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PCAC PEDW
Penderfyniadau Cynllunio ac Amgylchedd Cymru
Planning & Environment Decisions Wales

Ein Cyf / Our Ref: DNS 3253253 - Plas Power Estate Solar Farm

Dyddiad / Date: 09/10/2024

To:
Lightsource SPV 192 Limited, c/o Vincent Ryan, Stantec UK Limited

(via e-mail)

Dear Mr Ryan,

Subject: DNS 3253253 - Plas Power Estate Solar Farm
The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Wales) Regulations 2017 (as amended) – Regulation 24 Request for 'Further Information'

As part of our acceptance checking process, we have undertaken a review of the Environmental Statement (ES). We have found that it is not currently complete in terms of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Wales) Regulations 2017 (as amended) ['the EIA Regs']. Please treat this as a formal request for further information under Regulation 24 of the EIA Regs.

Description of development

We refer to the Tree Survey and Arboricultural Impact Assessment (Appendix 5.8) within which it is stated that it is anticipated that the removal of 3 trees (T273, T328 and T261) will be required to facilitate site access and / or access tracks within the site. However, the ES at paragraph 5.154 states that tree removal would entail the removal of Tree T264.

- Please clarify which trees will need to be removed.

Landscape and Visual Impact (LVIA)

1. Assessment Methodology

We refer to the Scoping Direction Addendum (Appendix 4.4) within which attention was drawn to Natural Resources Wales' (NRW) comments regarding the evidence which should

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inform the LVIA assessment. NRW advised the assessment should be informed by existing evidence on the natural beauty and special qualities of the AONB contained in:

Tranquility and Place Report No: 569, NRW, 2022
Supplementary Planning Guidance Note on the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB, 2018

- Please clarify whether this evidence has been considered in the preparation of the Landscape and Visual Impact assessment and if so, where this can be found in the ES.

2. Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV)

As indicated in paragraph 5.105 of the ES, the ZTV (Figure 5.2) is a 'with barriers' ZTV. Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA3) highlights a ZTV should treat the world as 'bare earth', not taking account of potential screening by vegetation or buildings. By including barriers, your ZTV may omit certain viewpoints.

- Please explain which guidance has been followed regarding this approach or provide a robust rationale for not using a 'bare earth' ZTV. Alternatively, provide a 'bare earth' ZTV, in line with GLVIA3.

- Please also explain the rationale for using 9 m settlement barriers and 10 m vegetation barriers as part of the ZTV.

3. Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVAA)

We refer to the RVAA (Appendix 5.7).

- Please clarify that paragraph 5.2 should refer to 7 of the 123 properties requiring more detailed assessment, rather than 5 as stated.

4. Photomontages

The ES at paragraph 5.122 and 5.214 indicates that the photomontages for viewpoints 10 and 11 illustrate the proposals at **Winter Year 1 and Winter year 15**. However, the photomontages themselves (figure 5.9) indicate the following:

Representative Viewpoint 10
Figure 5.9 C: Year 1 **Winter** Illustrative Photomontage
Figure 5.9 D: Year 15 **Summer** Illustrative Photomontage

Representative Viewpoint 11
Figure 5.9 G: Year 1 **Winter** Illustrative Photomontage
Figure 5.9 H: Year 15 **Summer** Illustrative Photomontage

- Please clarify this discrepancy.

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In addition, the Year 1 and Year 15 photomontages for both viewpoints 10 and 11 look very similar.

- Please confirm that they are different, and this is not an error in the supporting document

5. Likely Environmental Effects on Landscape Resource

In relation to 'Duration' listed in Table 5.12, it is noted that paragraph 5.51 of the GLVIA3 explains that duration can usually be judged on a scale of short term (0 to 5 years), medium term (5 to 10 years) and long term (10 to 25 years).

The GLVIA3 also states that there is no fixed rule on these definitions so it must be made clear how the categories are defined and the reasons for this. However, the definition of duration used in the assessment is not provided and Table 5.12 uses "temporary".

- Please clarify what is the definition of duration used in the assessment, the rationale behind the definition and how it affects the magnitude of the impact.

- Please explain why you are deviating from GLVIA3 on this matter.

Furthermore, in Table 5.12, for the Wrexham Town 10 receptor, the Significance of Effect is listed as 'Negligible, summer Year 1 and winter Year 15'.

- Please clarify whether this is an error.

6. Illustrative Landscape and Ecology Masterplan

In response to NRW's comments in relation to the statutory pre-application consultation you refer to an existing hedgerow located along the western boundary of field A (to the east of the redline boundary). This appears to be present looking at aerial pictures of the site. However, this is not shown on the Illustrative Landscape and Ecology Masterplan (figure 5.10).

- If it is present, please ensure this is reflected on figure 5.10.

Cumulative Impact

We refer to the Scoping Direction (Appendix 4.2) within which Bronwylfa Reservoir Solar Park was highlighted as a development which should be included in the cumulative assessment. We note that Bronwylfa Reservoir Solar Park has not been included within the cumulative assessment for the topic chapters within the ES. PEDW's view remains that this should be included within the assessment as the development is clearly visible from maps.

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Paragraph 5(e) of Schedule 4 of the EIA Regulations makes it clear that consideration of cumulative effects should include existing development:

> "the cumulation of effects with other existing and/or approved projects, taking into account any existing environmental problems relating to areas of particular environmental importance likely to be affected or the use of natural resources;"

- Please either revisit your assessment to include this existing project, or alternatively provide a robust rationale as to why this development has not been included within the assessment.

- Please also explain whether the choice of using a ZTV "with barriers" instead of "bare earth" could have had an impact on the choice of VPs and the exclusion of the Solar Park from the cumulative assessment.

Impact on Trees

The Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) states that the removal of three trees (T261, T273 and T328) is proposed to be removed to facilitate the development. The plan 'Southern Site Access Cross drawing no. 330610724-SK-1200-005' (Figure 2.31) appears to show T328 to be removed on the section plan. The section 2 plan shows that the ground levels would be reduced around trees which are shown to be retained. The Tree Constraints Plan (706) shows that root protection zones fall within the access.

- Please provide an assessment of the impact of these trees and their roots, notably for T61, T62, G147, T330, T331.

Ecology

1. Survey dates

The following surveys were not undertaken within the last two years, which is generally accepted as the requirement for surveys to be considered up to date.

> Appendix 6.2 Breeding Bird Report – Issued September 2021, surveys undertaken April – June 2021
>
> Appendix 6.6 Otter Report – Issued November 2021, surveys undertaken August 2021

- Please provide a rationale as to why you consider these surveys to be valid and no updated surveys are required. Alternatively, if additional surveys have been conducted during spring / summer 2024, please provide an update.

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2. Date of Guidance (Ecology)

The ES references the following for chapter 6:
CIEEM (2018). Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland. Terrestrial, Freshwater and Marine version 1.1. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.

There is an updated version of this guidance, v1.2 dated April 2022, available at Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA) | CIEEM.

- Please provide reasons why the previous version has been used to inform the ES.

Historic Environment

It is not clear that all the assets identified by Cadw for inclusion in the assessment at stage 1 have been considered. Given the concerns raised about the approach to the ZTV in the above section, the assessment may need to be revisited on the basis of a 'bare earth' ZTV.

- Please provide a table that lists all assets identified by Cadw at the Scoping stage and clarification of their status in the existing assessment and a rationale as to why that approach is acceptable. Alternatively, provide an updated assessment on the basis of a 'bare earth' ZTV.

Please provide this information no later than Friday 28 February 2025. Please note that we will not accept the application for examination until we are in receipt of a complete ES.

Yours sincerely

Robert Sparey

Mr Robert Sparey MPlan
Planning & Environment Manager

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