



Great Harmeston Solar Farm Environmental Statement

Technical Appendix 7.8

Skylark Mitigation Strategy



Skylark Mitigation Strategy



Great Harmeston Solar Farm

10th March 2026



**Tyler
Grange**

TG Report No. 16720_R08a_Skylark Mitigation Report_JM_10032026

Project No:	Report No.	Date	Revision
16720	R08	10 th March 2026	A

Author	Checked	Approved
Jasmine Mackintosh BSc (Hons) MSc	Jessica Whittaker BSc (Hons) MSc	Rachel Chatting BSc MSc MCIEEM



Contents:

Section 1: Introduction	1
Section 2: Estimate of Skylark Territories and Impacts	3
Section 3: Skylark Mitigation	4
Appendix 1: Skylark Territory Results (ref: 16720/P03)	6
Appendix 2: Landscape Masterplan (ref: P24-1037_EN_14)	7



Section 1: Introduction

- 1.1. This Skylark *Alauda arvensis* Mitigation Strategy has been prepared by Tyler Grange Group Ltd (TG) on behalf of ASUK HoldCo4 Ltd. (Arise Renewable Energy UK Ltd.) (“the applicant”), and relates to the Proposed Development at Great Harmeston Solar Farm, Pembrokeshire, SA62 3HL (the ‘Site’). This includes the installation and operation of ground mounted solar photovoltaic arrays (with a capacity of up to 65MWac) together with all associated work, equipment, infrastructure and onsite point of connection via underground cable.



Figure 1.1: Site Red Line Boundary (© Google Aerial Imagery)

Site Context and Results of Surveys

- 1.2. The boundary of the Proposed Development extends to approximately 128 ha across a number of land parcels and is segregated by two ‘A’ roads and a railway line.
- 1.3. UK Habitat surveys, initially undertaken by Hazel Murrells and Vicky King-Cline in October 2024 and updated by Danielle Fry in April 2025, identified habitats including arable and improved grassland fields, marshy grassland, neutral grassland, broadleaved woodland, ponds and boundary features including a ditch, hedgerows, and hedgerows with trees.
- 1.4. Whilst not optimal due to existing land use for cattle grazing and arable farming practices, those of value for breeding skylark, and therefore the basis for undertaking further breeding bird surveys, included the open modified grassland, neutral grassland, marshy grassland and arable fields (for further information see Breeding Bird Survey and Results – Appendix 7.7). Examples of these were also present within adjacent fields, outside of the red line boundary.



- 1.5. Skylarks are birds of open landscapes, commonly found on heathland, moorland, meadows, grassland, and along the edges of marshes and dunes¹. They are especially closely linked with farmland which, due to its vast extent within the UK, supports most of the skylark population in western Europe, even though some crop types hold relatively low densities. Their breeding season runs from late March or early April through to July or August. Adult skylarks feed on a mixture of invertebrates, seeds, and green plant material, while their chicks feed almost entirely on invertebrates.
- 1.6. Breeding bird surveys carried out between April and July 2024 found 13 probable breeding skylark territories onsite and 10 probable territories offsite. Full results and methodology are detailed within the Breeding Bird Survey Results report (report reference: **16720_R02**). Other ground-nesting bird species such as lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* and yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella* have been historically recorded within 2 km of the Site. The skylark mitigation measures within this report, whilst not specifically considered for these species, are likely to be appropriate for these species.
- 1.7. Although recent literature has been published that state solar farms can provide a notable benefit to skylark chick survival for birds nesting off-site but close to the array due to the higher quality foraging habitat that is created post-development², it is unlikely that they will utilise the same fields that are to be lost due to the vertical nature of solar development. Therefore, to prevent long-term adverse effects on the conservation of skylark, a mitigation strategy comprising onsite mitigation for skylark has been developed, as presented within this report.
- 1.8. Measures to minimise impacts to nesting birds within the site during construction will be included within the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP): Biodiversity and are expected to be submitted alongside the Environmental Statement (ES) Chapter 7 (Ecology).

Conservation Objectives

- 1.9. Skylarks are classified in the UK as Red under the Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC)³ and are a Species of Principle Importance⁴. Also considered under the NERC Act 2006 (Priority habitats and species).

¹ Fischer J., Jenny M. & Jenni L. (2009) Suitability of patches and in-field strips for skylarks *Alauda arvensis* in a small parcelled mixed farming area. *Bird Study*, 56, 34-42.

² Avian Ecology (2025) Solar Energy UK Position Statement: Solar Farms and Skylarks. Draft 1.

³ The Bird Species of Conservation Concern (BoCC) categorises bird species into the following classifications:

- A. Red List species are bird species of high conservation concern, such as those whose population or range is rapidly declining, recently or historically, and those of global conservation concern.
- B. Amber List species are bird species of medium conservation concern, such as those whose population is in moderate decline, rare breeders, internationally important and localised species, and those of unfavourable conservation status in Europe.

Green List species are bird species in the least critical group of conservation concern, such as those that occur regularly in the UK but do not qualify under any of the above criteria.

⁴ Under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006



Section 2: Estimate of Skylark Territories and Impacts

- 2.1. Four breeding bird surveys were undertaken between April and July 2024 with five walked transects per visit. Survey visits were undertaken by a suitably qualified ecologist experienced in undertaking bird surveys. The method used was based on territory mapping methodology in accordance with published guidance⁵. Full methodology and results are detailed within the Breeding Bird Survey Results report (report reference: **16720_R02**).
- 2.2. The surveys found 13 probable breeding skylark territories onsite and 10 probable territories offsite (see **Appendix 1** for territory plan). The territories found showed affinity to the open arable and improved grassland fields (all onsite fields bar F1 and F33-39). Those observed offsite were predominantly located in arable fields with just four observations located within grassland fields.
- 2.3. Site survey results are likely to vary from year-to-year dependent on crop cultivation⁶ and field utilisation. The current crop schedule consists of winter wheat, potatoes, spring barley, swedes, and grass. Silage cuts are due to be undertaken three times within the 2026 season, these being in early June, early August, and late September or early October.
- 2.4. The installation of the solar array across the arable and pasture fields will lead to a loss of suitable nesting habitat for skylarks. This species avoids placing their nests in locations overlooked by tall features including both natural elements like woodland, mature trees, and high hedgerows, and artificial structures such as buildings and, in this case, rows of solar panels. This behaviour is linked to their strategy for avoiding predators, as elevated structures can hide ground predators or act as vantage points for birds of prey⁷. Current evidence suggests that although skylarks are unlikely to nest beneath solar panels, they may still use the grassland between the arrays for foraging⁸.
- 2.5. Therefore, to compensate for the nesting deterrent effect of the proposed structures, habitat enhancements are set out in the below section. These are targeted at increasing the local potential of these habitats to support increased densities of nesting territories.

⁵ Gilbert, G., Gibbons, D.W., & Evans, J. (1998) *Bird Monitoring Methods: A Manual of Techniques for UK Key Species*. The Royal Society for the protection of Birds, Sandy, Bedfordshire, England.

⁶ Donald P. F and Vickery J. A (2000) The importance of cereal fields to breeding and wintering Skylarks *Alauda arvensis* in the UK, [Online]: <https://bou.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/LFB-1-14-Donald-Vickery.pdf> [Accessed: 08/02/2026]

⁷ Donald, P. F., Green, R. E., & Heath, M. F. (2001). Agricultural intensification and the collapse of Europe's farmland bird populations. *Proceedings of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences*, 268(1462), 25–29.

⁸ Shotton, H. (2018). Solar farms and biodiversity: A review of ecological evidence. Solar Energy UK.



Section 3: Skylark Mitigation

Onsite Compensation Measures

- 3.1. As per the Countryside Stewardship management practices as set out in AB4: Skylark Plots⁹, there should be an assumed density of at least two territories to every hectare. Therefore, to compensate for the 13 territories lost, a minimum of 6.5 ha of suitable nesting habitat is required.
- 3.2. All fields proposed for habitat management and enhancement to encourage nesting skylark are currently modified grassland (F1, F5, F11, F34, and F39) bar one which is currently arable (F33). The areas of these field total c. 12.3 ha, nearly twice the required enhancement area.
- 3.3. All areas of grassland within the site boundary that are not to be panelled will be used for skylark mitigation, the areas underneath the panels will also be enhanced however this will be for foraging habitat rather than nesting. Currently, these areas comprise of modified grassland and arable fields, however they will be managed post-development to enhance their suitability for foraging skylark.
- 3.4. Typical meadow management will be implemented, involving an annual cut in summer and a subsequent cut in the autumn if necessary. The grassland should not be cut between early April and late May to avoid damage to or destruction of skylark nests, subsequent cuts must be at least seven weeks apart to enable success of later nests. This cutting schedule will encourage the grassland to develop tussocky swards. The resulting structural diversity of the grassland will encourage invertebrate assemblages, providing foraging opportunities for skylark and other ground nesting species.
- 3.5. Following any cuts, arisings are to be promptly removed to prevent the build-up of nutrients. This will help prevent weeds from outcompeting more valuable flora species, promoting species diversity within the habitat.

In total there will be c. 12.3 ha available across fields F1, F5, F11, F29, F33, F34, and F39 for nesting compensation for the lost territories (see Appendix 2 – Landscape Masterplan), assuming 2 territories are present in each hectare, this is a ratio of 1.89:1 based on the lost territories. The creation and appropriate management of new foraging areas, and the addition of the new nesting habitat, are expected to compensate for the loss of the 13 onsite probable territories.

Persons Responsible

- 3.6. The owner of the mitigation areas will be responsible for implementing the plan as per agreement with the operator and the operator will be responsible for the funding the implementation of the plan for the long-term.

⁹ Natural England (2022) Ab4: Skylark Plots, [Online]: <https://www.gov.uk/countryside-stewardship-grants/skylark-plots-ab4> [Accessed: 08/02/2026]



- 3.7. Any deviation of the plan will be remediated by the owner as per the agreement with the operator and agreed with the local planning authority.



Appendix 1: Skylark Territory Results (ref: 16720/P03a)



Legend

- Redline boundary
- Skylark Visit 1
- Skylarks Visit 2
- Skylarks Visit 3
- Skylarks Visit 4
- On-site skylark territories
- Off-site skylark territories



Project	Great Harmeston Solar Farm
Drawing Title	Breeding Bird Survey Results
Scale	Scale: 1:8,000
Drawing No.	16720/P02
Date	February 2026
Checked	LJ/HM



97 Icknield Street, Hockley, Birmingham, B18 6RU
T: 0121 828 4043 E: hello@tylergrange.co.uk
W: www.tylergrange.co.uk

Appendix 2: Landscape Masterplan (ref: P24-1037_EN_14)

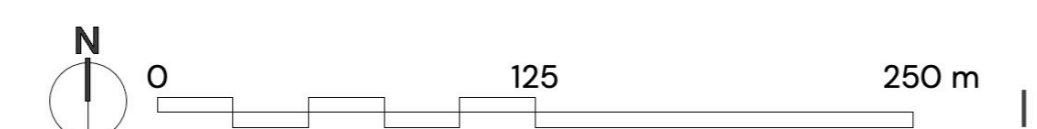




- KEY**
- Site boundary
 - Existing vegetation to be retained - Root Protection Area indicated by pink dashed line
 - Existing hedgerow to be infilled at approx. 30% infill rate
 - Existing vegetation to be removed
 - Existing overhead line
 - Grid connection route
 - Public Right of Way (PROW)
 - Bridleway
 - Existing rush pasture to be managed as skylark mitigation area
 - Proposed native tree
 - Proposed native woodland planting
 - Proposed native hedgerow planting
 - Grazing mix - ie. Emorsgate EM2 Standard General Purpose Meadow Mix, or similar
 - Tussocky grassland with wildflower - ie. Emorsgate EM10 Tussock Meadow Mix, or similar
 - Tussocky grassland with wildflower - ie. Emorsgate EM10 Tussock Meadow Mix, or similar - to be managed as potential skylark mitigation area
 - Proposed perimeter security fencing
 - Proposed solar panels
 - Proposed crushed stone access road
 - Proposed inverter / transformer
 - Proposed O&M spares and storage

All intellectual Property Rights (including but not limited to copyright) subsisting in or arising out of this drawing and the building works depicted are owned by Pegasus Blinning Group Ltd (Pegasus Group) and may not be copied, adapted, disseminated, redistributed, reproduced or otherwise used without a written license. Pegasus Group accepts no liability for any use of this drawing other than for its original purpose and by the original client, except in circumstances where approval for use has been provided by Pegasus Group in writing. Use of this drawing is subject to the terms & conditions available at pegasusgroup.co.uk. Application purposes only. Scale (or use) for construction, sales or any other purposes. Any agreement to use this drawing is subject to the terms & conditions available at pegasusgroup.co.uk.

DRAFT



GREAT HARMESTON - LANDSCAPE MASTERPLAN





Step into our world

www.tylergrange.co.uk



**Tyler
Grange**

Landscape | Ecology | **Arboriculture**