

Biodiversity management plan for proposed solar farm

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Background

The client wished to install a 250kW solar array with associated infra structure at a site in Bedfordshire comprising arable fields, semi-improved neutral grassland and hedgerows along the boundaries.

An ecological appraisal was required to inform the planning application. There was suitable habitat for breeding birds, great crested newt, reptiles, bats and water voles.

Solution

MKA Ecology undertook a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and protected species scoping survey to determine the potential ecological impacts of the solar array. Suitable habitat was available for great crested newt and reptiles, but their presence was considered unlikely. It was proposed that these potential constraints could be managed carefully during construction without the need for further surveys.

A Biodiversity Management Plan was created. The overarching aim was to minimise the impact of construction works and to deliver targeted biodiversity gains. Vegetation was cleared under an ecological watching brief to ensure no accidental killing or injuring of amphibians and reptiles. Ground was left clear of crops from the autumn preceding construction to avoid colonisation by ground nesting birds. Long term enhancements included woodland planting, new grassland and hedgerows. Mammal gates were fitted on the security fencing to allow free movement of these species.

The effect was a net increase in suitable breeding and foraging habitats for birds, great crested newt, reptiles, bats and other mammals at the site.

Outcome

Efficient and effective delivery of our services, combined with creative, cost-effective solutions, meant that the client could factor the ecological requirements on site into the project, minimising delay and cost and enabling sustainable development.



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