Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust

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RESPONSE TO H22-0466-26: Construction of the new Air Insulated Substation (AIS) - 400kV Weston Marsh Substation A, associated landscaping and environmental mitigation works, drainage, highways and other associated works at Land in the Vicinity of Spalding, Tee-Point, Surfleet Seas End and Moulton Seas End, Spalding.

Dear Joe O'Sullivan,

Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust wishes to make the following **comments** regarding this application.

We are facing a climate emergency, and one of The Wildlife Trust's primary strategic goals is to tackle this crisis. We are therefore, in principle, supportive of the need to increase infrastructure for renewable energy generation and transmission. However, this needs to be balanced against the need to minimise and compensate for impacts on biodiversity. We would have preferred to see this development included as part of the Development Consent Order (DCO) application for the wider Weston Marsh to East Leicestershire Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP), but we understand the need for the substation to support the Outer Dowsing project which has already been granted a DCO. The application, and the detail of information required, should therefore be considered within the context of the wider NSIP development.

Several protected species surveys are still to be completed within the coming months, such as vole and otter surveys of watercourse that were awaiting access permission, ground level tree assessment (GLTA) to assess bat roosting potential, and a habitat suitability assessment (HSI) of several ponds. Paragraph 99 of ODPM Circular 06/2005 : Biodiversity and Geological Conservation – Statutory Obligations and Their Impact Within the Planning System states that: "*It is essential that the presence or otherwise of protected species, and the extent that they may be affected by the proposed development, is established before the planning permission is granted, otherwise all relevant material considerations may not have been addressed in making the decision. The need to ensure ecological surveys are carried out should therefore only be left to coverage under planning conditions in exceptional circumstances, with the result that the surveys are carried out after planning permission has been granted. However, bearing in mind the delay and cost that may be involved, developers should not be required to undertake surveys for protected species unless there is a reasonable likelihood of the species being present and affected by the development. Where this is the case, the survey should be completed and any necessary measures to protect the species should be in place, through conditions and/or planning obligations, before the permission is granted. In appropriate circumstances the*

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permission may also impose a condition preventing the development from proceeding without the prior acquisition of a licence under the procedure set out in section C below." This illustrates that protected species surveys need to be completed before planning permission is granted.

Skylark mitigation has been proposed, with the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) stating that two skylark territories were identified within the works boundary during surveys, which will be offset by compensatory habitat. However, the table in Appendix A Breeding bird survey results 2024 – 2025, within the Breeding Bird Survey Report, states that eight skylark territories were observed in both the 2024 and 2025 surveys. Clarification is required on the number of skylark territories on site, and further details of how the mitigation area will offset the losses.

The Design and Access Statement asserts that "*The Substation Works would require 7 no. temporary watercourse crossings (including drains and ditches).*" However, crossings are not mentioned in the Otter and Water Vole Survey Report, and the Habitats Regulations Assessment Stage 1 Screening Report states that "*the Scheme will not deliver any temporary watercourse crossings to facilitate the movement of construction plant, equipment and personnel throughout construction areas.*" We would like some clarification on the locations of the watercourse crossings, and how these may impact otter and water vole. In addition to this, we request that the proposed watercourse diversion is designed with nature in mind. The Indicative Landscape & Ecological Mitigation Proposals show that Emorsgate EG1 - General Purpose Meadow Grass Mixture or similar will be used for the grassland alongside the new watercourse. However, a riparian seed mix of local provenance should be used, and we would be happy to advise on the best way to create this and other habitats in a way that is most beneficial to local wildlife.

The Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Metric shows a high strategic significance multiplier applied to the created woodland habitat, however the site is not within a mapped area for a woodland-associated action of the draft Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) for Greater Lincolnshire. The Biodiversity Metric User Guide, in reference to high strategic significance, states that: "*This category can only be applied to post development interventions when:*

- *The location of the habitat parcel has been mapped in the Local Habitat Map as an area where a potential measure has been proposed to help deliver the priorities of that LNRS; and*
- *The proposed intervention is consistent with the mapped potential measure in the LNRS for the habitat parcel*".

The created woodland habitat should therefore not have a strategic significance multiplier applied. We understand that it is not feasible to achieve a 10% BNG on site, however we would still like to see the project deliver for local biodiversity. Please continue to discuss with Green Investment in Greater Lincolnshire (GIGL) the best ways to achieve off-site BNG offsetting in a way that is most beneficial for wildlife within the local area.

The Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust hopes these comments are helpful at this stage and welcomes further discussion relating to the points covered. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any queries or need clarification regarding the comments provided.

Yours sincerely,



Louisa Williams
Conservation Officer