



SPRING



The ecological enhancements delivered by the proposal aim to support the Trent Valley Action Plan.



The site is specifically designed to enable sheep to graze, helping to manage the land.



Extensive new habitat created within the site can benefit rare species found locally such as willow warbler and brown hare (far left).

ENHANCING ECOLOGY

If our proposal is approved it will end the intensive agriculture, replacing the crops with a mix of native grass and wildflowers around the panels. The existing areas of woodland will be safeguarded and new woodland planted. This would provide an abundance of semi-natural habitats significantly increasing the potential for:

- A broad range of invertebrates typically associated with the field boundary habitats and also within the fields when in flower or being grazed.



Common frog.

- Common reptiles (slow worm, common lizard, grass snake).
- Amphibians such as palmate newt, smooth newt, common frog and common toad and possibly great crested newt (our surveys found evidence of this species adjacent to but not within the site).
- Farmland birds, including corn buntings, cuckoos, willow warblers and grasshopper warblers – all in the conservation risk list but that have been recorded within 2km of the site.
- A wide range of bat species foraging over the land and using potential roost features within Cawarden springs wood and adjacent farm buildings.
- Other mammals including badger, fox, deer, brown hare, hedgehog and smaller rodents. Dormouse could utilise the boundary hedgerows, offsite woodland and other arboreal habitats.



IMPROVING HYDROLOGY

Some of the most significant ecological benefits we can achieve is by reducing the impacts on the river Trent that arise from agricultural activity.

Historically, the Trent river has been one of the most polluted Rivers in Britain. Over the last two decades efforts taken to clean up the Trent have improved water quality but the job is not finished.

The 2018 Staffordshire Trent Valley Action Plan recognises that ‘Land management activities that result in the loss of phosphates, pesticides and sediment to the water environment is a major reason that water bodies are not achieving good status’

Taking the site out of intensive agriculture will dramatically reduce the run off of chemical fertilisers and pesticides into the Trent. By establishing a permanent pasture through the planting of a diverse mix of grasses and wildflowers will enable soil structure to restore and minimise the run-off of sediment into the river.

AGRICULTURE CONTINUES

The solar park can continue to be used for food production for the lifetime of the solar farm. The site is specifically design so sheep can graze the wide spaces between and underneath the panels in Autumn and Winter and the land rested in Spring and Summer so the wild flower meadow can bloom. The planning permission and the agreement made with the landowners both require the land to be returned to agricultural use at the end of the 40-year life of the park.

PROVEN TO SUPPORT WILDLIFE

A 2019 report* proves that well-designed and well-managed solar farms deliver broad benefits for British biodiversity and sustainable agriculture. Solar farms are providing a haven for rare species including moths, foraging bats, yellowhammers and grey-legged partridges when developers cultivate



800m of new hedgerow and large areas of species rich grassland provide new habitat for dormice, cuckoos, corn bunting (left) and butterflies such as the small blue (above).

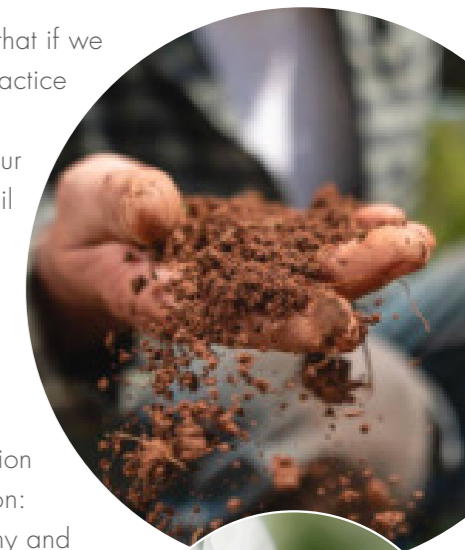
tree-rich hedgerows and some sites are recorded as hosted six times more pollinators than control sites. Other benefits include:

- Increased fruit crop pollination for orchards close to wildflower meadows
- Significantly higher plant and invertebrate diversity on sites with open drainage
- Positive impacts on wetland bird breeding when artificial wetland features are introduced

There is wide acceptance that if we continue current farming practice we are in danger of totally eradicating the fertility of our soils – if we exhaust our soil we can't grow crops.

If our project proceeds, the land will be rested from intensive agricultural use, reducing chemical inputs, restoring soil condition and replenishing soil carbon: essential for building healthy and resilient ecosystems.

And our project is fully reversible: after its operational life (40 years) all of the solar farm equipment is easily removed and the rested land will be revitalised, ready for harvest and benefit from an improved ecosystem.



* 'The Natural Capital Value of Solar' by the Solar Trade Association endorsed by the Natural Capital Coalition, the Centre for Alternative Technology and Ashden.

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