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**BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN PLAN:
LAND OFF HOLBEACH DROVE GATE,
HOLBEACH DROVE, SPALDING**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ESL (Ecological Services) Limited has been commissioned by Robert Doughty Consultancy Limited to produce a Biodiversity Net Gain Plan associated with a planning application for an agricultural machinery assembly facility, research and training facility, ground-mounted solar array and associated infrastructure on land off Holbeach Drove Gate, Holbeach Drove, Spalding (application number H09-0501-23).

Summary of findings:

- The scheme as detailed in this Plan will deliver a net unit change of 2.93BU for habitats and 4.22BU for hedgerows, resulting in a net gain of 8.80% and 685.64% respectively.

Summary of recommendations:

- Following successful granting of planning permission, a BNG Management and Monitoring Plan will be prepared.

BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN PLAN: LAND OFF HOLBEACH DROVE, HOLBEACH DROVE, SPALDING

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 ESL (Ecological Services) Limited (ESL) has been commissioned by Robert Doughty Consultancy Limited to produce a Biodiversity Net Gain Plan associated with a planning application for an agricultural machinery assembly facility, research and training facility, ground-mounted solar array and associated infrastructure on land off Holbeach Drive Gate, Holbeach Drive, Spalding (application number H09-0501-23), hereafter, referred to as the 'Site'.
- 1.2 The aim of this plan is to:
- Calculate the current biodiversity baseline value of the Site.
 - Calculate the pre-intervention scenario (the effect of the proposed scheme prior to habitat creation and enhancement measures).
 - Identify the level of habitat creation and enhancement required to achieve measurable net gain.
 - Deliver a strategy for Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) delivery.
- 1.3 A BNG baseline is provided as Figure 1 and a strategy for BNG delivery (BNG post-intervention) as Figure 2. A schedule of all BNG baseline habitats and hedgerows provided as Appendix 1 and the Statutory Metric Calculation Tool spreadsheet is provided as a standalone document.

2 NATIONAL AND LOCAL PLANNING POLICY

2.1 NATIONAL POLICY

- 2.1.1 The Environment Act 2021 (Schedule 14: Biodiversity gain as a condition of planning permission) states that:
- The biodiversity gain objective is met in relation to development for which planning permission is granted if the biodiversity value attributable to the development exceeds the pre-development biodiversity value of the on-site habitat by at least the relevant percentage.
 - The biodiversity value attributable to the development is the total of:
 - The post-development biodiversity value of the on-site habitat.
 - The biodiversity value, in relation to the development, of any registered off-site biodiversity gain allocated to the development.
 - The biodiversity value of any biodiversity credits purchased for the development.
 - The relevant percentage is set at 10%.

2.2 LOCAL PLANNING POLICY

The South East Lincolnshire Local Plan, adopted March 2019.

2.2.1 Policy 28: The Natural Environment outlines that a high quality, comprehensive ecological network of interconnected designated sites, sites of nature conservation importance and wildlife-friendly greenspace will be achieved by protecting, enhancing and managing natural assets and that:

- Development proposals that would cause harm to internationally-designated sites will not be permitted, except in exceptional circumstances, where imperative reasons of overriding public interest exist and the loss will be compensated by the creation of sites of equal or greater nature conservation value.
- All major housing proposals within 10km of The Wash and the North Norfolk Coast European Marine Site, including the Sustainable Urban Extensions in Boston (site Sou006 & Wes002), Spalding (site Pin024/Pin045) and Holbeach West (site Hob048), will be the subject of a project-level Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) to assess the impact of recreational pressure on The Wash and North Norfolk Coast European Marine Site. This should include:
 - Locally-specific information relating to access and site sensitivities.

Address gaps in the ecological network by ensuring that all development proposals provide an overall net gain in biodiversity by:

- Protecting the biodiversity value of land, buildings and trees (including veteran trees) minimising the fragmentation of habitats.
- Maximising the opportunities for restoration, enhancement and connection of natural habitats and species of principal importance.
- Incorporating beneficial biodiversity conservation features on buildings, where appropriate; and maximising opportunities to enhance green infrastructure and ecological corridors, including water space.
- Conserving or enhancing biodiversity or geodiversity conservation features that will provide new habitat and help wildlife to adapt to climate change and if the development is within a Nature Improvement Area (NIA), contributing to the aims and objectives of the NIA.

3 BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN PLAN

3.1 METHODS

3.1.1 A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) of the Site was undertaken by H S Ecology on 13 February 2023 and was updated on 3 August 2023; this comprised a Phase-1 habitat survey.

3.1.2 The results were used to condition-assess the habitats utilising the Statutory Metric methodology (Natural England, 2023), hereafter referred to as 'the Metric'. The Metric calculation tool was used to determine the value of the Site's biodiversity in terms of Biodiversity Units (BU).

3.1.3 The way that habitats are recorded using the Phase-1 methodology does not align with those used to inform the Metric. Therefore, a pragmatic approach has been taken in converting one to the other with regard to the extent, categorisation and condition assessment of the habitats, taking care not to under-represent the value of the Site in doing so. This condition assessment has been informed by:

- The descriptions of each habitat type provided in the PEA.
- A review of representative photographs.
- A review of available aerial photography.
- Consideration of the past and current uses of the Site and the likely impact of these on current habitat quality.

Strategic significance.

3.1.4 The desk study was utilised to identify and review Local Planning Policy and other relevant documentation detailing local biodiversity priorities and to determine the strategic significance of habitats both within the baseline and the post-intervention scenario.

3.1.5 The Site is isolated and does not lie within any Local Planning Policy Strategies such as Green Infrastructure Networks, Biodiversity Opportunity Mapping Networks or Non-statutory biological designations. Therefore, no habitats have been assigned a **High** strategic significance.

3.1.6 Habitats covered by the following local biodiversity priorities, comprising '*Other neutral grassland*', '*Mixed scrub*', '*Ponds (non-priority habitat)*', '*Other woodland; broadleaved*', '*Rural tree*', '*Urban tree*', '*Species-rich native hedgerow*' and '*Native hedgerow - associated with bank or ditch*' have been assigned a **Medium** strategic significance:

- Habitats considered strategically valuable by the scheme ecologists in view of all important biodiversity features of the Site identified during the appropriate surveys undertaken in support of the scheme design.

3.1.7 All other habitats have been assigned a **Low** strategic significance.

Post-development calculations.

3.1.8 The Proposed Site Plan (drawing no. 1411-3_PL_SP03 A) has been used to model the post-intervention value of the Site and to identify all on-Site opportunities to maximise biodiversity gain.

Temporal multipliers.

- 3.1.9 No delay in starting habitat creation has been assigned to any habitat creation measure as landscaping and biodiversity provision are heavily intertwined with the development proposals and are anticipated to be undertaken prior to, alongside or immediately following construction of infrastructure.

Habitat categorisation considerations.

- 3.1.10 The majority of the Site is described as 'rough grassland' within the PEA, largely dominated by coarse grasses and unpalatable herbs. Given the arable use of the Site within the past 20-years, the grassland is likely to be species- and structurally-poor. However, to ensure the value of the Site is not under-represented, the assessment assumes that 55% of the grassland comprises '*Other neutral grassland*', a 'Medium' distinctiveness habitat and the remaining 45% is '*Modified grassland*'.
- 3.1.11 National guidance on the impacts of solar schemes (BRE National Solar Centre, 2014) states that in calculating the post-intervention scenario, 5% of the proposed solar array area is assumed to be permanently lost as a result of infrastructure associated with the array. The remainder is available for habitat creation and enhancement measures. Drawing no. 1411-3_SK_DD01 has been used to inform habitat creation and management opportunities.

3.2 BASELINE CONDITIONS

- 3.2.1 The Site comprises seven habitat types (9.47ha) generating 33.33BU and one hedgerow type (0.045km) generating 0.62BU. The contribution of each habitat and hedgerow types are given in Tables 1 and 2 and are illustrated on Figure 1.

TABLE 1: Summary baseline of habitats present on-Site and their contributing values.

Broad Habitat Category	Habitat Type	Condition	Area (ha)	Habitat BU
Grassland	Other neutral grassland	Poor	4.3851	19.29
	Modified grassland	Poor	3.5878	7.18
Heathland and shrub	Mixed scrub	Moderate	0.0881	0.78
Lakes	Ponds (non-priority habitat)	Poor	0.0196	0.09
Urban	Developed land; sealed surface	N/A	0.002	0.00
Woodland and forest	Other woodland; broadleaved	Moderate	1.3427	5.91
	Other coniferous woodland	Poor	0.0463	0.09
Total			9.47	33.33

TABLE 2: Summary baseline of hedgerows present of on-Site and their contributing values.

Broad Habitat Category	Hedgerow Type	Condition	Length (km)	Hedgerow BU
Hedgerow	Native hedgerow - associated with bank or ditch	Good	0.0446	0.62
Total			0.045	0.62

3.3 IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED SCHEME

Habitats.

- 3.3.1 Most habitats on the Site will be lost or temporarily impacted to facilitate the construction of infrastructure, reversion to agroforestry and creation of habitats.

Hedgerows.

- 3.3.2 To facilitate Site access off Holbeach Drove Gate, a hedgerow loss of approximately 25m is anticipated.

Application of the mitigation hierarchy.

- 3.3.3 A minimum of 3.4ha of the existing woodland will be retained within the scheme design and enhanced to ensure at least no net loss of woodland habitat types. In this assessment, this area of retained woodland is defined as that outside a 20m buffer from the proposed solar array area.
- 3.3.4 Considering all these impacts and mitigation measures, Table 3 below highlights the habitat and hedgerow BUs required through habitat creation and enhancement measures to reach no net loss and then 10% net gain.

TABLE 3: Impact of the proposed scheme and requirement to achieve 10% net gain.

BU Type	Proposed scheme impact (i.e., habitat creation/enhancement to achieve no net loss) (BU)	Habitat creation/enhancement to achieve 10% net gain (BU)
Habitat	32.08	35.44
Hedgerow	0.34	0.40

3.4 SUMMARY OF HABITAT CREATION AND ENHANCEMENT MEASURES

- 3.4.1 All identified habitat creation and enhancement opportunities to seek measurable net gain for each habitat and hedgerow type are summarised in Table 4 below. Detailed management prescriptions to achieve the desired habitat and hedgerow types and conditions will be provided as part of a Biodiversity Net Gain Management and Monitoring Plan (BNGMMP).

TABLE 4: Summary of habitat and hedgerow creation and enhancement measures.

Habitat/Hedgerow Type (Target Condition)	Summary of creation and enhancement measures
Cereal crops (N/A).	Comprising the arable crop element of the agroforestry. No specific management is required.
Other neutral grassland (Moderate).	<p>Wildflower grassland will be established and managed throughout the development.</p> <p>Appropriate ground preparation will be employed, then seeded dependent on the anticipated growing conditions and future management, comprising:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Around the surface water attenuation, seasonal ponds and south of the R&D and assembly buildings, a wildflower meadow mix appropriate for the local soil characteristics, such as Emorsgate Seeds Meadow Mixture for Loamy Soils EM5 or Emorsgate Seeds Special General-Purpose Meadow Mixture EM3. 2. Within the surface water attenuation, dependant on duration, seasonality, volume and frequency of saturation, a wetland meadow mixture, such as Emorsgate Meadow Mixture for Wetlands EM8 or Naturescape Wetland Meadow Mixture N7. 3. Associated with the greenspace amongst the built-environment, a wildflower mix suitable for more regular management will be utilised, such as Emorsgate Flowering Lawn Mixture EL1 or Naturescape Flowering Lawn Mixture N14. 4. Around the agroforestry provision, in areas where a late-summer cut and annual cultivation can/will be undertaken, a seed mix comprising a range of annual wildflowers, such as Emorsgate Special Cornfield Mixture EC2 or Naturescape Special Cornfield Annuals Mix NCA2. 5. Within the solar array, 50:50 of a wildflower mix suitable for more regular management (as above 3) and a shade-tolerant mix of species, such as Emorsgate Hedgerow Mixture EH1 or Naturescape Hedgerow Meadow Mixture N9 will be utilised. If management is by cutting, the front edge of panels can be managed more regularly to a height of no less than 50mm to avoid the vegetation shading the solar panels, as required.
Modified grassland (Poor).	Comprising grassland to be utilised as a 'trials area' for agricultural machinery. No specific management is required.
Mixed scrub (Moderate).	Mixed scrub will be planted in blocks throughout the built-environment of the development. This must comprise a minimum of three native species with no one species comprising more than 70% of the scrub. Species could include but is not limited to hawthorn <i>Crataegus monogyna</i> , hazel <i>Corylus avellana</i> , elder <i>Sambucus nigra</i> , field rose <i>Rosa canina</i> , dogwood <i>Cornus sanguinea</i> and wayfaring tree <i>Viburnum lantana</i> .
Ponds (non-priority habitat) (Moderate).	<p>A waterbody will be created within the built-environment of the development. If required, this will be lined to ensure permanence of water. This will also be planted-up with a diverse range of marginal, emergent and aquatic plants.</p> <p>A series of five seasonal ponds will also be created along the south edge of a new broadleaved woodland towards the northeast of the Site. These will be dug to an appropriate depth and not lined. These will be left to colonise naturally based on their hydrological regime and managed accordingly.</p>
Developed land; sealed surface (N/A).	One of the main components of the scheme design will be the built environment, comprising of R&D and assembly buildings, road and path networks and car parking allocation. No specific management is required.

Habitat/Hedgerow Type (Target Condition)	Summary of creation and enhancement measures
Other woodland; broadleaved (Moderate).	<p>The northern boundary of the Site is to be planted with a native species-rich woodland. Along the narrower western half and along the northern edge, small trees and shrubs will be used, with larger trees along the southern part of the wider eastern half of the woodland. This will integrate the planting better with the built-environment of the scheme, as well as provide a sensitive design to limit shading on off-Site boundary drain features.</p> <p>An area of the existing woodland will be retained, separating the proposed solar array from the agroforestry. This will be enhanced through selective felling of willow scrub over a period of a few years and planting of a similar range of tree species as to be planted along the northern boundary.</p>
Urban tree (Moderate).	Urban tree planting will be a frequent feature around the built-environment of the development. These will comprise native, locally-appropriate species. A landscaping plan will detail the appropriate species to be planted based on their anticipated size and the surround development features.
Species-rich native hedgerow (Good).	The southern boundary presents opportunity for hedgerow planting, which, together with providing biodiversity benefit, would also provide visual screening to the solar array. This will be planted with at least five woody species per 30m of length. Appropriate species could include hawthorn, hazel, field maple <i>Acer campestre</i> , elder, blackthorn <i>Prunus spinosa</i> and wild privet <i>Ligustrum vulgare</i> . A landscaping plan will determine the required size of stock at planting.
Line of trees (Poor).	Comprising the trees associated with the agroforestry. These have been awarded a 'Poor' condition due to uncertainty of the species composition and their future management. No specific management is required.

3.5 BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN OUTCOME OF THE PROPOSED SCHEME

3.5.1 The target condition for each habitat and hedgerow type following the habitat creation and enhancement measures presented in Table 4, together with the number of BUs delivered by each, are detailed in Tables 5 and 6 below and illustrated on Figure 2.

TABLE 5: Summary post-intervention scenario of on-Site habitats and their contributing values.

Broad Habitat Category	Habitat Type	Condition	Area (ha)	Habitat BU
Cropland	Cereal crop	N/A	3.0265	5.84
Grassland	Other neutral grassland	Moderate	2.8791	21.20
	Modified grassland	Poor	0.6869	1.33
Heathland and shrub	Mixed scrub	Moderate	0.1689	1.24
Lakes	Ponds (non-priority habitat)	Moderate	0.0463	0.37
Urban	Developed land; sealed surface	N/A	1.6136	0.00
Woodland and forest	Other woodland; broadleaved	Moderate	1.0493	5.97

Broad Habitat Category	Habitat Type	Condition	Area (ha)	Habitat BU
Individual trees	Urban tree	Moderate	0.0936	0.31
Total			9.47*	36.26

*Excluding the area of Urban tree.

TABLE 6: Summary post-intervention scenario of on-Site hedgerows and their contributing values.

Broad Habitat Category	Hedgerow Type	Condition	Length (km)	Hedgerow BU
Hedgerow	Species-rich native hedgerow	Good	0.0197	0.27
	Native hedgerow - associated with bank or ditch	Good	0.3014	2.59
	Line of trees	Poor	1.0696	1.97
Total			1.39	4.84

4 CONCLUSIONS

4.1 BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN OUTCOME OF THE PROPOSED SCHEME

- 4.1.1 The scheme as detailed in this Plan will deliver a net unit change of 2.93BU for habitats and 4.22BU for hedgerows, resulting in a net gain of 8.80% and 685.64% respectively.

4.2 NEXT STEPS

- 4.2.1 A BNGMMP will be submitted to the Local Planning Authority (LPA) for approval following successful granting of planning permission. Monitoring intervals are to be agreed with the LPA but a typical schedule for a medium sized habitat creation project might result in reports in years 2, 5, 10, 20 and 30.

5 REFERENCES

- BRE, 2014. Biodiversity Guidance for Solar Developments. Eds G E Parker and L Greene.
- CIEEM, 2021. Biodiversity Net Gain Report & Audit Templates. Version 1. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.
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- H S Ecology, 2023. Preliminary Ecological Appraisal: Land East of Holbeach Drove Gate, Holbeach Drove, Lincolnshire. Robert Doughty Consultancy Limited.
- Robert Doughty Consultancy, 2023. Proposed Site Plan (Job No. 1411-3; Drawing No. 1411-3_PL_SP03 A). Land east of Holbeach Drove Gate, Holbeach Drove, Holbeach. G. Sly Holdings Ltd.

Robert Doughty Consultancy, 2024. Solar PV Detail (Job No. 1411-3; Drawing No. 1411-3_SK_DD01). Land east of Holbeach Drove Gate, Holbeach Drove, Holbeach. G. Sly Holdings Ltd.

Defra, 2023. The Statutory Biodiversity Metric: draft user guide.

The South East Lincolnshire Local Plan, adopted March 2019.

KEY

- Site boundary
- Native hedgerow - associated with bank or ditch
- Other neutral grassland / Modified grassland (55:45)
- Mixed scrub
- Ponds (non-priority habitat)
- Developed land; sealed surface
- Other coniferous woodland
- Other woodland; broadleaved

0 50 100 m
1:1,500



SITE NAME:
**Land off Holbeach Drove Gate,
Holbeach Drove, Spalding.**

DRAWING TITLE:
Biodiversity Net Gain baseline.

Figure 1
Dwg no.: ES148-L263-002 Date: Jan 2024

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KEY

- Site boundary
- Species-rich native hedgerow
- Native hedgerow - associated with bank or ditch
- Line of trees
- Surface water attenuation
- Cereal crops
- Modified grassland
- Other neutral grassland
- Other neutral grassland (Solar array)
- Mixed scrub
- Ponds (non-priority habitat)
- Developed land; sealed surface (Buildings)
- Developed land; sealed surface
- Urban tree
- Other woodland; broadleaved

SITE NAME:
**Land off Holbeach Drove Gate,
Holbeach Drove, Spalding.**

DRAWING TITLE:
**Biodiversity Net Gain
post-intervention.**

Figure 2
Dwg no.: ES148-L263-003 Date: Jan 2024



APPENDIX 1

SCHEDULE OF BNG BASELINE HABITATS AND HEDGEROWS

Parcel No.	Habitat Type (Condition)	Area (ha)/ Length (km)	BU	Criteria met	Description
1	Other woodland; Broadleaved (Poor)	1.3427	5.91	24 of 39: A (1), B (3), C (3), D (1), E (3), F (3), G (1), H (3), I (1), J (1), K (1), L (1), M (2).	Monoculture of similarly aged fairly young willow with limited/no understorey vegetation.
2	Other coniferous woodland (Poor)	0.0118	0.02	22 of 39: A (1), B (3), C (3), D (1), E (1), F (3), G (1), H (3), I (1), J (1), K (1), L (1), M (2).	Monoculture of similarly aged fairly young non-native species (Leyland cypress <i>Cupressus × leylandii</i>) with limited/no understorey vegetation.
3	Other coniferous woodland (Poor)	0.0345	0.07	22 of 39: A (1), B (3), C (3), D (1), E (1), F (3), G (1), H (3), I (1), J (1), K (1), L (1), M (2).	Monoculture of similarly aged fairly young non-native species (Leyland cypress) with limited/no understorey vegetation.
4	Mixed scrub (Moderate)	0.0494	0.43	3 of 5: A, C and D.	Native range of shrub with semi-natural habitat surrounding. Assumed to meet Criterion A and 'Moderate' condition.
5	Mixed scrub (Moderate)	0.0387	0.34	3 of 5: A, C and D.	Native range of shrub with semi-natural habitat surrounding. Assumed to meet Criterion A and 'Moderate' condition.
6	Ponds (non-priority habitat) (Poor)	0.0013	0.01	4 of 9: D, E, F, and G.	Waterbodies appear quite small and stagnant, likely poor water quality and eutrophication with much algae. Minimal/no aquatic vegetation present. Much scrub surrounding pond.
7	Ponds (non-priority habitat) (Poor)	0.0013	0.01	5 of 9: D, E, F, G and I.	Waterbodies appear quite small and stagnant, likely poor water quality and eutrophication with much algae. Minimal/no aquatic vegetation present.
8	Ponds (non-priority habitat) (Poor)	0.0144	0.06	5 of 9: D, E, F, G and I.	Waterbodies appear quite small and stagnant, likely poor water quality and eutrophication. Minimal/no aquatic vegetation present.
9	Ponds (non-priority habitat) (Poor)	0.0013	0.01	5 of 9: D, E, F, G and I.	Waterbodies appear quite small and stagnant, likely poor water quality and eutrophication with much algae. Minimal/no aquatic vegetation present.
10	Ponds (non-priority habitat) (Poor)	0.0013	0.01	5 of 9: D, E, F, G and I.	Waterbodies appear quite small and stagnant, likely poor water quality and eutrophication with much algae. Minimal/no aquatic vegetation present.
11	Developed land; sealed surface (N/A)	0.002	0.00	N/A	Hardstanding at site access.

Parcel No.	Habitat Type (Condition)	Area (ha)/ Length (km)	BU	Criteria met	Description
12	Modified grassland (Poor)	3.5878	7.18	4 of 7: C, D, F and G.	Likely species-poor and as such failing essential Criterion A for 'Moderate' or 'Good' condition. Scattered scrub throughout but accounts for less than 20% of total area.
13	Other neutral grassland (Poor)	4.3851	19.29	2 of 6: A and D.	With a lack of management and considering past use of the Site, the sward is likely homogenous in structure, of limited species-diversity, and comprises of much 'species indicative of suboptimal condition'. Scattered scrub throughout but accounts for less than 5% of total area.
H1	Native hedgerow - associated with bank or ditch (Good)	0.0446	0.62	A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, D1, D2.	Appears to be a continuous hedgerow with no evident signs of damage. May suffer from plants indicative of nutrient enriched soils within ground cover.