Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru
Natural Resources Wales

Ein cyf/Our ref: CAS-292794-R8K8
Eich cyf/Your ref: P/2025/0759

Wrexham County Borough Council
The Guildhall
Wrexham
LL11 1AY

Dyddiad/Date: 10 December 2025

Annwyl Syr/Madam/Dear Sir/Madam,

BWRIAD/PROPOSAL: Installation of ground-mount solar scheme and associated infrastructure

LLEOLIAD/LOCATION: Land Off Hafod Road, Hafod, Ruabon, Wrexham, LL14 6HF

Thank you for consulting Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru (CNC)/Natural Resources Wales (NRW) about the above, which we received on 11 November 2025.

We have concerns with the application as submitted because inadequate information has been provided in support of the proposal. To overcome these concerns, you should seek further information from the applicant regarding protected species. If this information is not provided, we would object to this planning application. Further details are provided below.

We also advise that based on the information submitted to date, a condition regarding protected species should be attached to any planning permission granted and the documents identified below should be included in the approved plans and documents condition on the decision notice.

Approved Documents:

- Hafod Road Solar Scheme, Construction Environmental Management Plan, August 2025

Without the inclusion of this condition and documents we would object to this planning application.

Protected Species

We have reviewed the following information, submitted in support of the application:

- Proposed Installation of Solar Photovoltaic Panels on Land off Hafod Road, Johnstown, Wrexham – Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, Version C520/3.0 dated 20/08/2025, Marches Ecology
- Hafod Road Solar Scheme, Environmental Report, dated August 2025, Dulas
- Proposed Installation of Solar Photovoltaic Panels on Land off Hafod Road, Johnstown, Wrexham – Ecological Mitigation and Enhancement Statement, Version C520/2.0 dated 20/08/2025, Marches Ecology
- Landscape Maintenance and Management Plan, dated August 2025, Viento Environmental Limited

The information has identified that great crested newts (GCN) are material to the application site.

The proposal has the potential to kill, injure, disturb GCN, or damage or destroy their breeding sites and resting places at this site. GCN and their breeding sites and resting places are protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) and Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Where GCN are present and a development proposal is likely to contravene the legal protection, they are afforded, the development may only proceed under licence issued by Natural Resources Wales, having satisfied the three requirements set out in the legislation. A licence may only be authorised if:

i. The development works to be authorised are for the purpose of preserving public health or safety, or for other imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment;
ii. There is no satisfactory alternative; and,
iii. The action authorised will not be detrimental to the maintenance of the population of the species concerned at a favourable conservation status in its natural range.

To avoid developments with planning permission subsequently not being granted a licence, the Local Planning Authority should take Planning Policy Wales and Technical Advice Note 5 into account when considering development proposals where a European Protected Species is present.

Please note, for the purposes of providing advice at the planning application stage, our comments are limited to compliance with the 3rd test “demonstration of no detriment to the maintenance of the favourable conservation status of European protected species”. We advise that before any consent is given, as informed by the provisions of Regulation 9 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) the LPA satisfy itself as to whether the scheme satisfies the other two tests, namely a relevant Habitats Regulations purpose and whether there is no satisfactory alternative to the proposal.

Whilst we consider that the above reports provide an adequate basis upon which to consider the potential impacts of the scheme on this species, aspects of the proposed scheme will require further development.

We note that that Landscaping Scheme drawing (Figure LS01, Landscape Maintenance and Management Plan) shows the creation of one pond within the ecological area. Owing to the unfavourable current conservation status of GCN, we advise that habitat creation

includes two or more ponds. Therefore, a revised Landscape Scheme should be submitted including the additional pond or ponds, including the condition below.

We advise that the remining further information can be ascertained via a suitably worded condition, included on the decision notice. We therefore advise any subsequent consent is subject to the provisions of a planning condition and planning obligation as noted below.

Condition: No development or phase of development, including site clearance, shall commence until a Great Crested Newt (GCN) Conservation Plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Conservation Plan should build upon the principles outlined in the Ecological Mitigation and Enhancement Statement and the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and include, but not necessarily be limited to:

- The submission (to include proposed timescales and reporting requirements) of further details and associated plans concerning GCN avoidance and mitigation measures including, but not limited to:
    - fence specifications, locations, construction and maintenance (amphibian fence, prior to and throughout the duration of construction operations)
    - considerations of access issues (including public rights of way if applicable)
    - monitoring and maintenance requirements and supervised removal.
- The detail of planting to be delivered, shown on appropriate drawings
- The submission of a long-term site management plan (not less than 25 years) that includes:
    - details of habitats and ecological features present or to be created, both in written form and shown on appropriate drawings, including planting plans
    - defined aims and objectives (including defined key performance indicators for long term monitoring indicators)
    - details of the desired condition for each habitat and criteria to determine when habitats have achieved this
    - details of short and long-term habitat management prescriptions to both achieve and maintain the desired condition
    - details of monitoring methodologies for habitat(s) and species
    - details of scheduling and timings of activities
    - contingency measures if fish or invasive non-native species (INNS) are detected
    - current and any proposed changes to the freehold tenure of the compensation area (tenure of the ecology and heritage area to be approved by the Local Planning Authority)
    - persons or bodies responsible for undertaking management and surveillance together with required skills and competencies
    - site liaison and wardening
    - licensing requirements
    - biosecurity measures which consider invasive non-native species and specific diseases (e.g., Chytrid) to prevent the introduction of and where present control, removal or for the long-term management of invasive species both during construction and operation.
    - details of reporting, review and update of the plan (informed by monitoring) at specific intervals as agreed - owing to the spatial location of the application site, we require annual amphibian monitoring for the duration of the operational phase of the scheme
- The submission of detailed measures including plans designed to prevent the accidental capture/killing of GCN during operational phases of the scheme (including

the installation and maintenance of an amphibian-friendly surface water management system that does not include gully pots (or other similar features)
- Details of timing, phasing and duration of construction activities and conservation measures
- Post-construction monitoring and record dissemination for a period of not less than 25 years. Methodology shall include annual GCN abundance counts and Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) assessments. All ponds (including sustainable drainage systems water bodies) to be added to the Wales GCN Monitoring Scheme, with individuals/bodies being identified as being responsible for monitoring and reporting works.

The Conservation Plan shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Justification: To ensure that GCN are protected by the development.

We would welcome works being carried out under licence, however, given distances from known records a non-licensed approach in this instance is satisfactory. In the event of one or more GCN being found, works must stop and must only resume on receipt of a licence.

Pollution Prevention

We have reviewed the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) (Hafod Road Solar Scheme, Construction Environmental Management Plan, August 2025) submitted in support of the application.

We consider that the measures proposed within the CEMP are appropriate and advise that the CEMP is included in the approved list of plans / documents condition within the decision notice.

We also advise that further guidance in relation to GPP 1 and GPP 6 is available via Guidance for Pollution Prevention (GPP) documents | NetRegs | Environmental guidance.

Protected Sites

River Dee and Bala Lake Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

We note the application site is within the catchment of the River Dee and Bala Lake Special Area of Conservation (SAC). In line with our Advice to Planning Authorities for Planning Applications Affecting Nutrient Sensitive River Special Areas of Conservation (22 October 2025), under the Habitats Regulations, Planning Authorities must consider the impact of proposed developments on water quality within SAC river catchments.

However, recognising the specific nature of the application submitted we are satisfied that there is unlikely to be a source of additional nutrients and/or a pathway for impacts. In our opinion, it would be reasonable for your Authority to screen out this proposal as not likely to have a significant effect on the River Dee and Bala Lake SAC in relation to nutrient inputs.

Johnstown Newt Sites Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

The application is located within 339m from the Johnstown Newt Sites Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

From the information provided, we consider that the proposal is not likely to have a significant effect on the SAC due to the scheme design and location and distance of the proposal we consider that the proposal is not likely to cause a significant effect, both alone and in combination, on the conservation objectives of the Johnstown Newt Sites.

Our advice may change should modifications be made to the proposed development prior to the determination of the application. If there are any changes to the proposed development which may affect the consideration of potential environmental impacts, please consult us again before you determine the application.

As the competent authority under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended), it is for your Authority to carry out the test of Likely Significant Effects for the proposed development. Should you conclude that the proposal is likely to have a significant effect on a SAC, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, an appropriate assessment must be made on the implications of the project for that site in view of its conservation objectives. You must for the purposes of the assessment consult NRW and have regard to any representations we make within such reasonable time as you specify.

Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

We have considered the information submitted in support of the above application. Based on the information submitted, we consider that the proposed development is not likely to damage the features for which Stryt Las a'r Hafod SSSI is of special interest.

Designated Landscape

Our advice relates to the landscape character and visual amenity of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley (CRDV) National Landscape (the name for the legally designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), and the proposed Glyndŵr National Park (GNP). and their setting, and the statutory purpose of the designation to conserve and enhance natural beauty.

We have reviewed the following documents:

- Pre-application report, Dulas Renewable Energy, Nov 2025
- Design and Access Statement, Dulas Renewable Energy, Aug 2025
- Environmental Report, Dulas Renewable Energy, Aug 2025
- Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA), Viento Environmental,
- Figure LS01 Landscape Scheme (including management plan), Viento Environmental, August 2025
- Figure LV4 Landscape Mitigation Plan, Viento Environmental, July 2025
- Photomontages
- Figure LV3, Zone of Theoretical Visibility, Visitor Attractions and Routes, Viento Environmental, July 2025

This application is for a ground-mounted 1.05MWh photovoltaic (PV) solar scheme, distribution network operator substation and inverters, associated site infrastructure, security fencing and landscaping located on approximately 2.9 hectares (ha) of agricultural land to the east of Rhosllannerchrugog and west of the A483 at Hafod, Ruabon. An overhead power line crosses the southern site field, approx. 20m from the proposed solar panels at its closest point

The methodology for the LVA generally follows guidance produced by the Landscape Institute (LI) 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment' (3rd Edition, 2013) (GLVIA3) as described in the Method of Assessment (LVA page 1). The study area is set at 2.5km which excludes the National Landscape. Viewpoint photography is in line with Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 06/19: Visual Representation of Development Proposals. There is no reference to lighting assessment or effects on dark skies within the LVA.

The LVA concludes that effects of the proposed development would be limited to the landscape character of the landscape of the site and immediately surrounding area and primarily to local receptors on footpaths and routes in closer proximity to the site than the CRDV or GNP and that these effects would be moderate/minor adverse effects. Assessment of effects on Long Distance Recreational Route, The Wat's Dyke Way at a distance of approx. 0.8km from the proposal at its closest point. suggests that the proposal may be visible from a few separate sections of the route ranging between 0.8km and 2.5km from the proposed array. The assessment reports that: "*due to the position of the site close to the A483 and its wealth of mature vegetation alongside the dual carriageway, fieldwork found that the proposal would consistently be entirely screened from view, even in winter months. Viewpoint 3 illustrates this point, showing the high levels of mature vegetation within the winter view, where the proposal would be entirely screened. As a result, no effects on the visual amenity of walkers on this route within the study area would occur".* We concur that effects are unlikely to extend to the protected landscape. Lighting design and effects are not included in the LVA.

The cumulative effects of these proposals in combination with other schemes within the locality is not assessed/reported. We note that the site is in proximity to the extensive Butterfly / Glöyn Byw Solar Farm proposals on land north of the B5426. We have previously advised that due to the elevated views available in the CRDV that the combined effects of those developments were likely to be minor and not significant in relation to the NL. In the case of the Land off Hafod Road, we advise that the development is unlikely to be discernible from the National Landscape in combination with other sites due to the vegetation surrounding the site and intervening developments. However, the local planning authority may wish to consider any cumulative impacts on local landscapes and visual receptors.

We note the landscaping scheme and management plan provided at LS01. The LVA does not describe the mitigation measures in any detail and does not include details of finishes and colours of infrastructure and built elements within the site.

We advise that it is unlikely there will be any discernible effects of these proposals on the National Landscape or proposed Glyndŵr National Park due to vegetation in proximity to the site and its locality behind intervening developments.

Other Matters

The advice in this letter relates to matters which are included on our consultation topics list. We do not rule out the potential for the proposed development to affect other environmental interests that are not included on this list.

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 about the above, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yn gywir / Yours faithfully,

Rachael Burke
Cynghorydd - Cynllunio Datblygu/Advisor - Development Planning
Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru/Natural Resources Wales

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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.