

Ms R Dodd
Sirius Planning

My Ref/Fy Nghyf: Your Ref/Eich Cyf:	Date/Dyddiad:	Please ask for/ Gofynnwch am:
25/0463/SSO	30/06/2025	Matthew Farley 01443 281130

THE TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT) (WALES) REGULATIONS 2017

DATBLYGIAD EIA Scoping Opinion – solar farm.
ARFAETHEDIG/
PROPOSAL :
LLEOLIAD Dyffryn Farm, Ynysmaerdy
/LOCATION:

I refer to your correspondence received 06th May 2025, enclosing a scoping report dated April 2025, for the Environmental Statement (ES) to accompany the forthcoming planning application for a proposed solar farm at Dyffryn Farm, Ynysmaerdy.

I would firstly advise that we are currently experiencing significant delays with consultation responses and therefore, responses from all consultees have not been received at the time of writing. I apologise for any inconvenience and will forward any further responses on as/when they are received.

Having consulted statutory consultees, and other interested parties, I would advise that the scoping report is a comprehensive document that addresses the key issues associated with the proposed development and the potential consequences of allowing the development.

The document advocates a conventional and widely accepted approach to the preparation of an ES and is generally considered acceptable in what it aims to achieve. There are no obvious gaps in terms of the planning policies at both national and local

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level, and it takes a consistent approach to scoping the issues relevant to the consideration of the proposals, identifying key issues.

As such, the document is generally considered acceptable. That said, we would however seek assurance that the following requirements will be adequately addressed in the various topic areas:

- A statement of expertise.
- Legislative and policy context and the methodological approach adopted in reassessing the likely significant environmental effects of the proposals.
- The assessed effects of the proposals pre and post mitigation.
- Where the assessed residual effects remain significant a conclusion on whether additional assessment may be required.

Ecology and Nature Conservation

Following consideration of the Scoping Report, the Council's Ecologist advised that the Wychwood Ecological Assessment (April 25) indicates that a considerable part of the proposed site supports grassland habitat which has some ecological importance. However, further survey assessment would be required to better understand the grassland significance of the site, which should include grassland fungi DNA assessment and Phase II vegetation assessment and mapping.

Additionally, the site is in close proximity to an element of the Rhos Tonyrefail SSSI, known protected species habitat (dormouse and marsh fritillary butterfly). While the Scoping Report identifies that potential, the ecology work is not sufficient to demonstrate that there would be no impacts. Further, it does not evidence effective biodiversity mitigation and enhancement measures, which should include long-term habitat management and monitoring of key habitats and species through a Habitat Management Plan, and which will likely have to be secured via S106 Agreement.

The developer is advised that should this scheme progress, a joint site visit with the Ecologist would be recommended before any further survey work is undertaken.

No comments have been received from Natural Resources Wales (NRW) at the time of writing. Should comments be received, they will be forwarded on for information. That said, NRW provided the below comments for a solar farm development at an adjacent site. The comments are included for information:

The application site is located in close proximity of the Rhos Tonyrefail Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), designated for 'marshy grassland' habitat, its 'flush, spring and soligenous marsh' habitat, and for supporting marsh fritillary butterflies. As such, it is a key area for the conservation of this protected species in South Wales.

The proposed development has the potential to have an impact upon the ecological resilience of the SSSI with two fields within the application site being identified as having suitable habitats to support marsh fritillary butterflies.

It is noted that a central band of 30m is to be retained from development in field 1, connecting the eastern boundary to the Rhiwelin Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC). However, it is difficult to confirm at this stage whether the 30m central band is sufficient to act as landscape linkage. We recommend that further consideration should be made to the potential for both field 1 and field 9 to support marsh fritillary butterflies (see attached NRW response letter for further details).

The ES should consider the positive management of the remaining grassland habitats that are unaffected by the proposed development, in the first instance before wildflower seeds are imported into the habitats on site (see attached NRW response letter for further details).

It is noted that two shallow scrapes are to be excavated along the central band of field 1 and are designed to flood seasonally. In addition, scrape margins would be planted with wetland plant plugs, selecting species found in the nearby Rhos Tonyrefail SSSI. However, these suggested wetlands may not be suitable for field 1 as they have the potential to destroy valuable, marshy grassland habitat, a priority habitat for marsh fritillary butterflies. Further consideration in this respect should be undertaken.

In addition to the SSSI, the development also has the potential to impact upon the Rhiwelin SINC. This SINC plays a general role within the landscape and could form an important part of the habitat connectivity to the marsh fritillary metapopulation. As such it should be considered within the ES.

The protected species surveys already carried out are welcomed. Information must be provided within the ES of the species-specific impacts in the short, medium and long term, together with any mitigation and compensation measures proposed to offset the impacts identified. It is advised that the ES sets out how the long term site security of any mitigation or compensation will be assured, including management and monitoring information and long term financial, tenure, and management responsibility. Where

the potential for significant impacts upon protected species is identified, a Conservation Plan should be prepared.

It is noted that lesser horseshoe bats were recorded on site. It is advised that a maternity roost is located less than 200m south of the site, and second maternity roost is sited within 1km of the south of the site. Therefore, further consideration of lesser horseshoe bats should be made in the ES.

Dormice are known to be present on site. The ES should address the likely impacts upon dormice and include suitable mitigation measures.

It is noted that great crested newt surveys have been carried out at accessible waterbodies within 500m of the site, but it is unclear which waterbodies have been surveyed. It is advised all ponds within 250m of the site are identified and assessed.

While no evidence of otter was found, the ES should include full details of the surveys carried out.

Landscape and Visual Impact

The methodology and report structure set out in respect of the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment appear appropriate in principle for the development proposed.

Noise

The approach to the consideration of noise appears acceptable in principle. The Council's Public Health and Protection Division have not indicated that the approach is in any way lacking or inadequate. However, if not already, it is recommended that Public Health Wales are consulted and their views taken account of.

Cumulative Impacts

The developer is advised that the application site is located in close proximity to several other, existing solar and wind farm developments, as well as a large industrial estate comprised of many mixed uses. The cumulative impacts of this proposed scheme and those existing developments on the environment will form a significant consideration of any future scheme and must be appropriately addressed.

Topics not Significantly Affected by the Proposals

A number of topics are covered under this heading, and these are generally of a lesser concern and indeed will be dealt with under consultation with the relevant bodies concerned for the most part. As such, it is considered the approach set out to each of the topics is appropriate. However, I would advise that the following comments were received from the Council's Highways and Transportation and Flood Risk Management Sections, and should be considered:

Traffic and Transport

Access to the site would be via an existing point off the A4119 which serves Dyffryn Farm. The A4119 fronting the site has recently been redeveloped to provide dualling. Therefore, access to and from the site would be via a newly formed vehicular access with a left in / left out access arrangement only. This proposed access would be acceptable for safe two way vehicular movement.

The solar farm would connect to an existing substation located approximately 1.2km to the south-east of the application site, off the A4119. The cable from the on-site substation will largely run in the highway. The cable run would not be permitted for 5 years along the newly constructed highway. Further discussion with the Council's Highways and Transportation Section in this regard is suggested before the scheme is progressed any further.

Should any planning application be forthcoming, the following information would be required:

- A Transport Statement and Transport Implementation Strategy relating to construction, operation and dismantling phase.
- Details of any proposed works to the existing public highway to provide power supply / cable route along with legal agreement with the Highway Authority, should the cable route be private and not in the ownership of a statutory undertaker.
- A Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) for approval prior to any works commencing on site. The CTMP should include, but not be limited to:
 - i. Details of access and any mitigation measures to improve the access in accordance with details to be submitted.
 - ii. Swept Path Analysis of the largest anticipated load to the site.

- iii. Details of the amount of material to be transported to and from the site.
- iv. Breakdown of the amount of construction traffic required daily and type of vehicle required.
- v. Details of contractor's compound.
- vi. Details of storage of materials within the site.
- vii. Wheel wash facility to prevent mud and debris being dragged onto public highway.
- viii. Condition survey of local highway network with before and after photos and compensation arrangements agreed to rectify any damage caused to the public highway.
- ix. Details of the construction traffic management plan including any traffic management proposals along public highway such as temporary signage / advanced warning.

Hydrology, Flood Risk and Drainage

The NRW Flood Risk Assessment Wales (FRAW) maps have been used to review the site's surface water flood risk, as per Paragraph 8 of the Technical Advice Note (TAN) 15. The review concluded that there is low to high surface water and ordinary watercourse flood risk present within the site boundary, associated with several unnamed ordinary watercourses that drain the hillside. The developer should be aware of the requirements to obtain Ordinary Watercourse Consent under Section 23 of the Land Drainage Act 1991 prior to undertaking any works that may affect any watercourse identified within the site. Further information regarding Ordinary Watercourse Consent and the Council's Culverting Policy can be found on the Council's website.

A total site area of 28.4 hectares has been set out by the applicant, but the total construction area of the solar farm and its associated infrastructure has not been stated within the supporting documents. It is however likely to exceed 100m² and therefore, under Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010, the developer will be required to submit an application to the Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) Approval Body (SAB). Further information regarding SuDS approval can be found on the Council's website.

As addressed in subsection 5.9.2 of the Scoping Report, a Flood Consequences Assessment detailing how the site has been designed in respect of flood risk would be beneficial to the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) in considering the proposal, although this has not been provided at this stage. On making a full application, the

developer will need to provide further evidence to the LLFA regarding how surface water will be managed and disposed of at the site and to demonstrate compliance with the requirements of Section 8.3 of Technical Advice Note 15. This information may include a drainage strategy with associated calculations demonstrating the pre and post surface water discharge rates from the site and a general arrangement of the catchment and proposed drainage system.

Please note that the comments made in this scoping opinion relate to the content of the ES only and are made without prejudice to the determination of any future planning application.

I trust you will find the above helpful in progressing your deliberations on the proposed development. However, should you have any further queries please do contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Matthew Farley
Planning and Enforcement Manager