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The Planning Inspectorate Wales
Crown Buildings
Cathays Park
Cardiff
CF10 3NQ

Dear Sir or Madam

**On behalf of Elgin Energy EsCo Limited
Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Wales) Regulations 2017
Request for Screening Direction for Proposed Solar Park, Access and Ancillary Development at
Wautyyswg Farm, Abertysswg, Rhymney, Tredegar NP22 5BQ**

Regarding the above, please accept this letter as a request for a formal Screening Direction from the Welsh Ministers under Regulation 31 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Wales) Regulations 2017 ('the EIA regulations') in terms of whether an Environmental Impact Assessment ('EIA') is required to accompany an application for planning permission for a development of national significance for the purposes of section 62D of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

To enable the Welsh Ministers to provide a Screening Direction, in accordance with Regulations 31(2) please find enclosed the following information:

- (a) A plan sufficient to identify the land (drawing reference: JPW0888-DNS-004 enclosed);
- (b) A description of the development (see below and drawing reference: JPW0622-WAU-002 Rev G enclosed), including:
 - (i) A description of the physical characteristics of the development and, where relevant, of demolition works;
 - (ii) A description of the location of the development, with regard to the environmental sensitivity of the geographical areas likely to be affected;
- (c) A description of the aspects of the environment likely to be significantly affected by the development (see below);
- (d) To the extent the information is available, a description of any likely significant effect of the proposed development on the environment (see below) resulting from:
 - (i) The expected residues and emissions and the production of waste, where relevant; and
 - (ii) The use of natural resources, in particular soil, land, water and biodiversity; and
- (e) Such other information or representations as the person making the request may wish to provide or make, including any features of the proposed development or any measures envisaged to avoid or prevent what might otherwise have been significant adverse effects on the environment (see below).

We trust the below is sufficient to enable you provide a formal Screening Direction within 21 days beginning with the date of receipt of this request.

Site Description

The site is located approximately 2.6 km (1.6 miles) to the south of Tredegar, to the east of Tredegar and Rhymney Golf Club and approximately 6.4 km (4 miles) to the west of Ebbw Vale.



Regarding the main solar park, to the north of the site lies an area of open countryside and the B4256 beyond. To the east lies an unnamed road and sloping valley hillside. To the south, where the valley narrows, lies a plantation woodland. The Nant Tysswg river runs from north to south along the western boundary of the site with an area of sloping hillside and Tredegar and Rhymney Golf Club located beyond.

The solar park site itself comprises the floor of the Nant Tysswg valley and is in agricultural use currently. It extends to approximately 58 ha (143 acres) and is irregular in shape – approximately 980 m long and 580 m at its widest point. The site slopes southward, generally. Ground levels range from approximately 299 m at the lowest point at the southern end of the site to approximately 331 m at the highest point at the northern end.

Access to the site is from an unnamed road to the east currently. However, a new dedicated access track will be formed from the B4256 to the north west of the site. A public right of way: Restricted Byway 339/24/1 lies within the eastern periphery of the site, running broadly parallel with the unnamed road to the east.

The Proposed Development

The application proposes the installation of free-standing, static solar photovoltaic (PV) panels anticipated to generate 30,000 kW (30 MW) of electricity per annum. This is sufficient to power approximately 9,000 homes.

Should the application be approved, the solar park will generate electricity every day of the year for a project lifespan of 30 years. The project is fully reversible so that any visual impacts are temporary in nature only and the land can be returned to agricultural use following relatively minor decommissioning works.

The solar park is made of three main elements as follows:

- Solar panel modules;
- Inverters; and
- Substation.

In addition, the solar park will also comprise a new access, internal access tracks, fencing, security measures, underground (on site) cabling, grid connection cable, a 15 m antennae together with the diversion of a public right of way by up to approximately 21 m to the east along the eastern periphery of the site.

The proposed initial design layout for the development can be seen on drawing reference: JPW0622-WAU-002 Rev G enclosed.

Solar Panel Modules

The proposed solar park will be made up, principally, of dark blue or black solar panels of 2 m x 1 m x 0.05 m, consisting of crystalline cells of silicon wafers and semi-conducting materials applied to a glass plate. When sunlight hits the solar cells, a voltage develops between the treated silicone and the semi-conductor material and direct current (DC) is generated.

The solar panels will be arranged in a series of rows up to a height of 3 m at the highest point and tilted southwards at an angle of, typically, 10 to 25 degrees from horizontal. The frame uprights are screwed or pushed into the ground, avoiding the use of concrete and hard standing. The mountings housing the solar panels are then assembled by hand.



Inverters

Inverters are required to convert the DC generated by the photovoltaic (PV) panels to grid compatible alternating current (AC).

Substation

Cabling from panels and inverters are routed to the substation via a network of shallow backfilled trenches. The substation comprises a small-prefabricated building, approximately the size of a small portacabin, containing switchgear to increase the voltage to feed into the District Network and National Grid.

Access

A new access to the site is proposed from the B4256.

The access will be sufficient to accommodate passage of HGV vehicles that will visit the site during the construction phase. The contractor will ensure that deliveries are coordinated such that two vehicles will not be required to pass each other on the access roads leading to the site. At all times, the contractor will ensure that vehicles entering the site will be afforded priority to those exiting. This will ensure that vehicles entering the site can turn off the highway network without detriment to the passage of through vehicles.

Internal Access Tracks

Internal access track will be provided within the site to provide access for construction vehicles and the maintenance of the site. The tracks will resemble agricultural tracks and be made of permeable materials, such as crushed stone or loose bound gravel.

Fencing

A 2.4 m timber post and wire deer proof fence will be erected around the site for health, safety and insurance purposes. Matching gates will be provided at key access points at the site.

Security Features

Security features in the form of CCTV will be installed at the site for monitoring and security purposes.

Underground Cabling

On site, underground cabling will link the panels, invertors and the substation to the main grid connection cable, which will export the electricity generated from the site to the District Network and National Grid.

Grid Connection Cable

An approximately 8 km grid connection cable will be required to enable the site to be connected to the electricity network. This will pass along the site access to the B4256 before passing underground to the connection at the Ebbw Vale Bulk Supply Point.

Antennae

At the request of the electricity Distribution Network Operator (DNO), a 15 m tall slim line lattice antennae may be positioned on the site. The antennae will enable the automated control of generation at the site to ensure stability in the localised electricity network.



Diversion of Public Right of Way

Restricted byway 339/24/1 lies within the eastern periphery of the site and will be diverted by between 2 m and 21 m to the east around the eastern perimeter of the site for a length of approximately 200 m.

Construction

The construction phase of the development will take approximately 4 months.

A site compound will be necessary for storage of equipment and housing of temporary site offices. The limited noise and traffic associated with construction will be kept within reasonable daytime working hours.

Vehicle Movements

Most of traffic associated with the proposal will be experienced during the construction phase. The site preparation phase will allow the site to receive delivery of equipment and establish areas for equipment storage and temporary prefabricated site offices.

During the construction period, which is estimated to take around 16 weeks, delivery vehicles and construction staff will make vehicular trips to the site. Most of deliveries will be undertaken by HGV.

It is expected that construction hours will be between 0700 and 1830 hours Monday to Friday and 0700 to 1300 hours on Saturday.

The most deliveries will occur during weeks 8 to 11, where approximately 11 deliveries per week will take place. Based on a six-day week this equates to an average of just under 2 deliveries per day during the most intense construction period.

During the other busiest periods (weeks 4 to 7), only approximately 3 HGVs will visit the site per day. Expected HGV volumes are an estimate based on experience of other similar sites in the UK.

Trip Generation Staff

During the construction period, it is expected that up to 100 staff will be present on site, although this will vary throughout the construction process. It is normal that teams of construction staff will commute together in vans and cars and therefore the likelihood of vehicle sharing is high. On this basis, it is anticipated that at least 2 members of staff will vehicle share and therefore the maximum 'staff' vehicles expected on site at peak construction periods will be no more than 50 vehicles.

Due to the proposed hours of construction (0700 to 1830 hours weekdays) most of these trips are expected to take place outside of traditional peak periods.

The site will be laid out to accommodate all staff vehicles as well as the expected daily HGV delivery vehicles.

Operation

The solar farm will begin operation following construction and grid connection. The PV panels will generate electricity every day for the project lifespan of 30 years.

The solar farm will not be manned permanently. The installation will be monitored remotely. There will, however, be regular maintenance visits by a team of engineers, on two or more occasions per year, in addition to regular landscape and cleaning maintenance.



Decommissioning

The solar farm is designed to be fully reversible at the end of the lifetime of the project. Minimal concrete and hardstanding is used. Solar panels, cabling, inverters, sub-station and other paraphernalia are removed leaving only small holes, trenches and areas to be back filled. The land can then revert to its previous use.

Key Benefits

The proposal will result in several benefits, including:

- Safe, stable and affordable electricity for approximately 9,000 homes;
- The abatement of over 520,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide over the lifetime of the project. Contributing to sustainable development and government carbon reduction targets;
- Increased revenue from the energy sector to be spent in the local economy;
- The construction phase will result in jobs and increased expenditure in local shops, eating and drinking establishments and overnight accommodation; and
- The maintenance of the site will generate further opportunities for employment.

The proposed development will also be one of the first subsidy-free renewable solar PV developments in the UK. This will be entirely privately funded and maintained and will result in significant savings to the exchequer and tax-payer.

Relevant Legislation and Screening Criteria

The EIA regulations 2017 require certain types of development to always be accompanied by EIA. These are known as 'Schedule 1' developments. Whereas certain other types of other development falling within 'Schedule 2' may be accompanied by EIA on a discretionary basis following a screening process to identify whether required.

The proposed development is not Schedule 1 development

Schedule 2 development is defined as development, other than exempt development, of a description mentioned in Column 1 of the table in Schedule 2 or the regulations, where:

1. Any part of that development is to be carried out in a 'sensitive area'; or
2. Any applicable threshold or criterion in the corresponding part of Column 2 of that table is respectively exceeded or met in relation to that development.

The site does not fall within a 'sensitive area' as defined by the EIA Regulations, such as:

- Sites of Special Scientific Interest;
- Nature Conservation Orders;
- International Conservation Sites;
- National Parks;
- Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty;
- World Heritage Sites; and
- Scheduled Ancient Monuments.

The proposed development does, however, meet the threshold within Schedule 2 (3[a]) as an energy industry industrial installation for the production of electricity with an area of development exceeding 0.5 ha.

Consequently, the development must be screened to determine whether a EIA is required and whether any planning application should be accompanied by an Environmental Statement.



Screening of Schedule 2 Development

A Schedule 2 development does not require EIA to be undertaken in all cases but must be considered against the criteria provided in Schedule 3 of the Regulations to determine whether significant effects on the environment are likely. Schedule 3 considers the characteristics and location of the development and the characteristics of the potential impact.

Consideration of the selection criteria for screening Schedule 2 development set out in Schedule 3 is provided below.

Characteristics of Development

The characteristics of the development must be considered having regard to:

- (a) the size and design of the development;
- (b) the cumulation with other existing development and/or approved projects;
- (c) the use of natural resources in particular land, soil, water and biodiversity;
- (d) the production of waste;
- (e) pollution and nuisances;
- (f) the risk of major accidents and/or disasters which are relevant to the project concerned, including those caused by climate change, in accordance with scientific knowledge;
- (g) the risks to human health (for example due to water contamination or air pollution).

These are considered below.

Size and Design of the Development

The area of the site comprising the solar park and access extends to approximately 58 ha. However, the development is low lying, the panels rising to 3 m in height at the highest point. The panels are black or dark blue and therefore recessive in terms of their colour within the landscape.

The 15 m lattice tower is slimline in design and positioned at some distance from the majority of public vantage points and will be viewed in context with other vertical features in the surrounding landscape, such as overground telephone and electricity poles that are common in rural areas.

The grid connection cable is approximately 8 km long and is to be installed below ground within the highway.

Cumulation with Other Existing Developments and/or Approved Projects

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council ('BGCBC') has requested a cumulative assessment with other renewable energy infrastructure in the form of wind turbines in the study area.

There is a single known consented and operational solar park within a 5 km study area of the site at Hafod y Dafal (planning permission reference: C/2014/0126).

There are 5 operational wind turbine developments within 5 km of the site, none of which are within 4 km.

There are 4 consented but not constructed wind turbine developments within 5 km, none of which are within 4 km.

There are a further 2 wind turbine development that are the subject of planning applications that are yet to be determined, none of which are within 4 km.



The Use of Natural Resources, in Particular Land, Soil, Water and Biodiversity

Regarding land and soil, a desktop Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) report is being undertaken. It is considered provisionally that land included within the site is some of the lowest quality and least versatile agricultural land. Notwithstanding, the proposal is for a temporary 30 year period, at which point subject to relatively minor removal and decommissioning works, the site can be returned to its previous agricultural use.

Regarding water resources, the proposed development will have no impact on and does not consume any water in the development process or its ongoing operation. No change to any existing water features on the site are proposed and a Hydrological Assessment is in the process of being drafted that provisionally concludes that there will be no hydrological or flooding consequences as a result of the proposals.

Regarding biodiversity, there are no statutory nature conservation designations (international, national or local) located within 2 km of the site. The closest statutory designation is Cefn y Brithdir Site of Special Scientific Interest ('SSSI') located approximately 2.6 km to the south.

The Mynydd Bedwellte Site of Importance for Nature Conservation ('SINC') is located along the northern and eastern boundaries of the site. It is unlikely that any features of the SINC would be directly affected by the proposals. An appropriate stand-off from the SINC is proposed to avoid damage to floral communities and will protect its integrity. All the other non-statutory nature conservation designations in the vicinity are located over 300 m from the boundary.

The whole site will be brought into ecological management alongside the environmental protection measures being implemented throughout the construction and operational life of the development to maintain the status of any higher value habitat and achieve biodiversity gains as part of the development.

An Upland Bird Survey of the site has been undertaken at the request of BGCBC. One species of wader (Curlew) and an additional 12 species of conservation concern were recorded during the upland breeding wader survey. Curlew and seven of the additional species of conservation concern were considered to be breeding within the survey area. No species was present in numbers approaching national significance (i.e. 1% of the UK population [Musgrove et al. 2013]). For many of the species of conservation importance recorded during the survey all remain widespread in Wales and therefore are unlikely to be present on this site in numbers important at a Welsh scale. The estimate of one pair of Curlew present within the survey area is considered likely to be important at a local scale, possibly up to County level. To minimise impacts on Curlew and other ground-nesting birds it is proposed to mitigate through suitable habitat to maintain one pair of breeding Curlew being provided off-site via appropriate habitat management or through a commuted sum contribution to wider curlew conservation initiatives.

The Production of Waste

The proposed development will not result in the production of waste.

Pollution and Nuisances

The proposed development is considered not to result in any pollution or nuisances. There will be some noise during construction but this will be kept to a minimum using best practice. Once operational, the development will not result in any noise or vibration impacts.

The Risk of Major Accidents and/or Disasters Which Are Relevant to the Project Concerned, Including Those Caused by Climate Change, in Accordance with Scientific Knowledge;

The proposed development will not result in the risk of major accidents or disasters. The site is not within an area at risk of flooding and considered not to increase the likelihood of flooding elsewhere.



The Risks to Human Health (for Example Due to Water Contamination or Air Pollution).

The proposed development is considered not to pose any risk to human health. The site is not contaminated nor would it involve any hazardous substances or technologies or produce hazardous waste and therefore would not have any impact on human health. The proposed development site does not lie within a Ground Source Protection Zone.

Location of Development: Environmental Sensitivity

The environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected by development must be considered, having regard to:

- (a) the existing and approved land use;
- (b) the relative abundance, availability, quality and regenerative capacity of natural resources (including soil, land, water and biodiversity) in the area and its underground;
- (c) the absorption capacity of the natural environment, paying particular attention to the following areas:
 - (i) wetlands, riparian areas, river mouths;
 - (ii) coastal zones and the marine environment;
 - (iii) mountain and forest areas;
 - (iv) nature reserves and parks;
 - (v) European sites and other areas classified or protected under national legislation;
 - (vi) areas in which there has already been a failure to meet the environmental quality standards laid down in Union legislation and relevant to the project, or in which it is considered there is such a failure;
 - (vii) densely populated areas;
 - (viii) landscapes and sites of historical, cultural or archaeological significance.

The Existing and Approved Land Use

The site is in agricultural use currently, primarily for grazing and comprises mostly semi-improved grassland and semi-improved pasture.

The agricultural holding benefits from full permitted development rights, as a holding of over 5 ha, conferred by Part 6 of the General Permitted Development Order 1995, including:

- (a) works for the erection, extension or alteration of a building; or
- (b) any excavation or engineering operations, which are reasonably necessary for the purposes of agriculture within that unit.

Relative Abundance, Availability, Quality and Regenerative Capacity of Natural Resources (Including Soil, Land, Water and Biodiversity) In the Area and Its Underground

Regarding soil, as summarised earlier, a desktop ALC is in the process of being undertaken. Initial indications are that the land is of low agricultural value and versatility. Notwithstanding, the development is fully reversible and can therefore be restored to its previous condition and reused for agriculture, if required, following the 30 year life of the project. It is considered that there is more naturally productive agricultural land available in the area in comparison to the subject site.

Regarding land and landscape, the site lies within a locally designated Special Landscape Area ('SLA') within the Blaenau Gwent Local Development Plan, adopted November 2012 ('LDP'), as does almost the entirety of rural Blaenau Gwent County Borough outside the defined settlement boundaries. It is considered, therefore, that the site lies in a landscape, as a land resource, of relative abundance and availability and is of lower order in terms of the hierarchy of landscape designations. The site is also relatively contained and concealed from the remainder of the wider SLA due to the surrounding topography.



Regarding water, the proposals do not require any water during construction and operation and the development has been designed to respect surface water features across the site and the Nant Tysswg river to the west with appropriate standoff distances. The proposal will not impact upon the water resources in any way.

Parts of the site lie within a Coal Mining High Risk Area and Coal and Mineral Safeguarding Areas. Accordingly, a Coal Mining Risk Assessment and Minerals Statement are being prepared. The proposed development does not require extensive groundworks and is therefore considered likely to be of minor coal mining risk. The designated mineral safeguarding areas are extensive and cover large parts of the South Wales valleys and can therefore be considered abundant and impact upon them as a result of the proposals minimal. Moreover, the development is temporary in nature and will not permanently sterilise any underground resources.

The Absorption Capacity of The Natural Environment

The agricultural landholding the development is proposed within contains some marshland areas, the highest value of which have been omitted from within the development. Marshlands are relatively abundant in South Wales. The site does not affect any rivers, coastal zones, the marine environment, mountains, forests, nature reserves, parks, European or other statutory sites. There is no known failure to meet environmental quality standards relevant to the project.

There are no densely populated or built up areas affected by the project.

The site does not form part of or contain any historic landscapes or sites. The nearest historic site is Tredegar Ironworks Cholera Cemetery Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM) situated approximately 650 m to the north. The site is considered not to form a significant part of the setting of the SAM. Furthermore, the SAM is considered not to experience any significant visual effects to its setting due to the degree of separation.

Therefore, the site is considered not to lie in a particularly environmentally sensitive area. The proposed layout and design has been amended to protect higher value habitats and mitigation will be provided to minimise impact on locally important species. Furthermore, the development is fully reversible at the end of the 30 year project life following relatively minor removal and decommissioning works and any impact on the natural environment are therefore temporary in nature.

Characteristics of the Potential Impacts

The likely significant effects of the development on the environment must be considered in relation to criteria set out under paragraphs 1 and 2, regarding the impact of the development on the factors specified in regulation 4(2), considering:

- (a) the magnitude and spatial extent of the impact (for example geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected);
- (b) the nature of the impact;
- (c) the transboundary nature of the impact;
- (d) the intensity and complexity of the impact;
- (e) the probability of the impact;
- (f) the expected onset, duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact;
- (g) the cumulation of the impact with the impact of other existing and/or approved development;
- (h) the possibility of effectively reducing the impact.

A brief assessment of the likely effects of the proposed development based on the information available is set out below.



Landscape and Visual Resources

Regarding magnitude of impact on landscape and visual resources, a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment of the proposed development is in the process of being undertaken. The site forms part of the locally designated, extensive and non-statutory Mynydd Bedwellte, Rhymney Hill and Sirhowy Sides Special Landscape Area (SLA). The magnitude of the visual impact is considered to be limited by the location of the site and the surrounding topography, which conceals the site from the wider landscape to a large extent. Visual impact is therefore likely to be significant only at a localised level, i.e. within a few hundred metres of the site.

Regarding transboundary impact, the site boundary is partly within Caerphilly County Borough (CCB) and some of the remainder of the site will, in theory, be visible from CCB, although actual visibility is likely to be confined to localised short distance views as outlined above. The southern edge of the Brecon Beacons National Park boundary is located approximately 4 km to the north of the application site at its closest point.

The magnitude of landscape and visual impact of the proposed development is therefore considered to be localised and temporary for a maximum 30 year period.

The cumulative visual impact is considered minimal as there are no other solar parks nearby to the site and its visual impacts are considered to be different in terms of nature and type to that of wind turbines.

A Glint and Glare Assessment is being prepared to support the application. However, the solar panels are designed to absorb, rather than reflect, light and will result in minimal impacts in this regard.

There will be some landscape and visual impact for the 30 year life of the project. However, this is considered to be localised and some appropriate boundary planting, particularly along the northern boundary, together with the retention and protection of existing trees could soften the boundaries of the site to assist its integration into the landscape.

Ecology and Nature Conservation

The site comprises agricultural grassland fields bounded by fence lines and bisected with drainage channels. The fields include a mixture of semi-improved grassland, semi-improved rush pasture and marshy grassland with localised areas of acidic flush. Within the large site there are small areas of semi-improved acid grassland and unimproved grassland.

There are no statutory nature conservation designations (international, 3.2.1 national or local) located within 2 km of the site. Mynydd Bedwellte SINC is located along the northern and eastern site boundaries.

An ecological appraisal has been carried out and confirms that based on the working area and development footprint being located outside of the adjoining designated SINC, it is unlikely that any feature of the SINC would be directly affected by the proposals. It recommends a standoff to avoid damage to the floral communities which has been accommodated for within the design layout. The development will be subject to a construction environmental management plan together with an ecological management plan for the lifetime of the development that will outline measures to protect the habitats of the site and result in an overall biodiversity enhancement over the project lifetime.

Regarding the one species of wader (Curlew) and an additional 12 species of conservation concern were recorded during the upland breeding wader survey. Curlew and seven of the additional species of conservation concern were considered to be breeding within the survey area. No species was present in numbers approaching national significance (i.e. 1% of the UK population [Musgrove et al. 2013]). For many of the species of conservation importance recorded during the survey all remain widespread in Wales and therefore are unlikely to be present on this site in numbers important at a Welsh scale. The estimate of one pair of Curlew present within the survey area is considered likely to be important at a local scale, possibly up to County level. To minimise impacts on Curlew and other ground-nesting birds



it is proposed to mitigate through suitable habitat to maintain one pair of breeding Curlew being provided off-site via appropriate habitat management or through a commuted sum contribution to wider curlew conservation initiatives.

The magnitude of impact on ecology is considered to be, overall, limited due to the ecological mitigation and enhancements proposed and the benefits of removing the site from agricultural use and practices.

Archaeology and Cultural Heritage

An Archaeological and Heritage Assessment of the site is in the process of being undertaken. The proposed development is not located in a registered historic landscape or a conservation area and it does not contain any listed buildings or SAMs. We are unaware of any archaeological interest within the site itself.

The nearest SAM is Tredegar Ironworks Cholera Cemetery approximately 650 m to the north. The site is considered not to form a significant part of the setting of the SAM. Furthermore, the SAM is considered not to experience any significant visual effects on its setting due to the degree of separation from the proposed development.

The magnitude of impact upon archaeology and heritage is therefore considered to be limited.

Air Quality

The site is not located within or adjoining an Air Quality Management Area and is considered to have a positive impact through potentially abating over 500,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide over the lifetime of the project.

Noise and Vibration

The proposed development does not generate any significant noise or vibration.

Hydrology and Drainage

A review of the current Technical Advice Note 15: Development Advice Maps indicate that the site is located within Zone A whereby there is little or no risk of fluvial or tidal/coastal flooding.

The proposed development respects existing land drainage, watercourses and features on the site and includes a minimum 5 m buffer zone from their boundaries.

A Hydrology Assessment has been drafted that confirms the proposed development will have no negative impact in terms of land drainage.

Land and Soils

The land is of poor agricultural quality and versatility and the magnitude of impact in this regard as a result of the proposed development is considered negligible.

A Coal Mining Risk Assessment is being prepared as parts of the site lie within a Coal Mining High Risk Area. The recommendations of the report will be incorporated in full within the proposed development to minimise risk accordingly.

Regarding the Mineral Safeguarding Areas that affects part of the site, the designation affects large parts of the South Wales valleys and are considered relatively abundant locally. Therefore the magnitude of impact on land and soils as a result of the development is considered negligible.



Furthermore, the temporary nature of the development means it would not permanently sterilise any underground resources.

Traffic and Transport

Traffic and transportation impacts will be local and limited to the construction period only.

Regarding the nature of the impact, most of traffic associated with the proposal will be experienced during the construction phase. The construction period is expected to take approximately 4 months. It is expected that construction hours will be between 07:00 and 18:30 hours Monday to Friday and 07:00 to 13:00 hours on Saturday. The most deliveries will occur during weeks 8 to 11, where approximately 11 deliveries per week will take place. Based on a six-day week this equates to an average of just under 2 deliveries per day during the most intense construction period.

During the other busiest periods (weeks 4 to 7), only approximately 3 HGVs will visit the site per day. Expected HGV volumes are an estimate based on experience of other similar sites in the UK. A construction and environmental management plan will be drawn up to mitigate against any impact the deliveries may have on the local area which is considered to be low.

Public Rights of Way

In terms of Public Rights of Way affecting the site there is a Restricted Byway 339/24/1 located within the eastern boundary of the site for a length of approximately 200 m. The development proposes to move the public right of way eastwards by between 2 m and 21 m along this length for safety reasons.

Overall the magnitude of impact on the public right of way is considered minimal.

Risk of major accidents and/or disasters

The proposed development represents a very low risk of major accidents and/or disasters.

Inter-relationships and Cumulative Impacts

The site is considered to result in little cumulative impact with other renewable energy development due to their absence in the vicinity. The visual impact of the proposed development is considered to differ markedly from the wind turbines BGCBC has asked the applicant to assess and, as a consequence, the cumulative impact with these developments, which are located at significant distances from the site of over 4 km, is considered minimal.

Conclusion

This letter identifies available information regarding the likely impacts associated with the proposed development and has confirmed that the proposed development is not Schedule 1 development.

The proposed development is considered to be Schedule 2 development as energy industry industrial installation for the production of electricity with an area of development exceeding 0.5 ha. Therefore, EIA is required only if it is considered that there are likely to be significant environmental effects as a result of the proposed development. The development has been considered against the criteria in Schedule 3. The letter provides a consideration of the likely effects of the proposed development. The location of the site and its relatively low environmental sensitivity, together with the proposed mitigation measures it is considered that there would be impact of local significance only.

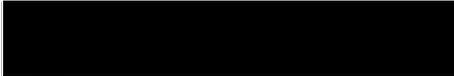
Consequently, it is considered that the development will have no significant environmental effects and is therefore not EIA development.



Accordingly, a formal screening direction under Regulation 31 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Wales) Regulations 2017 is requested to confirm this.

We look forward to receiving your formal screening direction in due course.

Yours faithfully
For RPS



Dafydd Williams
Associate

Enc.

As above.