

Adeilad y Goron,
Parc Cathays, Caerdydd,
CF10 3NQ

Crown Buildings,
Cathays Park,
Cardiff, CF10 3NQ

Eich Cyf / Your Ref:
Ein Cyf / Our Ref: CAS-02430-B1L0D2

Ffôn / tel: 0300 123 1590

Dyddiad / Date: 23/08/2023

Ebost / email: PEDW.Infrastructure@gov.wales

Dear Francesca Wray

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: Mynydd Emroch Solar Farm
Site Address: 550 m north of the village of Goytre and 1.4 km south of the village of Cwmafan
Proposed Development: Proposed 50 MW ground mounted photovoltaic solar farm with associated equipment, infrastructure, grid connection and ancillary works.

On the 23rd June 2023 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 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 proposal is seeking to install a 50 MW solar farm with associated equipment, infrastructure, grid connection and ancillary works. The site borders an existing solar farm and is within proximity of existing and proposed wind farms. Effects on the historic landscape are considered unlikely, although Cadw notes that the proposed assessment

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of the impact on cultural heritage should be carried out to confirm that there will be no significant effects. The implementation of a Construction Environmental Management Plan secured by condition could mitigate against the potential risk of silt entering watercourses. Any potential impacts in relation to the site falling within a Coal Mining Reporting Area could be mitigated via a pre-commencement condition for a survey to identify any mine workings. Significant effects in these respects are therefore considered unlikely.

However, concerns have been raised by the LPA and NRW about the potential effects of the proposed development in relation to cumulative effects, landscape and visual impacts, glint and glare and ecology (including European Protected Species and birds protected under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act). Given the nature and location of the proposed development and based on the information currently available, it is not possible to rule out the potential for significant effects (including cumulative) in several areas, in particular landscape and visual effects, glint and glare, effects on sensitive land uses, Public Rights of Way, ecology and effects on nearby populated areas. As such, I consider that due to the potential for these significant effects, the proposal is EIA development and that consequently EIA is 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 EIA development** within the meaning of the Regulations.

Consequently, this application must be accompanied by an Environmental Statement. Under regulation 17(1) of the Regulations an Environmental Statement must contain, for the purpose of assessing the likely impact on the environment, the information specified in that regulation. It is recommended that you refer to the Regulations and the accompanying Circular, Welsh Office Circular 11/99, before and during the preparation of the Environmental Statement. In the meantime, you may wish to have regard to the particular environmental topics identified in the attached screening assessment.

This letter will be copied to Neath Port Talbot County Borough 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.

Yours sincerely

Marloes Holtkamp

Marloes Holtkamp MSc

Swyddog Cynllunio | Planning Officer

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

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STAGE 1 – INITIAL EIA SCREENING ASSESSMENT

1 Case Details	
A	DNS case reference
	CAS-02430-B1L0D2
B	Brief description of development
	Proposed 50 MW ground mounted photovoltaic solar farm with associated equipment, infrastructure, grid connection and ancillary works.
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) - Industrial installations for the production of electricity, steam and hot water
(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>
	Choose an item.
(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 move 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>
	Threshold: The area of the development exceeds 0.5 hectare. As the site covers a total area of approximately 72.3 hectares, the proposed development exceeds the threshold.

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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	Marloes Holtkamp
Date	30/06/2023

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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		
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.)?	Yes. The proposal comprises solar panels on mounting frames, inverters and transformers (housed in prefabricated containers) and associated cabling (largely below ground), deer fencing, CCTV units, temporary set down area, internal service roads and site access. A substation is proposed which will enable electricity generated on site to the distribution network. The proposed point of connection is to the overhead 132 kV line that runs over the proposal site. A new replacement pylon, located adjacent to the proposed substation, is required as part of the grid connection works. The proposed site is currently used for agricultural purposes as grazing land. The land is of poor and very poor agricultural quality (grades 4 and 5), with a linear feature included as part of the submitted Red Line Boundary passing through a small section of moderate agricultural land (grade 3b).	Significant effects unlikely .

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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> ?
	The proposed solar panel design and position will ensure the land can remain in agricultural use through grazing, although at a reduced scale. The land can also be returned to agricultural use following decommissioning. As such, whilst there would be considerable physical change to the site itself during the lifespan of the development, as the proposal is temporary in nature and is on land that is of poor agricultural quality, the effects on land use are unlikely to be significant in EIA terms.	
Question 1(b) Cumulation with Existing and/or Approved Development		
Are there any other factors which should be considered such as: • 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?	Yes. There is an existing solar farm between two of the western most parcels of the site and an existing windfarm to the south of the site. To the east of the site is the proposed DNS scheme Y Bryn wind farm (DNS 3264571). Furthermore, within and around the site are overhead powerlines and collinear antenna masts. Port Talbot Steel Works is located on the coastal plane. There are several farms in the locality and the site is located around 550 m to the north of the village of Goytre, around 1.4 km to the south of the village of Cwmafan and beyond the M4 which runs to the south-west of the site is Port Talbot which is located approximately 900 m from the site. The Screening Report states that whilst there is potential for cumulative effects with the existing solar farm, the topography and in-situ vegetation	Significant effects likely .

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Questions to be considered	Yes/No/Unknown – provide description	For 'Yes/Unknown', are effects <u>likely</u> to be <u>significant</u> ?
	reduces the likelihood of any potential impacts. However the LPA have noted that the prominent location of the proposed development is highly likely to result in a cumulative impact when considered together with the existing solar farm, as well as the addition of the pylon. Given the proposed scale and location of proposed DNS 3264571, coupled with the scale of this proposed development and the existing solar farm, I consider there is the potential for cumulative effects to be significant, including but not limited to Landscape and Visual effects, during the construction, operational and decommissioning phases. The information currently available with regards to cumulative effects is insufficient to rule out significant effects in this respect.	
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?	Yes, the development will use some resources during construction and decommissioning, but nothing which is likely in short supply. Furthermore, the land is of poor and very poor agricultural quality (grades 4 and 5), with a linear feature included as part of the submitted Red Line Boundary passing through a small section of moderate agricultural land (grade 3b). The Screening Report states that the site lies within a Minerals Safeguarding Area Category 1 Sandstone Resource. This resource would remain available following decommissioning.	Significant effects unlikely .

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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> ?
	Given the low degree of impact and the nature of the proposed development, I am content that significant effects on natural resources are unlikely.	
Question 1(d) Production of Waste		
Will the Project produce solid wastes during construction or operation or decommissioning?	Yes, waste would be produced during construction and eventual decommissioning. This could be addressed by implementing a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), to accompany the DNS application, to be secured by condition. Given this and the scale and nature of the proposed development, I do not consider that significant effects are likely in terms of waste generation.	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?	Yes, some noise and vibration are likely during construction and decommissioning, which would be localised and time limited. During the operational phase, there would be a minimal amount of noise as well as potential for redirection of light in terms of glint and glare via the reflective surface of the panels. The Screening Report notes a Glint and Glare Assessment and Noise Assessment are due to be submitted with the DNS planning application. However, as also noted by the LPA, insufficient information is provided in the Screening Report in	Significant effects likely .

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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> ?
	relation to glint and glare or mitigation required to limit any impact. Given the minimal information provided in the Screening Report, coupled with comments from consultees and the prominent location of the site, there is insufficient information provided for me to conclude that there would be no significant effect in relation to glint and glare in EIA terms.	
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)?	The Screening Report does not include information relating to the type of solar panels proposed. It is known that some solar panels have the potential to act as sources of leachable quantities of PFAS (per-and polyfluoroalkyl substances) that may enter the environment over time through general wear and tear interaction as PFAS may be used in the manufacture of solar panels. The potential impact could be mitigated against, such as regular monitoring of the site, which could be secured via condition. As outlined below, NRW have noted there could be a risk of silt entering watercourses resulting from machinery on the ground during construction. However, this could be mitigated against via robust pollution prevention measures to be outlined in a CEMP, to be secured by condition. Given the scale of the proposal, coupled with the ability for conditions to be attached to a decision that will appropriately mitigate any potential impacts, the effect of these element of the scheme are not deemed significant in EIA terms.	Significant effects unlikely .

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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> ?
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		
Will there be any risk of accidents during construction or operation of the Project which could affect human health or the environment?	Yes, there are some risks in terms of accidents during construction, operation and decommissioning, but given the scale and type of the development, this is unlikely to be significant. The site falls within a Coal Mining Reporting Area and it appears that parts of the site fall within the defined Development High Risk Area. As such it is recommended the Applicant consults the Coal Authority in relation to the proposed development. Should the planning decision maker be minded to grant permission, a survey to identify any mine workings can be required via a pre-commencement condition of the planning permission. This would avoid any potential impacts. I do not therefore consider this to be significant in EIA terms.	Significant effects unlikely .
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 proposed development this is unlikely to be significant. Furthermore, as outlined above, although it appears that parts of the site fall within the defined Development High Risk Area in relation to coal mining, should the planning decision maker be minded to grant permission, a survey to identify any such workings can be required via a pre-	Significant effects unlikely .

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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> ?
	commencement condition of the planning permission. This would avoid any potential impacts. I do not therefore consider this to be significant in EIA terms.	
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. The Screening Report notes there is a Public Right of Way (PRoW) that runs beside and through several of the proposed development areas. There would inevitably be some visual change for users of this route, and potential for cumulative effects in combination with other schemes. No further detail has been provided in relation to the stopping up of the PRoW or likely visual impacts on its users. The information currently available with regards to the effect on the PRoW is insufficient to rule out significant effects in that respect.	Significant effects likely .
Are there any transport routes which are susceptible to congestion or which cause environmental problems, which could be affected by the project?	Yes. A number of roads could be impacted by the proposed development. However, the main impact would be during the construction phase, which could be readily controlled by a Traffic Management Plan in order to limit effects on the road network. Traffic during the operational phase would be minimal. The Screening Report also states a Transport Assessment and Construction Traffic Method Statement will be provided to support the application. Given these factors, I do not consider that significant effects in this respect are likely.	Significant effects unlikely .

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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> ?
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 poor 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. As such, significant effects are considered to be unlikely.	Significant effects unlikely .
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?	Yes. The site is located around 550 m to the north of the village of Goytre and around 1.4 km to the south of the village of Cwmafan. Both locations include cemeteries. The only likely effects on these sensitive receptors are visual. As referred to below, the information currently available with regards to visual impacts is insufficient to rule out significant effects in that respect. Therefore, insufficient information is provided for me to conclude that there would be no significant effect in relation to sensitive land uses in EIA terms.	Significant effects likely .
Question 2(b) Relative Abundance, Availability Quality and Regenerative Capacity of Natural Resources in the Area and its Underground		
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?	Yes. The Screening Report states that the site lies within a Minerals Safeguarding Area Category 1 Sandstone Resource. This resource would remain available following decommissioning. Given the low degree of impact and the nature of the proposed development, I am content that significant effects on this resource are unlikely.	Significant effects unlikely .
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	Yes. The site is not located near any designated sites, but NRW have noted it is within proximity to European Protected Species records such as European Otter, Common Pipistrelle, Soprano	Significant effects likely .

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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> ?
sensitive species of fauna or flora, which could be affected by the project?	Pipistrelle, Noctule Bat, Dubenton's Bat and Hazel Dormouse. They note that insufficient information on the extent of the proposed development and the site itself has been provided to determine whether there would be a significant effect on European Protected Species. NRW also note that as no ecological information has been provided, they are unable to determine whether the proposed development would have a significant effect on birds protected under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act. Although the Screening Report states an Ecological Appraisal will be undertaken, it does not include sufficient information regarding the site's ecology or mitigation required to limit any impact. Given the minimal information provided in the Screening Report, coupled with comments from consultees, there is insufficient information provided for me to conclude that there would be no significant effects on the environment in EIA terms.	
Are there any inland, coastal, marine or underground waters on or around the location which could be affected by the project?	Yes. NRW note the site is located within proximity to local watercourses and main rivers including River Ffwrddwyllt and River Afan. As limited information has been provided on the proposed construction phase of the development, NRW recommends a CEMP is produced, which in particular should outline how the likely impacts of machinery on the ground and the resulting risk of silt entering the watercourses will be mitigated.	Significant effects unlikely .

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Questions to be considered	Yes/No/Unknown – provide description	For ‘Yes/Unknown’, are effects <u>likely</u> to be <u>significant</u> ?
	The potential impact of pollution during construction can be mitigated via pollution prevention measures within a CEMP, to accompany the DNS application, to be secured by condition. Given this, I am content that significant effects on local watercourses are 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 proposal site is designated as a Special Landscape Area. The LPA notes that the mountains are a dominant and important natural environment feature for the low-lying settlements of Port Talbot, Margam, Aberavon and Sandfields. The LPA adds that recent development has not completely erased this important feature and further development must be clearly and comprehensively justified. As outlined above, I consider there is the potential for cumulative effects to be significant, including the potential for effects on areas of high landscape or scenic value. The information currently available with regards to cumulative effects is insufficient to rule out significant effects in that respect. Therefore, insufficient information is provided for me to conclude that there would be no significant landscape effects in EIA terms.	Significant effects likely .
Is the project in a location where it is likely to be highly visible to many people?	Yes. The scheme would be visible to many people in the surrounding area. The LPA have stated that the prominent location would be visible from all of the immediate and wider surrounding communities. The LPA has also noted details of the new pylon, such as height, have not been provided.	Significant effects likely .

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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> ?
	The LPA has highlighted that some of the parcels of the proposed development area were removed from the planning application for the existing solar farm due to their highly visible nature and that small sections of the existing solar farm are already visible from the low-lying area. This highlights that there is the potential for a significant visual impact, including cumulative effects with other development. Given these considerations, the information currently available with regards to visual impacts is insufficient to rule out significant effects in this respect.	
Are there any areas on or around the location which are densely populated or built-up, which could be affected by the project?	As noted above, there are a several farms in the locality and the site is located around 550 m to the north of the village of Goytre, around 1.4 km to the south of the village of Cwmafan and beyond the M4 which runs to the south-west of the site is Port Talbot which is located approximately 900 m from the site. There is the potential for landscape and visual impacts on nearby populated areas. As referred to above, the information currently available with regards to visual impacts is insufficient to rule out significant effects in that respect. Therefore, insufficient information is provided for me to conclude that there would be no significant effects in relation to populated or built-up areas in EIA terms.	Significant effects likely .

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Questions to be considered	Yes/No/Unknown – provide description	For 'Yes/Unknown', are effects <u>likely</u> to be <u>significant</u> ?
Are there any areas or features of historic or cultural importance on or around the location which could be affected by the project?	Yes. The nearest Scheduled Monument is Pen-y-Castell Iron Age Hillfort (approx. 1 km to the north). The nearest Listed Buildings (Grade II) are Holy Cross Church (approx. 700 m south of the western edge) and Velindre Bridge (approx. 800 m south-west of the western edge). Cadw's initial appraisal is that, due to the surrounding topography, views of the proposed development will be blocked or significantly screened from all the designated historic assets located within 3 km of the proposed site and as such it is unlikely that the proposed development will have a significant impact on these settings. Cadw does however note that proposed assessment of the impact of the proposed development on Cultural Heritage should still be carried out to ensure that this appraisal is correct and that there are no unacceptable impacts on non-designated historic assets. Given these considerations, I do not consider significant effects on the historic environment to be likely.	Significant effects 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	No.	N/A

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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> ?
climatic conditions, which could cause the project to present environmental problems?		
Has there already been a failure to meet environmental quality standards that is relevant to the project?	No.	N/A

Statement of reasons

The proposal is seeking to install a 50 MW solar farm with associated equipment, infrastructure, grid connection and ancillary works. The site borders an existing solar farm and is within proximity of existing and proposed wind farms. Effects on the historic landscape are considered unlikely, although Cadw notes that the proposed assessment of the impact on cultural heritage should be carried out to confirm that there will be no significant effects. The implementation of a Construction Environmental Management Plan secured by condition could mitigate against the potential risk of silt entering watercourses. Any potential impacts in relation to the site falling within a Coal Mining Reporting Area could be mitigated via a pre-commencement condition for a survey to identify any mine workings. Significant effects in these respects are therefore considered unlikely.

However, concerns have been raised by the LPA and NRW about the potential effects of the proposed development in relation to cumulative effects, landscape and visual impacts, glint and glare and ecology (including European Protected Species and birds protected under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act). Given the nature and location of the proposed development and based on the information currently available, it is not possible to rule out the potential for significant effects (including cumulative) in several areas, in particular landscape and visual effects, glint and glare, effects on sensitive land uses, Public Rights of Way, ecology and effects on nearby populated areas. As such, I consider that due to the potential for these significant effects, the proposal is EIA development and that consequently EIA is required.

6	Outcome of assessment	
(ii)	If a SO/SD has been provided do you agree with it?	N/A
(iii)	Is EIA required?	Yes
Outcome		Action
Schedule 2 development – threshold exceeded/ criterion met or Sensitive Area and likely to have significant effects		Issue direction stating EIA Required (Letter 2)
Name and Job Title of Assessor	Marloes Holtkamp MSc Planning Officer	
Date of Assessment	07/08/2023	

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.

Appendix 1 – Consultation Responses

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.



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council

Date Dyddiad	10th July 2023
Direct line Rhif ffôn	[REDACTED]
Email Ebost	[REDACTED]
Contact Cyswllt	Nicola Lake
Your ref Eich cyf	
Our ref Ein cyf	P2023/0498

Adeline Wilcox
PEDW
Crown Buildings
Cathays Park
Cardiff
CF10 3NQ

Dear Sir/Madam

Town and Country Planning Act 1990

PROPOSAL:	Consultation Request from DNS Team - PEDW in relation to a Screening Opinion for the proposed 50MW ground mounted photovoltaic solar farm with associated equipment, infrastructure, grid connection and ancillary works.
LOCATION	Mynydd Emroch Penycae Neath Port Talbot
APPLICANTS	Adeline Wilcox
NAME/ADDR:	Crown Buildings Cathays Park Cardiff CF10 3NQ

I write regarding the consultation request in relation to the screening opinion for the above proposed DNS development.

The proposed development seeks permission for an extension to an existing solar farm rather than permission for a new solar farm. The applicant's screening report states that the site would have an area of 72.3ha across 4 parcels of land. The proposal would appear to surround the existing solar farm on three sides (to the east, south and western sides). During the course of the determination of the original planning permission some of these parcels of land were removed from the scheme due to their impact upon the visual amenity of the wider area. Any application submitted would have to consider the visual and landscape impacts associated with what would be a highly visible and prominent location which would be visible from all of the immediate and wider surrounding communities.

On the top of page 3 the screening report states "A wind farm is located on the elevated plateau to the south of the site and Port Talbot Steel Works are located in the valley which is clearly visible from the site." Port Talbot Steel Works is located on the coastal plane, not in a valley area and due to the application site's significant elevated position most development within the area would be visible from it. The mountains are very dominate features when viewed from the low lying settlements of Port Talbot,

Margam, Aberavon and Sandfields. Despite these settlements being densely developed with residential, commercial and heavy industry, the mountains are a constant reminder of the natural environment that is just a short distance away. The importance of this landscape is reflected in its designation as a Special Landscape Area. While a windfarm, an existing solar farm, telecommunications apparatus and pylons have been constructed on these mountains they remain predominantly green and undeveloped. The constant erosion of this vital function through recent development has not completely erased this important feature. However further development must clearly and comprehensively justify, rather than just dismissing their importance.

The applicants have not specified any proposed battery storage facilities within the proposal which is a little unusual but noted, however there are large number of solar farms being proposed with the Authority's area, the majority of which are proposing battery storage, which now appears to be central part to such development. The Authority would not wish to see battery storage facilities subsequently retrofitted into the development at a later date, without allowing a comprehensive assessment at this stage. While the Authority of course understands the development must be considered as submitted, perhaps some information could be provided as to why battery storage is not part of the development, to help provide clarification why it will not be added to the development at a later date.

However it is also noted that the proposed additional/new/replacement pylon has not been included within the description of development. Will this not be part of the proposed development and subject to a separate application process? There are no submitted details of the pylon such as height.

Under section b) of the Characteristics of Development it states "Whilst there is potential for cumulative effects with the existing solar farm, the topography and in-situ vegetation reduces the likelihood of any potential impacts." As stated a number of the parcels of proposed development area were removed from the planning application for the existing solar farm due to their highly visible nature. Small section of the existing solar farm are already visible from the low lying area, the addition of these more prominent location is highly likely to result in a cumulative impact when considered together with the existing solar farm, as well as the addition of a new/replacement/additional pylon. These impacts must be fully and comprehensively assessed and not dismissed.

The statement continue on to state that the land would continue to be used for albeit a reduced agricultural purpose however there is no information identifying the grade of the agricultural land to inform the potential impact of the proposed development.

In relation to statement e) of the Characteristics of Development the applicants state that "The development would not create pollution or nuisance given the nature of the equipment proposed on site". There is very little information provided to support such a sweeping statement. With no information provided in relation to the visual impacts, the impact upon biodiversity, the impact through glint and glare or the impact upon agricultural land. Similarly, no information has been provided in relation to the other plans and projects for energy generation, especially the solar developments that are currently passing through the DNS process and which are currently in the public dominate and have the potential for cumulative impacts with this proposal.

While the planning permission is seeking consent for a 40 year period there is no reason to believe that green energy would no longer be required after 40 years. Current permitted solar farms were given 25 years but are currently seeking amendments to increase these time periods.

No information has been provided in relation to site selection or site alternatives.

As such and for the reasons as set out above, the Authority would recommend that the development is considered to be EIA Development and that any application submitted should be supported through the submission of an Environmental Statement setting out the finds of the EIA.

Should you require any further assistance please contact Nicola Lake on the case officer number above.

Yours faithfully

Ceri Morris

HEAD OF PLANNING & PUBLIC PROTECTION

If you require this information in larger print, or in an alternative format, please contact the above named officer.

Ein cyf/Our Ref: CAS-221323-F3D4
Eich cyf/Your Ref: CAS-02430-B1L0D2

Adeline Wilcox
PEDW
Crown Buildings
Cathays Park
Cardiff
CF10 3NQ

Dyddiad/Date: 25 July 2023

Annwyl Adeline / Dear Adeline,

BWRIAD/PROPOSAL: SCREENING OPINION: PROPOSED 50MW GROUND MOUNTED PHOTOVOLTAIC SOLAR FARM WITH ASSOCIATED EQUIPMENT, INFRASTRUCTURE, GRID CONNECTION AND ANCILLARY WORKS.

LLEOLIAD/LOCATION: MYNYDD EMROCH, PEN-Y-CAE, PORT TALBOT.

Thank you for consulting Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru (CNC) / Natural Resources Wales (NRW) about the above, which we received on 26/06/2023.

We have considered the information provided in the report '*Request for Screening Direction – Proposed 50mw solar farm at Mynydd Emroch, Port Talbot*' by Sirius Planning dated 23rd June 2023. Based on the information provided

We consider that the proposed development is likely to have adverse effects on the environment. However, in light of the information available to us we cannot confirm the significance of these effects. We therefore cannot rule out that these effects may be significant. In the absence of further information, we consider that the proposed development has the potential to have significant environmental effects.

Our view on the likelihood of significant effect on each of the environmental interests identified by you in your consultation letter is set out below:

European Protected Species (EPS)

We note the site is within proximity to EPS records such as European Otter, Common Pipistrelle, Soprano Pipistrelle, Noctule Bat, Dubenton's Bat and Hazel Dormouse. However insufficient information on the extent of the proposed development and the site itself has been provided to determine whether there would be a significant effect on European Protected Species.

Local Watercourses

We note the site is located within proximity to local watercourses and main rivers including River Ffwrddwyllt and River Afan. Limited information has been provided on the proposed

construction phase of the development. However, given that the construction of the solar farm is likely to involve machinery on in and around the site, we would recommend that a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) is produced. In particular, this should outline how the applicant intends to mitigate the likely impacts of machinery on the ground and the resulting risk of silt entering the watercourses.

Provided robust pollution prevention measures are included within the submitted CEMP to address all risks of pollution during the construction phase, then we believe that a significant effect would be unlikely to local watercourses.

Ornithology

We note the site is not located within a close distance to any Special Protected Area (SPA) or Ramsar site. The nearest protected site is Crymlyn Bog Ramsar (approximately 9km west), however this site does not include birds as a criterion for designation. Therefore, the functional linkage between the proposed development and protected sites for birds can be ruled out.

We note that no ecological information has been provided. We are therefore unable to determine whether the proposed development would have a significant effect on birds protected under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act.

Protected Sites

The site does not appear to be located within proximity to any designated sites. We can therefore rule out any significant effects on protected sites.

Landscape

The site is not located in or near a National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Therefore, the proposed development would cause no likely significant effects on landscape.

Other Matters

Our comments above only relate specifically to matters included on our checklist, *Development Planning Advisory Service: Consultation Topics* (September 2018), which is published on our [website](#). We have not considered potential effects on other matters and do not *rule out the potential for the proposed development to affect other interests*.

We advise the applicant that, in addition to planning permission, it is their responsibility to ensure they secure all other permits/consents/licences relevant to their development. Please refer to our [website](#) for further details.

If you have any queries on the above, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yn gywir / Yours faithfully

Eleanor Sullivan

Cynghorydd - Cynllunio Datblygu / Advisor - Development Planning

E-bost/E-mail: swplanning@cyfoethnaturiolcymru.gov.uk

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg a byddwn yn ymateb yn Gymraeg, heb i hynny arwain at oedi. / Correspondence in Welsh is welcomed, and we will respond in Welsh without it leading to a delay.

Adeline Wilcox
Planning Officer
The Planning & Environment Team
PEDW

PEDW.infrastructure@gov.wales

Eich cyfeirnod
Your reference

CAS-02430-B1L0D2

Ein cyfeirnod
Our reference

Dyddiad
Date

7 July 2023

Llinell uniongyrchol
Direct line

Ebost
Email:

Dear Adeline

Proposed development - Mynydd Emroch Solar Farm - EIA Screening

Location - 550m North of the Village of Goytre and 1.4km to south of the village of Cwmafan

Thank you for your letter of 26 June asking for Cadw's view on the likely impact of the proposed development described above on the environment and whether or not Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is required.

Cadw, as the Welsh Government's historic environment service, has assessed the characteristics of this proposed development and its location within the historic environment. In particular, the likely impact on designated or registered historic assets of national importance. In assessing if the likely impact of the development is significant Cadw has considered the extent to which the proposals affect those nationally important historic assets that form the historic environment, including scheduled ancient monuments, listed buildings, registered historic parks, gardens and landscapes.

These views are provided without prejudice to the Welsh Government's consideration of the matter, should it come before it formally for determination.

Advice

Cadw does not consider that the effect, on the historic environment as a whole, will be significant enough to warrant an EIA.

Assessment

The request for the screening opinion is accompanied by a letter written by Sirius

Planning, which gives details of the proposed solar farm and explains that in their opinion it will not cause significant environmental effects, but that a number of assessments confirming this will be presented with the application including a Cultural Heritage Assessment.

The designated historic assets in Annex A are located inside 3km of the proposed development. However, our initial appraisal of the scheme is that, due to the surrounding topography, views of the proposed development will be blocked or significantly screened from all of them. As such it is unlikely that the proposed development will have a significant impact on the settings of any these designated historic assets and therefore an EIA is not required on historic environment grounds. However, the proposed assessment of the impact of the proposed development on Cultural Heritage should still be carried out to ensure that our appraisal is correct and that there are no unacceptable impacts on non-designated historic assets.

Yours sincerely

Jenna Arnold

Casework Team Leader

Annex A

Scheduled Monuments

GM054 Buarth y Gaer, Mynydd y Gaer
GM098 Pen-y-Castell
GM159 Ergyd Uchaf Round Barrow
GM160 Ergyd Isaf Round Barrows
GM279 Foel Fynyddau Round Cairn
GM289 Cwm-Clais Castle Mound
GM358 Plas Baglan
GM428 Ruins of St Baglan's Church
GM566 Cwmafan copper works flue

Registered Parks and Gardens

PGW(Gm)45(NEP) Talbot Memorial Park, Port Talbot

Registered Historic Landscapes

HLW (WGI/MGI) 2 Margam Mountain

Listed Buildings

14146	Old church of St Baglan	II
14147	Blaen Baglan	II
14160	Church of St Theodore	II*
14171	Church of St Catharine	I
14172	Beulah Calvinistic Methodist Chapel	II*
14173	Aberavon Bridge (partly in Aberavon community)	II
14174	Ebenezer Chapel	II*
15845	Ynysafan Tramroad Bridge	II
22136	Plaza Cinema	II
22166	Jerusalem Baptist Chapel	II
22802	Church of St Mary	II
22803	Church of St Joseph	II
22804	Aberavon Bridge (partly in Port Talbot community)	II
22805	Forecourt Walls, Railings and Gates to Ebenezer Chapel	II
22806	Gibeon Chapel	II
22807	Carnegie Free Library	II
22808	Milepost	II
	Footbridge and walls of Baglan brook around churchyard	
22810	of St Catharine	II
22811	The Vicarage	II
22813	Sunray	II
22852	Plate-Girder Bridge	II
22853	War Memorial	II
23018	Church of St Michael	II
23019	Tabernacle Chapel	II
23020	Penuel Chapel	II
23023	Cwm Clais Mill	II
23152	Harbour Court	II
23153	Plate-Girder Bridge	II
23154	Former Harbour House	II
23155	Harbour Watch-Tower	II
23248	Holy Cross Church	II
23249	Afan Masonic Temple	II
23250	Velindre Bridge	II
23251	Tabernacle Chapel	II
23252	Bethany Chapel	II

23253	Dyffryn Chapel	II
23254	Grove Place Chapel	II
23255	Gateway to Talbot Memorial Park	II
23256	War Memorial	II*
23257	Fountain in Honour of John Hopkin Davies	II
23258	Bandstand	II
23259	Lodge 2, Talbot Memorial Park	II
23260	Lodge 1, Talbot Memorial Park	II
23282	Vestry at Beulah Chapel	II
23283	Gates, Piers and Railings at Beulah Chapel	II
23284	Milepost at Tollgate Park	II