P23-0881

9 June 2023

Planning Services – Development Management
Wiltshire Council
County Hall
Bythesea Road
Trowbridge
BA14 8JN

Application to update the information for the discharge of condition 9 (Ecological Management Plan) of approval 14/05740/FUL for the 12MW solar farm and associated infrastructure at land adjacent to Boscombe Airfield, Idmiston, SP4 0AW for RES Group.

Dear Sir/Madam

I am writing on behalf of RES Group (the applicant) to apply to update the information required for the discharge of condition 9 (Ecological Management Plan) of approval reference 14/05740/FUL.

Approval 14/05740/FUL granted consent for the installation of a 12MWp solar farm with associated infrastructure at land adjacent to Boscombe Airfield near Idmiston.

Condition 9 of approval 14/05740/FUL is worded as follows:

"Before the scheme first becomes operational, an Ecological Management Plan (EMP) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local planning Authority. The ecological management plan shall:

i)be based on the Outline Ecological Management Plan (Delta Simons, 20th November 2014)

ii)provide full details of the locations and measures that will be put in place to mitigate, compensate and enhance biodiversity on the site.

iii)contain a five-year management programme for ecological features with details of how management will be continued for the duration of the scheme.

iv)contain details of a monitoring programme to assess the effectiveness of the EMP with reporting to the planning authority in the first, third and fifth years after the site first becomes operational.

Planting, sowing and initial aftercare will be completed as specified in the approved EMP within one year of the site becoming operational. Management works will be undertaken in accordance

with the approved EMP and the first year of the management programme will start in the month in which the site first becomes operational.

Reason: In the interests of ecology."

In accordance with the terms of condition 9, a further Ecological Management Plan (EMP) was produced by Delta Simons in March 2015.

Monitoring reports were produced for the first, third and fifth years. The third and fifth year monitoring reports by Avian Ecology, produced for RES Group, have been attached in support of this submission.

The applicant currently has an issue with maintenance of the site, that wild grass is growing so rapidly, that in late spring to early summer months, the grass is growing over part of the solar panels and affecting the performance of the site, a matter that was highlighted in the fifth-year monitoring report.

The EMP from March 2015 identified at section 4.2 that – "***The grassland will not be cut from spring to late July/ August*** *in order to allow the species opportunity to flower and to prevent disturbance of ground nesting birds. Following flowering the grassland should be cut back to approximately 50 mm and the cuttings left in-situ for 1-7 days, before removal, such that they dry and shed seed."*

However, in monitoring the above quoted strategy for maintenance of the fine grassland the fifth year monitoring report stated the following in table 3.1 for maintenance of the fine grassland and wildflower grassland – "***There may be circumstances when an additional summer cut is required to prevent over-tall vegetation obscuring panels, in such cases cuts should reduce sward height to no lower than approximately 200mm to avoid impacts on nesting birds (generally between March-August inclusive)."***

Therefore, to update the effectiveness of the agreed EMP under condition 9, I am writing to request that the applicant is permitted to undertake an additional summer cut in May/June time as part of the agreed ecological management of the site under the terms of condition 9, so that grass does not grow excessively and obscure panels. As confirmed by the ecologist in the fifth-year monitoring report, the additional cut at this time to 200mm would avoid any impact on nesting birds, so can be carried out without harming the ecological and biodiversity quality of the site.

I would be grateful if the Council could update their record for condition 9 in line with this submission to enable an additional cut to the grassland during early summer for the Hale Solar Farm adjacent to Boscombe Airfield.

If you require any further clarification or information in processing this request to update the discharge of condition 9 of approval 14/05740/FUL, then please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully



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Associate Planner

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