development are set out, based on the information available at this time. Initial details of the measures proposed to avoid, prevent, reduce or offset significant adverse effects (known as mitigation measures) are also provided.

- 1.6.2 The EIA process is currently ongoing, with further work being carried out to enhance the understanding of existing environmental conditions and to provide further detail of the likely significant environmental effects. Feedback provided during the consultation process will be considered in refining the design of the Proposed Development, during the ongoing assessment work and during the development of further mitigation measures where necessary. The results of this further work will be set out within the Environmental Statement (“ES”) that will accompany the application for Development Consent.

## **1.7 Structure of the PEIR**

- 1.7.1 This PEIR comprises studies on each aspect of the environment that has been identified as likely to be significantly affected by the Proposed Development (the ‘technical chapters’), which are supported with Figures and Technical Appendices where appropriate, and the outcomes to date of the on-going EIA.
- 1.7.2 The structure of the PEIR is outlined below in **Table 1.1**.

*Table 1.1 Structure of the Preliminary Environmental Information Report*

Volume 1 – Main PEIR Report	
Chapter 1	<b>Introduction</b>
Chapter 2	<b>EIA Methodology &amp; Public Consultation</b>
Chapter 3	<b>Site Description, Site Selection and Iterative Design Process</b>
Chapter 4	<b>Proposed Development</b>
Chapter 5	<b>Planning Policy</b>
Chapter 6	<b>Landscape and Visual Impact and Residential Amenity</b>
Chapter 7	<b>Ecology &amp; Biodiversity</b>
Chapter 8	<b>Hydrology, Hydrogeology, Flood Risk and Drainage</b>
Chapter 9	<b>Cultural Heritage</b>
Chapter 10	<b>Socio Economics</b>

Volume 1 – Main PEIR Report	
Chapter 11	<b>Noise</b>
Chapter 12	<b>Climate Change</b>
Chapter 13	<b>Transport &amp; Access</b>
Chapter 14	<b>Air Quality</b>
Chapter 15	<b>Land Use and Agriculture</b>
Chapter 16	<b>Glint &amp; Glare</b>
Chapter 17	<b>Miscellaneous Issues – Electric, Magnetic and Electromagnetic Fields, Telecoms &amp; Utilities and Waste</b>
Chapter 18	<b>Summary</b>
Chapter 19	<b>Glossary</b>
Volume 2 – Technical Appendices	
Volume 3 – Figures	
Non-Technical Summary	

1.7.3 For continuity, the figures and appendices are arranged and presented using the same reference numbers as the chapters as a means of providing supportive background and technical information.

## 1.8 EIA Project Team

1.8.1 The team responsible for the production of this PEIR has been coordinated and managed by Pegasus Group. Pegasus Group is accredited under the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (“IEMA”) ‘Quality Mark’ scheme which is a mark of excellence in EIA co-ordination and management. Pegasus Group have extensive experience of undertaking EIA work across a range of projects and development types.

1.8.2 The consultants who have contributed to the preparation of this PEIR are set out in Table 1.2 below.

*Table 1.2 Consultant Team*

Topic	Consultant
EIA Coordination	Pegasus Group
Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment	

Topic	Consultant
Residential Visual Amenity	Pegasus Group
Cultural Heritage	
Socio-economics	
Transport and Access	
Miscellaneous Issues	
Ecology and Biodiversity	BSG Ecology
Hydrology, Hydrogeology, Flood Risk and Drainage	RSK
Noise	RES
Air Quality	Hoare Lea
Land Use and Agriculture	Roberts Environmental
Glint and Glare	Pager Power
Climate Change	LUC
Cumulative Effects and Inter-relationships	EIA Project Team

1.8.3 A Statement of Competence setting out the relevant expertise of each of the topic authors is provided in **Appendix 1.4 ‘Statement of Competence’**.

## 1.9 PEIR Availability and Consultation

1.9.1 The PEIR has been prepared to provide the basis for formal consultation under the Planning Act 2008, as amended. This builds on the consultation undertaken to date, including consultation in relation to the scope of the EIA process (see Chapter 2: Environmental Assessment Methodology and Public Consultation for further details).

1.9.2 The Proposed Development website ([www.steeplerenewablesproject.co.uk](http://www.steeplerenewablesproject.co.uk)) will include all consultation documents, together with a virtual and in-person consultation events and details of document deposit points. In addition, the consultation process will include:

- Face-to-face consultation events as suitable, publicly accessible venues located within the consultation zone;

- Provision of all consultation documents (including the PEIR) on the website of the Proposed Development;
- Provision of hard copies of the documents at public deposit points (see Table 1.3) within each host local authority;
- One webinar held within the consultation period;
- Provision of individual hard copies of the documents on request excluding the PEIR. Hard copies of the PEIR can be requested for a charge of £0.35 per page to cover printing and posting costs;
- Telephone enquiries for members of the public – including a call back feature out of hours;
- the Applicant will consider invitations to, or requests for, meetings with affected stakeholders, other local groups or special interest organisations on a case-by-case basis;
- Feedback form for anyone wishing to respond to the statutory consultation;
- Use of a newsletter to publicise the consultation and details of how to access consultation documents; and
- Freephone (0115 718 2070), freepost (FREEPOST Steeple Renewables Project) and email address ([info@steeplerenewablesproject.co.uk](mailto:info@steeplerenewablesproject.co.uk)).

### Availability and Comments

- 1.9.3 Copies of the PEIR may be obtained via the contact details set out on the website of the Proposed Development ([www.steeplerenewablesproject.co.uk](http://www.steeplerenewablesproject.co.uk)), the costs for which are set out below:
- Main Text and Technical Appendices – 0.35p per sheet to cover printing costs;
  - Non-Technical Summary (“NTS”) – £15; and
  - Digital copies of the above documents on a CD or pen drive - £15.
- 1.9.4 Postage is payable on all orders. For copies of any of the above please contact Pegasus Group (quoting reference P22-1144) at the following address:

Pegasus Group  
 Pavilion Court  
 Green Lane  
 Garforth, Leeds  
 LS25 2AF

1.9.5 Document deposit points, for the consultation period, are set out in Table 1.3 below.

1.9.6 Details of how members of the public may respond to the consultation are set out in the Statutory Consultation Booklet.

*Table 1.3: proposed Consultation Document Deposit Points*

Deposit Locations	Opening Times					
	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
Gainsborough Library Cobden St, Gainsborough DN21 2NG	09:00 – 17:00	09:00 – 17:00	09:00 – 17:00	09:00 – 17:00	09:00 – 17:00	09:00 – 13:00
Retford Library 17 Churchgate, Retford DN22 6PE	09:00 – 18:00	09:00 – 18:00	09:00 – 18:00	09:00 – 18:00	09:00 – 18:00	09:00 – 15:30

### Next Steps

1.9.7 The consultation process to date and ongoing consultation will continue to influence the design of the Proposed Development. The next stage, following completion of consultation and analysis of the consultation responses, is to make an application for Development Consent, and having regard to the consultation responses received.

1.9.8 Following consultation, an ES will be prepared. The ES will accompany the application for development consent and will take into account the comments received during consultation with the community, statutory consultation bodies and other interested parties.

1.9.9 Details of the consultation undertaken during the preparation of the application will be set out in a separate Consultation Report. The Consultation Report will demonstrate how the comments received during consultation with the community,

statutory consultation bodies and other interested parties have been considered and taken account of in the application. The Consultation Report will be submitted alongside the final ES at the time of application.

- 1.9.10 The ES and other planning application documentation will also be available to view on the National Infrastructure Planning website (<https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/>). The website is managed by PINS – the government agency responsible for examining NSIP applications.