



Landscape and Ecological Management Plan

Tydd Solar Farm, Gorefield

February 2024 | Project Ref UKZ157





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Contents

Contents

1. Introduction.....	5
2. Existing and Proposed Landscape and Ecology Features	8
3. Management Plan Objectives – Operational Phase.....	11
4. Operational Phase Prescriptions	18
5. Monitoring and Review	25
6. Appendices	27

Appendices

Appendix 1 – UKZ139 Mitigation and Enhancement Plan

Appendix 2 – Bird boxes

A photograph of a greenhouse with a translucent plastic covering, situated behind a field of tall green grass and yellow buttercup flowers. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent green filter. The text '1.0' is centered in the middle of the image, with a horizontal line underneath it.

1.0



1. Introduction

Background

- 1.1** This Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP) has been jointly prepared by Briarwood Landscape Architecture Ltd. and AW Ecology.
- 1.2** The report has been prepared on behalf of Pathfinder Clean Energy UKDev Ltd. in order to accompany a planning application for the installation of a solar farm with associated infrastructure on land to the east of Guancockgate Road, Gorefield.
- 1.3** Ecological surveys of the site were undertaken by AW Ecology on 15th July 2022 and 7th November 2023, comprising an initial Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey (2022) and an update survey (with more targeted attention to water vole and potential badger activity) following extensive maintenance works to site ditches and boundary drains in the autumn of 2023.
- 1.4** A Landscape and Visual Appraisal was prepared by Briarwood Landscape Architecture Ltd. to accompany the planning application for the proposed development.
- 1.5** This LEMP draws on the findings and recommendations detailed in the above reports.
- 1.6** The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) identifies ways in which the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment, including minimising impacts upon biodiversity and promoting net gains where possible. Opportunities to enhance biodiversity in and around developments are to be encouraged and as such local authorities have a responsibility to ensure that such opportunities are taken.
- 1.7** Established guidance¹ sets out a series of opportunities to enhance solar farms for local wildlife and contribute to national biodiversity targets. This LEMP reflects recommendations set out within the guidance document.
- 1.8** The proposed solar farm is an example of a development which presents considerable opportunity for biodiversity enhancement. This LEMP has been prepared to ensure that the opportunities for enhancement are realised.

¹ BRE (2014) Biodiversity Guidance for Solar Developments. Eds G E Parker and L Greene



Planning

- 1.9** This LEMP has been prepared to accompany a planning application for the temporary installation of ground mounted solar photovoltaic (PV) farm with battery storage and substation; along with ancillary infrastructure and security fencing, landscaping provision, ecological enhancements and associated works at land east of Guanockgate Road, Gorefield.

Purpose of the Landscape and Ecological Management Plan

- 1.10** The purpose of this LEMP is:
- To set out the agreed objectives for the landscape and ecological management of the proposed Tydd Solar Farm;
 - To set clear standards for the performance of landscape maintenance work;
 - To assist in the development of work programmes for landscape maintenance staff;
 - To preserve and enhance biodiversity;
 - To help monitor attainment and improvement against management aims and objectives.

Management Aims

- 1.11** The main aims for the maintenance and management of the proposed solar farm are:
- To help assimilate the solar farm into the landscape, through the retention and enhancement of key landscape characteristics such as drains and dykes etc, so as to minimise any effects on local landscape character and visual amenity;
 - To set out how valuable landscape and ecological features on the site will be protected during the construction phase and how, during the operational phase of the solar farm, landscape and ecological enhancements can be managed to increase the value of the site for wildlife;
 - To help ensure ensuing management and monitoring of the solar farm will be in place so that any landscape and ecological benefits are long lasting ones;
 - To ensure that existing features with a biodiversity value on the site are protected and that the potential biodiversity value of the operational site is realised.



2.0



2. Existing and Proposed Landscape and Ecology Features

Site Description

- 2.1** The site is situated amongst agricultural fields and forms part of the larger Tydd St Mary's Fen and Treading Field . The closest settlement is Sutton St Edmund, which is located approximately 1km to the west of the site boundary. The larger village of Gorefield is located approximately 2.5km to the east of the site boundary.
- 2.2** The site is geometric but irregular in shape and comprises 16 agricultural fields, currently under arable production, plus a small woodland copse. The boundaries are largely open, except for a short section in the north-east corner the site adjacent to Broad Drove West where the boundary is defined by hedgerow and a small woodland block. Elsewhere, the site is defined by a series drainage channels including Treading Bank to the south-east and Straight Reach Drain along the west.
- 2.3** Internally, the fields are also defined by drainage channels, which are typically straight linear features. The exception is the Lady Nunn's Old Eau, which is a more sinuous features and which bisects the site south to north.
- 2.4** Topographically, the site is flat. There is a gently rise from -1 metre Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) on the southern boundary to 1 metre AOD on the northern boundary

Landscape and Ecological Features to be retained

- 2.5** The site comprises 16 fields (one of which, immediately south-east of the copse, is very small) of arable farmland, with winter wheat being the primary crop over the period covered by the surveys. Other habitats include a network of drainage ditches and some larger drains and watercourses, the most significant of which are Straight Reach (Drain) defining the western boundary, and Lady Nunn's Old Eau, that meanders north to south through the middle of the site. At the time of the initial Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey on 15th July 2022, the fields were under ripening wheat crops, with some narrow grassy margins, although there were a few areas where crops had failed and the affected areas colonised by dense ruderal weeds. In 2023 these areas had been brought back into cultivation and wheat had been, or was being, sown across the site.



- 2.6** There are no existing hedgerows within the proposed site boundary nor immediately adjacent to it, apart from a short section of garden hedge on the eastern boundary and the edge of a small, recently created, plantation adjacent to the north-eastern corner of the site. Neither of these small hedge sections were rich in native shrub species, and there is no connectivity with other hedgerows in the wider local countryside.
- 2.7** Apart from arable fields, the only significant terrestrial habitat present is a small copse in the middle of the site (outside, but surrounded by, the proposed development area). This copse consists of a mixture of native and non-native species, fringed with bramble scrub and with limited undergrowth and no veteran trees present. It was assessed as being in poor condition in July 2022 and this was unchanged in November 2023.
- 2.8** Two former strips of game crops and reedbed, each approximately 50m wide and straddling ditches were still apparent on online aerial imagery of the site in November 2023 but in reality, had been lost (ploughed and recultivated) by July 2022. These had originally been retained as game bird cover, but game bird shooting on the farm has since ceased. These lost features will be recreated (as reedbed) as part of the proposed biodiversity net gain proposals.

Mitigation and Enhancement Plan

- 2.9** A Mitigation and Enhancement Plan has been prepared for the proposed solar farm (see Appendix 1).
- 2.10** The layout of the proposed solar farm provides an opportunity to enhance the site's existing boundary planting.

A green-tinted photograph of a greenhouse with solar panels on the roof. In the foreground, there are yellow flowers and a butterfly. The text "3.0" is centered in the middle of the image, underlined.

3.0



3. Management Plan Objectives – Operational Phase

Objectives

- 3.1** The following operational phase objectives have been identified which, when achieved, will ensure the overarching aims of the Plan are achieved.

OBJECTIVE O1: TO CREATE NEW HABITATS THROUGH CESSATION OF INTENSIVE AGRICULTURE AND THROUGH PLANTING OF LOCALLY APPROPRIATE NATIVE SPECIES

- 3.2** A more diverse grassland will be established beneath the panels through cessation of intensive arable production (including herbicide application and fertilisation) of the existing fields.

- 3.3** Sections of new native species hedgerows are proposed along the north-eastern boundary of the site. The hedgerows will help to provide:

- a connection to existing hedgerows adjacent to the site;
- creation of a linked wildlife corridor;
- provision of an enhanced existing landscape feature;
- year round visual interest;
- enhanced screening and filtering of views of the proposed solar farm;
- habitats with the potential to support invertebrates, reptiles, birds and small mammals.

- 3.4** The proposed new section of hedgerows and gapping up of existing hedgerows would be comprised of native species with the ability to support wildlife and improve the site's biodiversity. As well as being appropriate to the character of the site and the local landscape.



New Hedgerow Species Mix

Latin name	Common name	Percentage of mix
Acer campestre	Field Maple	15%
Corylus avellana	Hazel	10%
Crataegus monogyna	Hawthorn	50%
Euonymus europaeus	Spindle	2%
Ligustrum vulgare	Wild Privet	2%
Prunus spinosa	Blackthorn	15%
Rhamnus cathartica	Common Buckthorn	2%
Rosa eglanteria	Sweet Briar	2%
Viburnum opulus	Guelder Rose	2%
		100%

3.5

A series of new woodland blocks are proposed across the site. The new woodland blocks would help to provide:

- year round visual interest;
- enhanced screening and filtering of views of the proposed solar farm including the substation and battery storage system;
- habitats with the potential to support invertebrates, reptiles, birds and small mammals.



3.6 The composition of the new woodland blocks reflects the species recommended by the Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust as being suitable for the area.

New Woodland Copse Species Mix

Latin name	Common name	Percentage of mix
Understorey Mix		
Acer campestre	Field Maple	15%
Corylus avellana	Hazel	10%
Crataegus monogyna	Hawthorn	50%
Ilex aquifolium	Holly	2%
Ligustrum vulgare	Wild Privet	2%
Malus sylvestris	Crab Apple	5%
Prunus spinosa	Blackthorn	10%
Rosa eglanteria	Sweet Briar	6%
		100%
Woodland Tree Species		
Betula pendula	Silver Birch	20%
Fagus sylvatica	Beech	30%



Latin name	Common name	Percentage of mix
Quercus robur	Pedunculate Oak	40%
Salix alba	White Willow	10%
		100%

OBJECTIVE O4: TO PROVIDE SHELTERING FEATURES AROUND THE SITE FOR NEARBY POPULATIONS OF BIRDS AND OTHER NOTABLE FAUNAL SPECIES

3.7 As the local habitat supports a variety of bird and mammal populations, management will seek to enhance the site for these species. This will include the installation of log piles and hibernacula to create basking and hibernating habitat for reptiles and amphibians. In the early years of the proposed development it is considered that there will be insufficient suitable habitat to support a resident bat population, and for this reason bat boxes are not proposed as part of the initial biodiversity/ecological mitigation proposals.

3.8 The Lincolnshire Bat Group's input at similar sites has also supported the priority of creating enhanced foraging conditions and habitat connectivity for local bat populations rather than the installation of bat boxes. There are currently no suitable locations for kestrel or barn owl nest boxes within the site boundaries, although this will change over time as the new trees mature and once the grasslands mature, a small number of pole-mounted kestrel/barn owl nest boxes will become a viable option.

OBJECTIVE O5: TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF THE MAIN EXISTING WATERBODIES ON THE SITE

3.9 The ditches and watercourses within the site and on its boundaries received extensive maintenance works in autumn 2023 to improve, and in some cases restore, water flow and open water areas. This maintenance will continue as required during the existence of the solar farm. There will also be an inevitable improvement in water quality both within the site (and beyond) with the cessation of the use of agrochemicals on the site, which will counter the existing problem with excessive duckweed and filamentous algal growth in the ditches.



OBJECTIVE O6: TO MANAGE GRASSLAND TO ENSURE THE DEVELOPMENT OF A DIVERSE SWARD BENEATH THE ARRAY OF SOLAR PANELS.

- 3.10** Grassland within the site will be managed to create a more diverse grassland habitat which will benefit a wide range of wildlife. The site will be managed through light and rotational sheep grazing. This will create a range of vegetation heights, bare patches, and disturbance that will promote colonisation.
- 3.11** Where grazing is not possible, then grassland will be cut. In general, this will be needed at least once per year for the whole site. The later this is done in the year, the more species will be able to seed, which will support a larger range of species. Even if the site is cut annually, certain areas will be left to stand throughout the winter and possibly for two seasons, but at least one entire year. Areas will also be cleared totally to open up bare patches.
- 3.12** All arisings will be removed from the grassland and piled within the site in a discrete area, which will provide new habitat suitable for species groups including invertebrates and reptiles.
- 3.13** The existing field margins are narrow and of limited ecological value due (in part) to spray drift, and will be enhanced by widening and re-seeding with native grasses and meadow wildflowers and will benefit from the cessation of broadcast herbicide spraying.

OBJECTIVE O7: TO MANAGE HEDGEROWS, HEDGEROWS AND WOODLAND TREES TO ENHANCE THEIR AESTHETIC AND WILDLIFE VALUE.

- 3.14** Management of the existing retained hedgerows and woodland will involve regular (annual) monitoring to check for any detrimental deterioration through damage and/or disease. The monitoring process will put forward suggested remedial work measures so as to ensure the long term survival of the existing retained hedgerows and hedgerow trees.
- 3.15** Management of new hedgerow and woodland planting will ensure good successful establishment and healthy development.

OBJECTIVE O8: TO ENSURE WILDLIFE ARE ADEQUATELY PROTECTED DURING OPERATION

- 3.16** Management will ensure that protected and notable wildlife are able to continue to use the site and are protected from adverse impacts during the operational phase, this includes the installation of wildlife gates, installation of fences that will only act



as a barrier to large mammals (specifically designed to contain grazing sheep, while excluding fallow deer, stray livestock and casual human trespassers), while allowing smaller wildlife (such as badger, fox, mustelids, brown hares) to have free access. Protection shall be given to new woodland planting to prevent damage of trees from deer and to encourage the development of an understorey.

- 3.17** No new external artificial lighting is anticipated as part of the proposed development. Should lighting be needed, such measures would be sensitive ones, with particular care taken to avoid artificial light spill onto bat foraging and roosting habitats, and would be agreed in advance with the local planning authority.

OBJECTIVE O9: To MONITOR THE SITE AND ASSESS THE SUCCESS OF MANAGEMENT

- 3.18** In order to deliver the proposed ecological objectives, monitoring of the effects of management prescriptions will be required in order to ensure that these are effective, and to inform any necessary refinement of the site management.



4.0



4. Operational Phase Prescriptions

- 4.1** In order to achieve the objectives outlined in Section 3, the following management prescriptions have been identified.
- 4.2** Implementation of the operational phase measures will be co-ordinated by the main construction contractor with the assistance of a suitably qualified ecologist.

Prescriptions

Contributes to Objective O1

- 4.3** The existing grassland fields will be managed to reduce nutrient levels and increase the diversity of the sward.
- 4.4** The aim of grassland management is to create a range of vegetation heights from bare ground to regrowth through the remains of previous seasons material. Each grass species within an area of grassland should be able to undergo its full lifecycle, as each stage will provide food or habitat for a particular species. Bare ground is an important feature, as is dense thatch and accumulation. A variation in topography, provides a range of microclimates that support different species.

PR4: HEDGEROWS AND TREES

Contributes to Objective O2

- 4.5** The existing hedgerows and trees on the site will be retained as part of the solar development and new native species hedgerows will be introduced in the locations indicated on the Mitigation and Enhancements Plan.
- 4.6** New native species hedgerow and tree plants will typically be planted as 1+1 transplants at 80-100cm in height. All bare-root hedge planting stock will be protected from rabbit damage using approved proprietary 600mm clear plastic spiral guards, supported with 0.9m 12/14lb canes as advised by the manufacturer.
- 4.7** So as to provide an element of partially maturity and to create an immediate visual presence some trees within the proposed new woodland copse would be planted as:
- standards – 8-10 cm girth, 250-300cm height;
 - select standards – 10-12cm girth, 300-350cm height, and



- heavy standard – 12-14cm girth, 300-350cm height.

4.8 To protect from deer damage, it is anticipated that the new woodland blocks will be enclosed by an approximately 2 metres high deer fence comprising wooden post and wire mesh.

PR5: PROVISION OF BIRD BOXES

Contributes to Objective O4

4.9 Additional bird nesting provision will be incorporated into new design proposals as the site matures. See 3.7 above for further details.

PR6: IMPROVEMENT TO THE QUALITY OF THE EXISTING WATERBODIES ON SITE

Contributes to Objective O5

4.10 Extensive maintenance and remedial works were carried out in autumn 2023 to improve the condition of the ditches and watercourses within the site and on its boundaries, enhancing water flow and restoring open water in previously overgrown and heavily shaded sections. These maintenance works will be continued as required throughout the life of the project. Water quality (and ecological value) will improve throughout these features with the cessation of agrochemical use on the fields within the site.

PR7: PROTECTION OF WILDLIFE DURING OPERATION

Contributes to Objective O8

4.11 Vegetation around the solar panels should allow for heights of 200-500mm during the nesting bird season to allow for this site to have the potential to be used by ground nesting birds. Examination of the use of the fields by ground nesting birds will form part of the annual monitoring by the ecologist.

4.12 As part of the proposed solar farm's management regime, sheep grazing will be restricted to periods outside of the main bird nesting season (i.e. no grazing between March and August inclusive) thereby avoiding conflict with ground nesting birds.

4.13 The management of the array will require minimal intervention by machines and as such if reptiles or amphibians colonise the grassland within the array or if brown hares hide their young in the grassland, the potential for killing and injury of these species is considered to be minimal, particularly in comparison with arable agricultural works.



PR8: MANAGEMENT OF GRASSLAND HABITATS

Contributes to Objective O6

Grassland Within Array

- 4.14** Grassland within the array will be managed for the lifespan of the scheme to encourage the development of a more diverse sward than is currently present.
- 4.15** Grassland can be managed through low intensity pulse grazing using sheep and/or mowing. Both the approach of conservation grazing and the approach of management through mowing alone are presented below.

Pulse Grazing:

January-February	Light grazing on any new growth (optional).
Early March	Remove grazing; this allows plants to grow and creates good habitat for ground nesting birds
September to end of December	Main grazing period if sheep are used with light grazing down to a short sward height; a mosaic of plant heights helps encourage insects.

- 4.16** Grazing is only to be undertaken by sheep. Cattle, horse or donkey grazing will not be possible due to the damage these species will likely inflict on the solar panel structures.
- 4.17** The intended outcome of a grazing scheme will be to have a sward of the following height structure at the beginning of March:
- 75% at a height of approximately 5cm
 - 25% at a height of approximately 25cm
- 4.18** A stocking density of between 5 – 10 animals per hectare is recommended between late September and February. This is a typical stocking density for conservation grazing. However, the stocking density and timing of grazing will be at the discretion of the land manager, in order to achieve the desired sward structure given above. More animals could be used for shorter grazing periods.
- 4.19** Grazing will not be undertaken between mid-March and August inclusive.



4.20 Mowing (no grazing):

Mid-February	Cut short any significant winter growth leaving 25-50mm of sward
August/September	After flowering, carry out main cut and remove all of the arisings.

4.21 Mowing will only take place during periods of dry weather to ensure that no waterlogged ground is damaged by machinery.

4.22 When mowing the grassland all arisings will need to be removed off site to prevent nutrient build up.

FIELD MARGINS

Contributes to Objective O6

4.23 The areas within the field margins (i.e. between the panels and security fencing) at the edges of the solar arrays will be re-seeded with a mixture of native grasses and meadow wildflowers, with the exception of the locations where new reedbed strips are to be created (which will be done by using reed seed resources from within the site).

General

4.24 No herbicides should be used on-site unless targeting specific weeds, as described in prescription PR9 below. Under this sensitive management a high floral diversity should develop over time and this will benefit a wide variety of invertebrates, birds and flowering plants. The grassland will not be improved by chemical fertilizer or slurry and nutrient levels in the soil should be allowed to reduce over time.

PR9: MANAGEMENT OF INJURIOUS WEEDS

Contributes to Objective O6

4.25 The land will be managed to make certain any of the five injurious weeds (Weeds act, (1959) do not proliferate on site, and ensure they do not spread. The five species are:

- common ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*);
- spear thistle (*Cirsium vulgare*);



- creeping or field thistle (*Cirsium arvense*);
- broad-leaved dock (*Rumex obtusifolius*); and
- curled dock (*Rumex crispus*).

4.26 If any species becomes a problem, it will be controlled through spot-treatment using selective herbicide during the plant's growth stage and prior to setting seed.

PR11: MANAGEMENT OF TREES AND HEDGEROWS

Contributes to Objective O7

Retained Trees and Hedgerows

- 4.27** Annual monitoring inspection of existing retained hedgerow and tree planting to take place in January and February. Any necessary tree works arising from monitoring inspection will be undertaken outside of the bird nesting season unless identified as a Health and safety risk in which case action would take place as soon as reasonably possible to eliminate risk.
- 4.28** All tree work should be carried out in accordance with BS 3998:2010 Tree Work Recommendations (or any subsequent updates). All work should be carried out by a suitably qualified person. Issues where a tree possesses a potential health and safety hazard should be dealt with by a qualified arboriculturist.
- 4.29** Unless for health and safety reasons, no pruning works to trees or hedgerows should normally occur between 1st March and 31st August inclusive so as to avoid the bird nesting season. Works during this period should be subject to a check by an ecologist so as to help ensure no nesting birds are present.
- 4.30** Where tree and hedgerow vegetation abuts the public right of way or any access track or roads, the portion of vegetation adjacent to the particular route shall be cut annually to allow free movement.

Maintenance of New Trees and Hedgerows Until Establishment

- 4.31** As a minimum, all implementation works are to be carried out in accordance with BS 4428: Code of Practice for General Landscape Operations.
- 4.32** The following maintenance operations are to be undertaken in relation to new tree and hedgerow planting implemented as part of the solar development:
- 4.33** Maintenance to be accord with BS 7370-4 Grounds Maintenance: Recommendation for Maintenance of Soft Landscaping (other than amenity turf);



- 4.34** Until established, all trees and shrubs (transplants) to be watered during the growing season. Following any dry periods of more than 7 days, soil moisture content should be assessed with an examination of root base and watering undertaken as necessary. Trees should receive a minimum of 40 litres per tree but this may need to be increased if trees should show signs of drought stress such as wilting leaves etc.
- 4.35** Stakes, shelters and guards will be regularly checked during the establishment period and adjusted as necessary to ensure that the developing hedgerow plants are not damaged.
- 4.36** There will be a minimal pruning policy for trees as pruning wounds can provide a source of infection. Formative pruning of new plants will only be carried out to remove dead and diseased wood and to create a well-balanced specimen.
- 4.37** In the event of tree death, the reason for growth failure shall be investigated and addressed before replanting a replacement. If death is due to the planting conditions, these shall be ameliorated. If death is due to pests or disease and likely to be present in the future, a resistant species of an alternative similar tree shall be selected.
- 4.38** Where hedges are seen to be failing due to compaction or lack of nutrients then soil aeration techniques and the use of inoculants shall be considered.
- 4.39** Any necessary remedial works will be carried out as soon as possible. All arisings will be either used to create compost heaps within the wildlife buffers outside the security fence or removed from site and disposed of at a registered facility.
- 4.40** To avoid competition and to assist with establishment, all planted areas and base of trees should be kept weed and grass free until plants have fully established at year 5.
- 4.41** At year 5, it should be confirmed that new tree and hedgerow planting has well established roots. All shelters, stakes, guards and ties should then be carefully removed from the plant material.



5.0



5. Monitoring and Review

- 5.1** Annual reviews and monitoring shall take place up until 40 years – the life expectancy of the proposed solar farm.
- 5.2** At each 5 year period, the landscape management regime shall be reviewed in response to any feedback from users of the site, the client or interested third parties.



6.0



6. Appendices



Appendix 1 – Mitigation and Enhancement Plan

UKZ157_10 Mitigation and Enhancements Plan Key

- New trees with native Shrub understorey
- Solar Panel
- Existing Planting
- Existing Hedgerows
- Species rich native hedgerows
- Wildflower Meadow
- Deer Fence
- Existing Public Right of Way
- Mammal Gate
- Reedbed
- Site Fence

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PACE
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New trees planting with native shrub understorey around the site to help protect long range views and create new habitat.

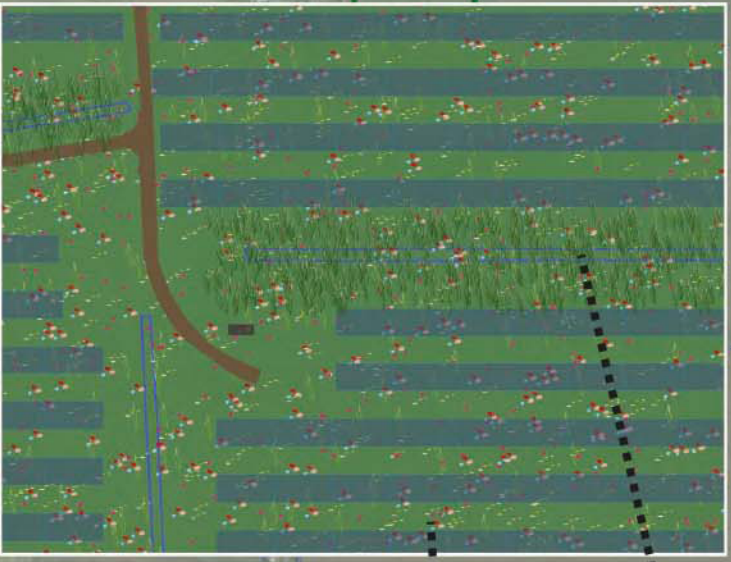
Deer fence to protect new tree planting

Wildlife gates installed strategically along the fenceline adjacent to existing ditches, site corners and access gates

Wide corridor for public rights of way

New trees planting with native shrub understorey around the site to help protect long range views and create new habitat.

Equipment positioned at significant distance from all existing trees.

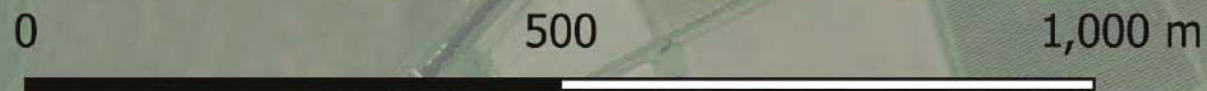


Native wildflower meadow around and underneath solar panels can be maintained by managed sheep grazing.

Site set back from ditch, restoring former reed strips creating field margins with high botanical and invertebrate interest.

Receptor Site for any captured wildlife (except hedgehogs)

New wood piles as refugia for reptiles and amphibians, positioned close to water sources.





Appendix 2 – Bird Box



Example of Kestrel nest box



Example of Barn Owl nest box