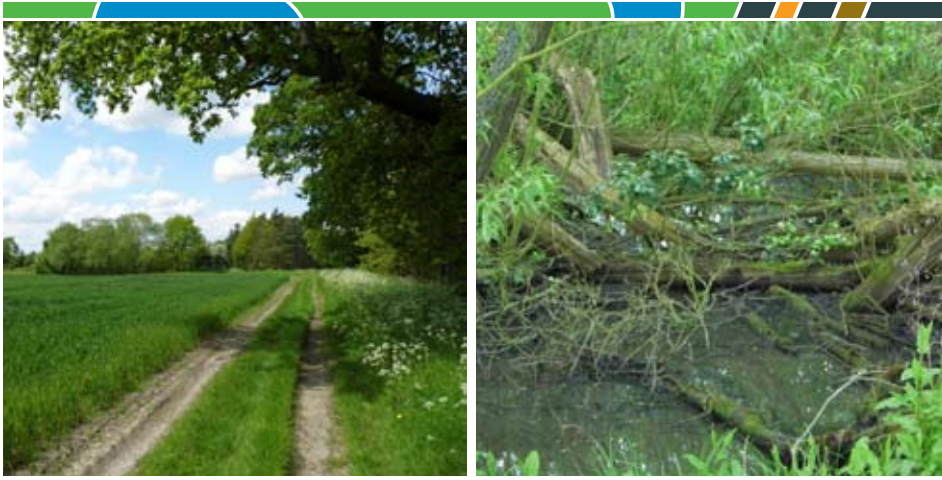




HABITAT & PROTECTED SPECIES SURVEYS FOR A
PROPOSED GROUND-MOUNTED SOLAR ARRAY IN
SOUTH OXFORDSHIRE



Rough grassland field margin

Woodland pond near to site boundary

BRIEF

In early 2014 we were instructed to undertake an Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey for a c.50ha greenfield site proposed for a ground-mounted solar array with generating capacity of up to 25MW. Land within the site boundaries was predominantly under arable cultivation, but also included areas of rough grassland and a network of ditches, hedgerows and linear woodlands. Five ponds were present within 500m of the proposal site, including one pond within 20m, and we recommended that surveys should be carried out to establish whether the ponds were used by Great Crested Newts for breeding.

APPROACH

The following techniques were applied:

- Egg searches - submerged vegetation was checked for folded leaves
- Dusk torchlight surveys - searching for newts using high-powered torches
- Bottle-trapping - traps placed around the pond edges in the evenings and checked the following mornings for great crested newts

OUTCOME

No Great Crested Newts were recorded and there was considered to be a negligible risk of impacts to this species. The Phase 1 report nonetheless set out a range of recommendations to reduce wider ecological impacts, including:

- Security fencing design to ensure site permeability to mammals
- Precautionary working methods to avoid impacts to reptiles
- Standard construction phase mitigation measures to prevent impacts to trees, nesting birds, mammals, and ecological light pollution
- Habitat creation, including: wildflower meadow planting; nectar-bearing climbers on the security fence; native species hedgerow enhancement; hibernacula for amphibians, invertebrates and reptiles; and a Biodiversity Management Plan for ongoing site maintenance.

The site subsequently received planning permission and the installation is due to come on line in spring 2015.

PROJECT

Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey and Great Crested Newt Surveys for a proposed ground-mounted solar array in South Oxfordshire

DATE OF INSTRUCTION

March 2014

LOCATION

South Oxfordshire, UK

CLIENT

Renewable energy developer



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