

CAPABILITY STATEMENT



Solar Energy

BSG Ecology provides specialist ecological advice for solar schemes across much of the UK. Services range from input to feasibility studies, and Phase 1 habitat surveys of small-scale / feed-in-tariff (FiT) schemes, to EIA for nationally significant infrastructure projects. We can provide advice on a proportionate approach to survey, mitigation and enhancement.

Overview

BSG Ecology provides specialist ecological advice for solar schemes across the UK. Services range from input to feasibility studies, and Phase 1 habitat surveys of small-scale / feed-in-tariff (FiT) schemes, to Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) for nationally significant infrastructure projects.

Our approach typically starts with a preliminary assessment of the ecological feasibility / risk associated with a scheme. Many small-scale solar projects have limited budgets: however, solar schemes are often proposed for agricultural land where ecological effects will typically be very limited. In these circumstances a Phase 1 habitat survey often provides an appropriate baseline for assessment.

Where a range of ecological survey is identified as being likely to be needed during initial desk study or survey, this is communicated to the developer at an early stage. This provides the developer with the option of pursuing alternative schemes if budgets are tightly constrained or if other disciplines have also identified issues and the scheme appears complex.

For large sites or those within ecologically sensitive areas, protected species survey is more regularly required, and mitigation, habitat enhancement and compensation can be used to reduce or avoid ecological effects, and in some cases deliver clear conservation gain (as is suggested in national planning policy).

Ecology Services for Solar

We have solar farm experience throughout the practice and provide support from initial high-level feasibility studies and constraints analysis, through to preparation of EclA and related planning support documents, and representation at appeal. We have supported schemes of up to 10.2MW, and many of the projects we have been involved in are now consented and/or built

Services we commonly provide include:

- Initial desk based and field-based ecological site appraisal to input to feasibility assessment;
- Extended Phase 1 habitat survey and further botanical surveys to support planning applications as necessary;
- Protected species survey and advice including appraisal of licencing requirements and (often) potential measures to avoid the need for a licence;
- Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA);
- Habitat management plans to integrate biodiversity gain with renewable energy production;
- Attendance at public consultation events and consultation and negotiation with SNCO and other stakeholders;
- Ecology constraints and opportunities mapping using GIS and working with other specialists to ensure optimal micro-siting;
- Post-consent support for discharge of conditions including protected species licences, ecological mitigation strategies and input to landscape and ecology management plans, pre-construction checks for protected species and baseline water quality monitoring by our specialist invertebrate and aquatic ecology team;
- Implementation of mitigation and impact avoidance measures including on site ecology watching brief, implementation of licenced mitigation and and pre-construction surveys and monitoring.