Dear Martin,

Many thanks for your helpful comments on our recent submission to *New Phytologist* (NPH-MS-2024-46044, “Nitrogen demand, availability, and acquisition strategy control plant responses to elevated CO2 at different scales”). I have been going through your feedback and the feedback from the first and third reviewers and find them very helpful for improving the paper framing. However, after a conversation with the co-authors (cc’ed), I wanted to bring some concerns about the second reviewer’s general comments to your attention, as we strongly suspect that they were created by an AI-generation tool.

We suspect that general comments were created by an AI-generation tool for a few reasons. First, the general comments are generic and can be applied to just about any paper, but more importantly are binned into obscure categories that often occurs when an AI text generator is asked to summarize a paper. I asked ChatGPT to summarize the abstract of one of my existing papers (DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/jxb/erab253>) and found quite similar verbiage when I asked it to evaluate the abstract using the subcategories provided by the second reviewer.

The major comments are eloquently written, yet do not offer any guidance on how to proceed with addressing these apparent major changes. This is particularly due to the fact that many of the major comments contradict themselves. For example, “the discussion adeptly connects the study's findings with broader ecological and evolutionary theories” is abruptly followed with “Yet, a more thorough comparison with conflicting or supporting studies would enrich the narrative, offering a broader perspective on the study's implications within the current scientific discourse”.

The sentence structure of the line comments are also quite dissimilar to those of the general comments. The eloquent syntax of the sentence structure in the general comments are starkly contrasted with haphazard notes in the line comments, which is puzzling and demonstrates an inconsistency in the review. We have also noticed that AI-generated text seems to replace “acclimation” with “adaptation” as the two words are often wrongly used synonymously. The review exclusively refers to our observed responses as adaptive responses.

Finally, I have run the general comments 1-5 through several AI text detectors. While I understand that there are limitations tot using AI text detectors, each detector I have used has suggested a high likelihood that the comments were generated using AI text generation tools. These findings support some of the anecdotal observations we’ve explained above.

Of course, I cannot prove without reasonable doubt that this review was completed using AI-generative text. However, the evidence is suggesting that the majority of the review was procured using such tools. My coauthors and I are proud of our work and understandably have strong concerns that our unpublished work has been placed into a language learning algorithm without our consent. We also have concerns that this review has undermined the peer review process.

To be clear, I am not writing to request that our review decision be reconsidered as we agree with many of your comments and those of the two other reviewers. After conversations with my coauthors, we agreed that it would be a good idea to bring this to your attention and more broadly to the editorial team at *New Phytologist* as we feel that the use of AI text generation tools are not an appropriate method for reviewing papers. If there is a more appropriate channel to direct these concerns, please do let me know.

Many thanks for your time and again for your helpful review.

Best,

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*On behalf of coauthors Ezinwanne Ezekannagha and Nicholas G. Smith*