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UK Onshore Scheme

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Appendix 11

Landscape & Visual Amenity (Proposed
Underground DC Cable)

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Contents

APPENDIX 11.1	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Technical Appendix Structure	1
1.3 National Landscape Character.....	1
1.4 Regional Landscape Character.....	4

Appendix 11.1

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 This technical appendix provides details of the baseline landscape character as described in various publications produced by Natural England and Local Planning Authorities. These national, regional and local level studies identify character units at different scales and levels of detail and have been used, in conjunction with observations in the field, to help inform the baseline description of the landscape character of the Zol.

1.2 Technical Appendix Structure

1.2.1 The remainder of this technical appendix is structured as follows:

- Section 1.3. National Landscape Character. Provides a description of the key characteristics of the landscape as identified at a national level.
- Section 1.4. Regional Landscape Character. Provides a description of the key characteristics of the landscape as identified at a regional scale for East Midlands.

1.3 National Landscape Character

1.3.1 The landscape character of the Zone of Influence (Zol) is summarised at a broad scale by Natural England in the National Character Area (NCA) descriptions. The aim of NCA profiles was to assist those who make decisions regarding local plans to consider how best to enhance and respect local distinctiveness. The following provides a description of the four NCAs which fall within the Zol of the proposed DC cable route.

National Character Area 42: Lincolnshire Coast and Marshes

1.3.2 The NCA profile describes this area as the wide coastal plain that incorporates three distinctively different but closely interconnected areas which run broadly parallel with the edge of the Wolds. The following key characteristics are relevant to the Zol:

- Flat coastal plain to the east, with dramatic skylines across great distances, rising gradually in the west to more undulating land at the foot of the adjacent Lincolnshire Wolds;
- Strong marine influences of accretion and erosion shape the coastline with extensive wide, shallow beaches, vast areas of mudflats, major dune systems, continuous lengths of artificial sea defences, and numerous sandy beaches and nature reserves;
- Land management has had a fundamental impact on the character of this area, with a clear distinction between the higher ground of the Middle Marsh, where settlement is nucleated, and dispersed settlement relating to drainage in the Outmarsh;

- Inland is a predominantly open, medium-scale agricultural landscape with mixed arable farmland in the Middle Marsh to the west. The Outmarsh, and smaller farm units with traditional pastures and occasional vegetable crops on the Outmarsh - nearer to the coast, also has medium-scale arable agriculture with pockets of traditional pasture;
- Woodland and hedge cover is sparse but increases westwards towards the foot of the Lincolnshire Wolds with significant ancient woodland on the Middle Marsh. There is a substantial amount of ancient semi-natural woodland to the west of the NCA, but more minimal tree and hedgerow cover on the lower-lying, open Outmarsh; and
- A dispersed settlement pattern is characteristic throughout much of the area with a concentration of larger settlement along the coast including resort towns. Rural areas have a mix of dispersed and nucleated settlement; the latter concentrated in the Middle Marsh.

National Character Area 43: Lincolnshire Wolds

- 1.3.3 This NCA is described as a long, narrow band of rolling agricultural land dominated by a west-facing chalk escarpment approximately 50 m high. The area is characterised by a range of varied yet unified features including open, arable plateau hill tops, chalk escarpments, deep dry valleys with sinuous Beech woods and isolated Ash trees punctuating the skyline. The area is sparsely settled with many villages hidden within the folds of the landscape and modest country houses and farmsteads.
- 1.3.4 The following key characteristics are relevant to the Zol of the proposed DC cable route:
- A predominantly agricultural landscape with a pronounced scarp edge to the north and west affording panoramic views across the surrounding land;
 - Predominantly arable, but some pasture fields with rectilinear patterns and clipped hawthorn hedgerows;
 - Woodland is limited particularly to the north but there are occasional shelterbelts, hedgerow trees and scattered beech clumps. Important alder carr woodland is associated with some of the valleys in the south-west;
 - A historically and archaeologically rich landscape of small parklands and modest country houses, ancient trackways, west–east salters’ roads, deserted or shrunken villages and prehistoric round and long barrows; and
 - A sparse settlement pattern of small market towns and small nucleated villages (often in sheltered valleys) and scattered farmsteads. The settlements are predominantly linked by west–east ‘A’ roads linking to coastal areas.

National Character Area 44: Central Lincolnshire Vale

- 1.3.5 The NCA profile description states that this is a tranquil, rural and sparsely settled landscape largely used for agricultural production, mainly for the growing of arable crops. The following key characteristics are relevant to the Zol of the proposed DC cable route:

- A predominantly broad, low-lying to very gently undulating commercial arable vale with some pasture around villages;
- A landscape crossed by many streams flowing from the Wolds towards the heavily modified courses of the main rivers: the straight course of the canalised River Ancholme which flows north into the Humber and the similarly modified River Witham which flows south to The Wash;
- A landscape crossed by many streams flowing from the Wolds towards the heavily modified courses of the main rivers: the straight course of the canalised River Ancholme which flows north into the Humber and the similarly modified River Witham which flows south to The Wash;
- Woodland cover is variable with little on the central and northern clay soils, much more on the Coversands and Fen Edge Gravels including extensive conifer plantations;
- In general, a regular pattern of medium to large-sized arable fields with hawthorn-dominant hedgerows enclosing most fields and with few hedgerow trees. Significant variation found on the Coversands and Fen Edge Gravels where field boundary trees are a feature, and on the flat land of the Ancholme Valley where rectilinear fields tend to be divided by ditches and dykes;
- A deeply rural, tranquil landscape with sparsely distributed small nucleated settlements and isolated farmsteads linked by an extensive but sparse network of minor roads and tracks with few major roads; and
- A variety of recreational assets including long-distances footpaths, historic places of interest and outdoor recreation centres.

National Character Area 46: The Fens

- 1.3.6 This NCA is described as a distinctive, historic and human influenced wetland landscape lying to the west of the Wash estuary. The area is notable for its large-scale, flat, open landscape with extensive vistas to level horizons. The level, open topography shapes the impression of huge skies which convey a strong sense of place, tranquillity and inspiration.
- 1.3.7 The following key characteristics are relevant to the Zol of the proposed DC cable route:
- Expansive, flat, open, low-lying wetland landscape influenced by the Wash estuary, and offering extensive vistas to level horizons and huge skies throughout, provides a sense of rural remoteness and tranquillity;
 - The soils are important for agriculture, which is hugely significant for the rural economy in the Fens. There are over 4,000 farms in the Fens;
 - Overall, woodland cover is sparse, notably a few small woodland blocks, occasional avenues alongside roads, isolated field trees and shelterbelts of poplar, willow and occasionally leylandii hedges around farmsteads, and numerous orchards around Wisbech. Various alders, notably grey alder, are also used in shelterbelts and roadside avenues.

- The predominant land use is arable made possible by actively draining reclaimed land areas. Associated horticultural glasshouses are a significant feature. Cattle graze narrow enclosures along the banks of rivers and dykes and on parts of the salt marsh and sea banks;
- Open fields, bounded by a network of drains and the distinctive hierarchy of rivers (some embanked), have a strong influence on the geometric/rectilinear landscape pattern. The structures create local enclosure and a slightly raised landform, which is mirrored in the road network that largely follows the edges of the system of large fields;
- Large built structure exhibit a strong vertical visual influence including wind farms and other modern large-scale industrial and agricultural buildings, while drainage and flood storage structures and embanked rail and road routes interrupt the horizontal fen plain.

1.4 Regional Landscape Character

- 1.4.1 The East Midlands Regional Landscape Character Assessment (EMRLCA) (2010) complements Natural England's assessment by bridging the gap between national and local level landscape character assessments. The stated aim and application of the EMRLCA is to provide landscape evidence that can be used for strategic region-wide landscape management.
- 1.4.2 The EMRLCA defines 31 Regional Landscape Character Types (RLCTs) using broad descriptions of distinctive, rare or special characteristics. The following section provides an overview of the relevant key characteristics of each of the seven RLCTs found within the Zol of the proposed DC cable route.

RLCT 1B: Coastal Dunes, Beach and Intertidal Sand Flats

- 1.4.3 The following key characteristics are relevant to the Zol of the proposed DC cable route:
- Dynamic landscape intimately linked to natural coastal processes;
 - Gently rolling landform of dunes fronted by sandy beaches and intertidal sand flats and occasionally saltmarsh on the North Lincolnshire Coast;
 - Intertidal flats and beaches washed by waves with limited or no plant growth;
 - Limited evidence of human activity beyond fencing, tracks and tourist facilities, such as viewpoints. During the summer months, in locations close to busy holiday resorts, a temporary busy character prevails in contrast to the predominantly empty character elsewhere.

RLCT 1C: Shallow Coastal Waters:

- 1.4.4 The following key characteristics are relevant to the Zol of the proposed DC cable route:
- Shallow marine waters fringing the coastline, influenced by strong wave action coming off the North Sea;
 - Important fisheries, in particular shell fisheries; and

- Strong human influences close to major holiday resorts associated with recreational uses during the summer

RLCT 2A: Settled Fens and Marshes:

1.4.5 The following key characteristics are relevant to the Zol of the proposed DC cable route:

- Low lying, flat and open landscape with wide horizons and panoramas encompassing vast skies;
- Fertile soils supporting highly productive arable farming with limited biodiversity interest;
- Successive periods of enclosure creating local variations in character from organic late Saxon enclosures to rigid 19th and 20th century geometric field systems towards the coast;
- Field boundaries predominantly defined by wet dykes, sea walls, roads and canalised rivers; few hedgerows, hedgerow trees and woodlands;
- Large farm buildings and glass houses often associated with industrial scale agricultural and horticultural operations; and
- Coastal seaside resorts with large areas of static caravans and associated facilities contrast to productive farmland and remote countryside elsewhere.

RLCT 2B Planned and Drained Fens and Carrlands

1.4.6 The following key characteristics are relevant to the Zol of the proposed DC cable route:

- Consistently low lying terrain and simple palette of land uses and landscape features gives visual unity and strong sense of identity;
- Large scale open landscape of flat farmlands with extensive and uninterrupted vistas to distant horizons beneath vast skies;
- Significant areas at or below sea level, with modestly elevated areas acting as the focus of settlement;
- Hierarchy of canalised rivers, high level drains and ditches divide the landscape up into rigid geometric patterns, dictating the grain of the landscape and patterns of movement and settlement;
- Limited settlement pattern characterised by isolated farms and linear villages strung out along roads; majority of buildings in brick with tile roofs, further adding to uniform character of the landscape;
- Rich and varied arable land uses, root crops, bulbs, vegetables and horticultural glass houses give the landscape a highly productive character and seasonal variations in colour and texture; and
- Strong sense of remoteness in expansive and sparsely settled areas although periods of intense activity during harvest

RLCT 2C Fen and Marsh Margin Farmlands

- 1.4.7 The following key characteristics are relevant to the Zol of the proposed DC cable route:
- Transitional landscape, displaying features characteristic of elevated areas to the west, and lowland fens and marshes to the east;
 - Broad east facing landscape with consistent pattern of streams and field drains that run west to east create a gently undulating character and structure to the landscape;
 - Small scale rural landscape of mixed farms with permanent pasture along valley bottoms;
 - Well maintained hedgerows, woodlands, copses and plantations that contribute to well treed and intimate character;
 - Network of sinuous winding rural roads linking nucleated villages, located at junctions of two or more routes; and
 - Medieval moated sites and areas of remnant ridge and furrow combine with ancient road network and compact settlement cores to create a landscape of notable historic interest.

RLCT 7A Chalk Wolds

- 1.4.8 The following key characteristics are relevant to the Zol of the proposed DC cable route:
- Open, elevated and gently dipping chalk plateau dissected by a system of valleys including dry valleys that create a pronounced rolling landform;
 - Huge expanses of field and sky across the plateau top with extensive views emphasising the large scale of the landscape;
 - Intensively farmed character extending across the plateau with large scale rectilinear fields predominantly under arable cultivation with restored and mechanically maintained hedgerows increasingly evident;
 - Changing crop patterns dominate the plateau top contrasting markedly with the numerous secluded valleys with their lush pastures and wooded slopes
 - Sparse woodland cover on the plateau tops confined to occasional shelter belt plantations and beech clumps;
 - Woodlands on steeper slopes and particularly within the valleys that dissect the plateau;
 - A number of historic features that convey a sense of a long period of occupation;
 - Sparse settlement pattern on plateaux; elsewhere a dispersed pattern of small nucleated villages; and
 - Plateau crossed by former drove roads with wide verges that support herb rich grassland.

RLCT 7B Wolds Scarps, Ridges and Valleys:

- 1.4.9 The following key characteristics are relevant to the Zol of the proposed DC cable route:
- Pronounced escarpment with rounded ridge top profile at north western section of the Chalk Wolds, with exposed scars of chalk, and ironstone outcrops;
 - Steep, hummocky scarp slopes with land cover of rough pasture and scrub, intermittent copses and larger blocks of mainly deciduous woodland including, some wet pastures and distinctive ridge top beech clumps along summit ridge;
 - Complex landform with areas of landslips and wet flushes
 - Panoramic and exhilarating views from top of escarpment to the Wooded and Unwooded Vales to the west;
 - Scarp dissected by minor watercourses, dry valleys and spring lines;
 - Few settlements on scarp except for occasional farmsteads;
 - Distinctive pattern of spring line villages at foot of escarpment;
 - Elevated undulating landscape of prominent chalk ridges bisected by deep combs and wide river valleys in the southern section of the type;
 - Mosaic of mixed pastoral and arable land in the southern section, enclosed by mature hedgerows and intermittent woodlands, a network of narrow winding roads and a dispersed pattern of small nucleated villages; and
 - Area rich in archaeological features.



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