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Eich Cyf/Your Ref: 2022/1119/SCR
Ein Cyf/Our Ref: DNS-CAS-01900-V0J7C7

Dyddiad/Date: 17/08/2022

To: City and County of Swansea Council
Pegasus Group – Gareth Roberts
Cadw
NRW

Town and Country Planning Act 1990
The Developments of National Significance (Procedure) (Wales) Order 2016
Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Wales) Regulations
2017

Potential DNS Application: Parc Solar Caenewydd, Gowerton

Site Address: Land fronting the A484 and Swansea Road (B4560) at Penyfodau Fawr Farm, Gowerton, Swansea SA4 4LN

Proposed Development: Construction operation, management, decommissioning of a ground mounted solar power and battery storage facility with associated development including battery storage facility, cable trench and connection infrastructure; biodiversity mitigation and enhancement measures; landscape and hedgerow mitigation and enhancement measures; temporary construction compound; and site access improvements. Operational lifespan is 40 years from date of first export.

On the 29 April 2022, Planning and Environment Decisions Wales (PEDW) received a request made under regulation 31(1) of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Wales) Regulations 2017 (“the Regulations”), for the Welsh Ministers to make a screening direction as to whether or not the development proposed is “EIA Development” within the meaning of the Regulations.

PEDW is authorised by the Welsh Ministers to provide that screening direction.

The project, as described above, falls within the description at paragraph 3(a) in column 1 of the table in Schedule 2 to the Regulations.

As the proposal is a potential Development of National Significance (DNS) application, the attached screening assessment identifies the key areas which have been considered. Having

Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth Gymraeg. Cewch ateb Cymraeg i bob gohebiaeth Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh. Correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not involve any delay

taken into account the selection criteria in Schedule 3 to the Regulations and the advice in Welsh Office Circular 11/99: Environmental Impact Assessment on establishing whether EIA is required, the assessment concludes that:

The application fronts the A484 and Swansea Road (B4560) at Gowerton, Swansea. The site is to the southwest and northwest of residential settlements, and the site is allocated as both a Green Wedge and Special Landscape Area. To the Northwest and south of the site lies two Strategic Development Areas, as allocated in the Adopted LDP. The site is within 3 km of Burry Inlet RAMSAR / Special Protection Area (SPA) site, as well as Carmarthen Bay and Estuaries Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The proposed development is for a solar farm of c. 44 MW capacity, along with associated infrastructure and battery storage facilities. Due to the topography, hedgerows and vegetation coverage, coupled with the surrounding site constraints, the impacts of the proposed development are limited in EIA terms. Initially NRW raised concerns regarding the potential for ground nesting birds in the area as little information was provided. However, upon additional information being provided by the applicant, NRW are content that the impacts generated from the proposal can be appropriately mitigated. Based on the information before me, I am led to conclude that the proposed development is not likely to cause significant environmental impacts, and an Environmental Impact Assessment is not required.

Therefore, in exercise of the powers conferred by the Regulations and the authority referred to above, the Welsh Ministers hereby direct that the development subject of this application **is not EIA development** within the meaning of the Regulations.

My opinion on the likelihood of this development having significant effects is reached for the purposes of this direction.

This letter will be copied to the City and County of Swansea Council, so that this screening direction is placed on Part 1 of the Planning Register in relation to the application in question, in accordance with the Regulations.

Yn gywir / Yours sincerely

A Wilcox

Swyddog Cynllunio | Planning Officer
Penderfyniadau Cynllunio ac Amgylchedd Cymru | Planning and Environment Decisions Wales
Llywodraeth Cymru | Welsh Government

STAGE 1 – INITIAL EIA SCREENING ASSESSMENT

1 Case Details	
A	DNS case reference CAS-01900-V0J7C7
B	Brief description of development Construction operation, management, decommissioning of a ground mounted solar power and battery storage facility with associated development including battery storage facility, cable trench and connection infrastructure; biodiversity mitigation and enhancement measures; landscape and hedgerow mitigation and enhancement measures; temporary construction compound; and site access improvements. Operational lifespan is 40 years from date of first export.
2 EIA Screening Details	
2A Schedule 1	
	Is the project Schedule 1 development as described in Schedule 1 of the EIA Regulations? No
	<i>If Yes, under which description of development? If No, consider whether project is 'Schedule 2' development below in part 2(B).</i>
2B Schedule 2	
(i)	Is the project listed as a description of development under Column 1 of Schedule 2 of the EIA Regulations? Yes
	<i>If Yes, under which description of development? If No, EIA is not required.</i>
	3(a)
(ii)	Does the project change or extend development described in paragraphs 1 to 12 of Column 1 of schedule 2, where the change or extension may have SIGNIFICANT* adverse effects on the environment? No
	<i>If Yes, provide reasons for your answer below. *If unsure, discuss with PET. Proceed to point (iii).</i>
	N/A - not a change or extension
(iii)	Is the project located wholly or partly within a ' Sensitive Area ' as defined by Regulation 2 of the EIA Regulations? No
	<i>If Yes, state which area and more to Question 3. If No, proceed to point (iv) below.</i>
(iv)	Are the applicable thresholds/criteria in Column 2 exceeded / met? Yes
	<i>If Yes, note which applicable threshold/criteria. If No, EIA is not required.</i>
	Area larger than 0.5 Ha.
3 LPA / Welsh Ministers' Screening	
(i)	Has the LPA issued a Screening Opinion (SO)? No

(ii)	Have the Welsh Ministers issued a Screening Direction (SD)?	No
4	Environmental Statement (ES)	
	Has the applicant/appellant supplied an ES for the current or previous (if reserved matters or conditions) application?	No

Is a detailed screening assessment (Section 5) required?

If Yes has been answered in response to either 2B(iii) or 2B(iv), send to relevant team to undertake detailed screening assessment.

If No has been answered for both questions, or the questions are not applicable, start appeal.

Sign-off

Signature	A Wilcox
Date	30/05/2022

STAGE 2 – DETAILED EIA SCREENING ASSESSMENT

As per Schedule 3, Para 3: When considering the potential impact, take into account; (a) magnitude / spatial extent / population likely to be affected; (b) nature of impact; (c) transboundary nature; (d) intensity & complexity; (e) probability; (f) expected onset / duration / frequency & reversibility; (g) cumulation with existing and / or approved development; (h) the possibility of effectively reducing the impact.

5	Detailed Screening Questions	
Questions to be considered	Yes/No/Unknown – provide description	For ‘Yes/Unknown’, are effects <u>likely</u> to be <u>significant</u> ? <i>Include consideration of features or measures to avoid or prevent what might otherwise be significant effects</i>
CRITERION 1. CHARACTERISTICS OF DEVELOPMENT		
Question 1(a) Size and design of the Development		
<p>Will construction, operation or decommissioning of the Project involve actions which will cause physical changes in the locality (topography, land use, changes in waterbodies, etc.)?</p>	<p>Yes. The proposed development would result in the site of 80 ha being altered from agricultural use to that of a circa 44 MW solar farm made up of PV panels and associated infrastructure. The majority of the land is classed as moderate quality agricultural land (3b) and the lifespan of the proposed scheme is up to 40 years, which after that the site would be largely restored.</p> <p>As such, whilst there would be considerable physical change to the site itself during the lifespan of the development, those factors lead me to conclude that the change would not be likely to result in significant effects in EIA terms.</p>	<p>Significant effects unlikely.</p>
Question 1(b) Cumulation with Existing and/or Approved Development		
<p>Are there any other factors which should be considered such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consequential development which could lead to environmental effects? • the potential for cumulative impacts with other existing or planned activities in the locality? • any plans for future land uses on or around the location which could be affected by the project? • transfrontier impacts? 	<p>Yes. The site is adjacent to two Strategic Development Area’s (SDA) allocated in the City and County of Swansea Local Development Plan (LDP), to the north west of the site and south. Whilst surrounded, the site is also a green wedge (policy ER 3).</p> <p>Taking this into account, coupled with the area’s topography, it is unlikely that the overall impact would be significant in EIA terms.</p>	<p>Significant effects unlikely.</p>

5	Detailed Screening Questions	
Questions to be considered	Yes/No/Unknown – provide description	For 'Yes/Unknown', are effects <u>likely</u> to be significant?
Question 1(c) Use of Natural Resources, in particular land, soil, water and biodiversity		
Will construction or operation of the Project use natural resources such as land, water, materials or energy, especially any resources which are non-renewable or in short supply?	<p>Yes, the proposal would require a degree of land take and use of natural resources during both the construction and operational stages.</p> <p>However, the land is only of medium agricultural quality and there is potential for a degree of material recycling at the end of the project's lifespan. Given the low degree of impact and the scale of the project, I am content that significant effects on natural resources are unlikely.</p>	Significant effects unlikely .
Question 1(d) Production of Waste		
Will the Project produce solid wastes during construction or operation or decommissioning?	<p>Yes, some waste would be produced during construction and, notwithstanding the potential for some recycling of materials, the decommissioning of the equipment at the end of its lifespan would result in some solid waste.</p> <p>However, given the scale and nature of the proposed development I do not consider that significant effects are likely in terms of waste generation.</p>	Significant effects unlikely .
Question 1(e) Pollution and Nuisances		
Will the Project involve use, storage, transport, handling or production of substances or materials which could be harmful to human health or the environment or raise concerns about actual or perceived risks to human health?	No.	N/A
Will the Project cause noise and vibration or release of light, heat energy or electromagnetic radiation?	<p>Yes, some noise and vibrations are likely during the construction phase, though this would be localised and time limited.</p> <p>There would also be a minimal amount of noise during the operational phase and potential for</p>	Significant effects unlikely .

5	Detailed Screening Questions	
Questions to be considered	Yes/No/Unknown – provide description	For 'Yes/Unknown', are effects <u>likely</u> to be significant?
	<p>redirection of light in terms of glint and glare via the reflective surface of the panels.</p> <p>The site is also within close proximity to Swansea Airfield. Given the proximity of the site to two SDAs, existing residential areas to the northwest and southwest, as well as Swansea Airfield, a glint and glare assessment may be required as part of any application on the site to ensure that potential impacts are minimised and mitigated, where possible.</p> <p>Whilst these will be considerations for the decision maker, given the location of the site and the nature of the impacts, I am content that any effects in terms of glint and glare and noise would be localised and unlikely to be of a magnitude that would be significant, such that they would warrant an EIA.</p>	
<p>Will the Project release pollutants or any hazardous, toxic or noxious substances to air, or lead to risks of contamination of land or water (including surface waters, groundwater, coastal waters or the sea)?</p>	<p>No.</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Question 1(f) Risk of major accidents and/or disasters relevant to the development concerned, including those caused by climate change, in accordance with scientific knowledge</p>		
<p>Will there be any risk of accidents during construction or operation of the Project which could affect human health or the environment?</p>	<p>Yes, some small risk of accident during construction, operation and decommissioning.</p> <p>Additionally, the SR notes that there will be battery storage utilised on site, however at this stage it is not clear which type of technology will be proposed. PEDW is aware of the fire risk associated with certain types of batteries such as lithium-ion and that safety measures are required in the design to minimise the risk of fire.</p>	<p>Significant effect unlikely.</p>

5	Detailed Screening Questions	
Questions to be considered	Yes/No/Unknown – provide description	For 'Yes/Unknown', are effects <u>likely</u> to be <u>significant</u> ?
	However, given the scale and type of works involved, such risks are unlikely to be significant.	
Question 1(g) Risks to Human Health (for example due to water contamination or air pollution)		
Will there be any risk to human health during the construction and/or operation of the development	Some small risk in terms of health and safety during the construction phase and routine maintenance but given the scale and nature of the works this is unlikely to be significant.	Significant effect unlikely .
CRITERION 2. LOCATION OF DEVELOPMENT		
Question 2(a) Existing and Approved Land Use		
Will the Project result in social changes, for example, in demography, traditional lifestyles, employment?	No.	N/A
Are there any routes or facilities on or around the location, which are used by the public for access to recreation or other facilities, which could be affected by the project?	Yes. There are a number of Public Rights of Way (PRoW) that are within and alongside the site, namely LC101, LC26, LC71, LC72 and CO60. There would inevitably be some visual change for users of those routes. However, given the scale of the proposed development and the localised nature of those impacts, I do not consider that they are likely to result in significant environmental effects.	Significant effect unlikely .
Are there any transport routes which are susceptible to congestion or which cause environmental problems, which could be affected by the project?	Yes. It is acknowledged that there would be impacts generated during the construction phase. The LPA response includes some information that is required for a formal Planning application to be submitted, however no overall concerns are raised by the LPA in relation to the impact of this aspect in EIA terms. I therefore do not consider that significant effects in this respect are likely.	Significant effect unlikely .
Is the project located in a previously undeveloped area where there will be loss of greenfield land?	Yes, the site is currently greenfield land in agricultural use. However, it is of moderate	Significant effect unlikely .

5		Detailed Screening Questions	
Questions to be considered	Yes/No/Unknown – provide description	For 'Yes/Unknown', are effects <u>likely</u> to be significant?	
	<p>agricultural quality and the nature of the development would be such that the land could be largely restored at the end of the scheme's lifespan. Additionally, it could continue to be used as grazing land after construction. As such, significant effects are unlikely.</p>		
<p>Are there any areas on or around the location occupied by land uses which could be affected by the project, particularly sensitive land uses e.g. hospitals, schools, places of worship, community facilities?</p>	<p>Yes. The proposal is surrounded to the north west and south west by residential land, as well as land allocated as SDA. The site is also near Westfield Industrial Park. The proposed site is also an allocated Green Wedge (ER 3) and the Garngoch and Lower Afon Llan Valley Special Landscape Area (SLA).</p> <p>However, given the type of development proposed, any impacts would not be significant in EIA terms.</p>	<p>Significant effect unlikely.</p>	
Question 2(b) Relative Abundance, Availability Quality and Regenerative Capacity of Natural Resources in the Area and its Underground			
<p>Are there any areas on or around the location which contain important, high quality or scarce resources e.g. groundwater, surface waters, forestry, agriculture, fisheries, tourism, minerals, which could be affected by the project?</p>	<p>The majority of the scheme appears to take into account woodlands, hedgerows and waterways in the vicinity and this vegetation will provide screening. However, the impact of the proposal will vary with the seasons, given the differing degrees of tree / hedgerow coverage to screen the development. For example, the north-western aspect of the site is within close proximity to the residential area of Pontybrenin. Conversely, there is a significant woodland that separates the proposed site from the residential area nearest the train station at Gowerton.</p> <p>However, the separation between the proposal and receptors is sufficient enough to state that there would not be a cumulative impact sufficient in EIA terms.</p>	<p>Significant effect unlikely.</p>	

5	Detailed Screening Questions	
Questions to be considered	Yes/No/Unknown – provide description	For 'Yes/Unknown', are effects <u>likely</u> to be significant?
Question 2(c) Absorption Capacity of the Natural Environment		
Are there any other areas on or around the location which are important or sensitive for reasons of their ecology, or are used by protected, important or sensitive species of fauna or flora, which could be affected by the project?	<p>Yes. The site is within 3 km of Burry Inlet RAMSAR / Special Protection Area (SPA) site, as well as Carmarthen Bay and Estuaries Special Area of Conservation (SAC).</p> <p>The LPA's Ecologist does not raise any concerns or comments on the information contained in the SR, other than noting that the scheme is not considered to require an EIA for ecology.</p> <p>NRW initially noted that there was insufficient information included to rule out the impact of the proposal on ground nesting birds (such as Skylark). However, upon receiving additional information relating to the presence of protected species, as well as mitigation, they are content that the potential impacts of the scheme can be appropriately mitigated.</p>	Significant effects unlikely
Are there any inland, coastal, marine or underground waters on or around the location which could be affected by the project?	Yes. The Avon Llan dissects the proposed site, and the proposal is also within 3 km of the River Loughour estuary. However, given the type of development proposed and the fact that a CEMP could be readily secured by condition, coupled with the potential scale of any impacts, I do not consider significant effects to be likely.	Significant effects unlikely
Are there any areas or features of high landscape or scenic value on or around the location which could be affected by the project?	Yes, the site is within an allocated SLA. However, given the topography and public vantage points, the proposal would not be likely to be significant in EIA terms.	Significant effect unlikely .
Is the project in a location where it is likely to be highly visible to many people?	Yes, however this will only occur in time as the SDA's are developed. As the proposal would not currently be visible to many people, coupled with a	Significant effect unlikely .

5	Detailed Screening Questions	
Questions to be considered	Yes/No/Unknown – provide description	For 'Yes/Unknown', are effects <u>likely</u> to be <u>significant</u> ?
	proposed Landscape and Ecological Enhancement Plan that is proposed to be submitted should the scheme be brought forward, I do not consider the effects to be significant in EIA terms.	
Are there any areas on or around the location which are densely populated or built-up, which could be affected by the project?	Yes, however this will only occur in time as the SDAs are developed. As the proposal would not currently be visible to many people, coupled with a proposed Landscape and Ecological Enhancement Plan that is proposed to be submitted should the scheme be brought forward, I do not consider the effects to be significant in EIA terms.	Significant effect unlikely .
Are there any areas or features of historic or cultural importance on or around the location which could be affected by the project?	There are a number of Listed Buildings and Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAM) within 3 km of the site. However, due to the topography, the location of existing buildings and vegetation, the impacts from the proposed solar farm would screen the impacts on heritage assets. Even though asset GM269 Mynydd Carn-Goch Roman Earthworks is nearby, Cadw notes that even in winter, any impact on the setting of this SAM would not be significant in EIA terms.	Significant effect unlikely .
Are there any areas on or around the location which are already subject to pollution or environmental damage e.g. where existing legal environmental standards are exceeded, which could be affected by the project?	No.	N/A
Is the project location susceptible to subsidence, landslides, erosion, flooding or extreme or adverse climatic conditions, which could cause the project to present environmental problems?	Yes. The southwestern aspect of the site falls within flood zone C2. NRW therefore advises that a Flood Consequences Assessment is produced in order to determine how the site would be managed in a flood event.	Significant effect unlikely .

5	Detailed Screening Questions	
Questions to be considered	Yes/No/Unknown – provide description	For 'Yes/Unknown', are effects <u>likely to be significant</u> ?
	Additionally, the proposal could also be designed so as to exclude this vulnerable area. As this area is relatively small, and measures could be put in place to minimise the impact of flooding, I determine that impact generated would not be significant in EIA terms.	
Has there already been a failure to meet environmental quality standards that is relevant to the project?	No.	N/A

Statement of reasons – insert into Screening Direction

The application fronts the A484 and Swansea Road (B4560) at Gowerton, Swansea. The site is to the southwest and northwest of residential settlements, and the site is allocated as both a Green Wedge and Special Landscape Area. To the Northwest and south of the site lies two Strategic Development Areas, as allocated in the Adopted LDP. The site is within 3 km of Burry Inlet RAMSAR / Special Protection Area (SPA) site, as well as Carmarthen Bay and Estuaries Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The proposed development is for a solar farm of c. 44 MW capacity, along with associated infrastructure and battery storage facilities. Due to the topography, hedgerows and vegetation coverage, coupled with the surrounding site constraints, the impacts of the proposed development are limited in EIA terms. Initially NRW raised concerns regarding the potential for ground nesting birds in the area as little information was provided. However, upon additional information being provided by the applicant, NRW are content that the impacts generated from the proposal can be appropriately mitigated. Based on the information before me, I am led to conclude that the proposed development is not likely to cause significant environmental impacts, and an Environmental Impact Assessment is not required.

6		Outcome of assessment	
(ii)	If a SO/SD has been provided do you agree with it?	No	
(iii)	Is EIA required?	No	
Outcome		Action	P
Schedule 2 development – threshold exceeded/ criterion met or Sensitive Area but not likely to have significant effects on the environment		Issue direction stating EIA NOT Required	
Name and Job Title of Assessor		A Wilcox, Planning Officer	
Date of Assessment		17/08/2022	