

DNS: Pre-Application Advice

CAS-01391-M3G6Q9

East Aberthaw Solar Farm

This advice should be read in conjunction with PEDW's procedural guidance on Developments of National Significance. Advice is provided following a request submitted by the applicants on 3 December 2021. The advice is not binding and does not prejudice PEDW's processing of the application if submitted, any recommendation made by an Inspector or any decision made by the Welsh Ministers in relation to a development of this nature on this site.

Summary of Request

The written request identified the following matters:

Pre-Application Consultation

- 1. The names of all specialist consultees to be consulted.
- 2. The names of any relevant persons to be consulted.
- 3. Confirmation that the proposal qualifies as a DNS.

Assuming that EIA is not required;

- 4. Confirmation of the main issues and considerations that are likely to be relevant to the application and the scope and form of assessment required to address them.
- 5. The documents required for the application to be valid.

Other Information

- 6. An outline of the relevant policy framework for the application, taking account of Future Wales and National Policy.
- 7. An overall assessment of the proposal based on the information provided and a view of its merits from a planning perspective.
- 8. Advice on whether any secondary consents will be required.

PEDW Response

1. The Specialist Consultees to be consulted

At the pre-application stage it is the developer's responsibility to identify and consult relevant specialist consultees. The potential specialist consultees are identified in Schedule 5 to the Developments of National Significance (Procedure) (Wales) Order 2016 (as amended) ['the DNS Procedure Order']. The following table is adapted from the Schedule and identifies where PEDW considers that it is likely that a specialist consultee is relevant to this application. This is based on the information provided with the pre-application request and the limited records available to PEDW; it does not purport to be exhaustive and it remains the responsibility of the applicant to correctly identify the specialist consultees for their application.

Table based on Schedule 5 of <u>The Developments of National Significance (Procedure) (Wales)</u> Order 2016 (as amended)

Paragraph	Description of Development	Potential Specialist Consultee	Consult?
(a)	Development within an area which has been notified to the Welsh Ministers by the Health and Safety Executive for the purpose of this provision because of the presence within the vicinity of toxic, highly reactive, explosive or inflammable substances (otherwise than on a relevant nuclear site) and which involves the provision of—	The Health and Safety Executive NSIP.Applications@hse.gov.uk	No – The development does not fall within a notified area.
	(i) more than 500 square metres of office floor space; or		
	(ii) more than 750 square metres of floor space to be used for an industrial process, or which is otherwise likely to result in a material increase in the number of persons working within or visiting the notified area		
(b)	Development within an area which has been notified to the Welsh Ministers by the Office for Nuclear Regulation for the purpose of this provision because of the presence within the vicinity of toxic, highly reactive, explosive or inflammable substances on a relevant nuclear site and which involves the provision of—	The Office for Nuclear Regulation	No.
	(i) more than 500 square metres of office floor space; or		
	(ii) more than 750 square metres of floor space to be used for an industrial process, or which is otherwise likely to result in a material increase in the number of persons working within or visiting the notified area		
(c)	Development likely to result in a material increase in the volume or a material change in the character of traffic—		
	(i) entering or leaving a trunk road; or	The Welsh Ministers (i.e. Transport Directorate of the Welsh Government ¹ .)	Potentially: depending on construction traffic route, construction & decommissioning phases may

¹ Transport Directorate.

			have an impact on a trunk road.
	(ii) using a level crossing over a railway	The operator of the network which includes or consists of the railway in question, and the Welsh Ministers (i.e. Transport for Wales and the Transport Directorate of the Welsh Government)	No.
(d)	Development likely to result in a material increase in the volume or a material change in the character of traffic entering or leaving a classified road or proposed highway	The local highway authority concerned	Yes.
(e)	Development likely to prejudice the improvement or construction of a classified road or proposed highway	The local highway authority concerned	Not under this paragraph. See above.
(f)	Development which involves the provision of a building or pipe-line in an area of coal working notified by the Coal Authority to the Welsh Ministers	The Coal Authority	No.
(g)	Development involving or including mining operations	The Natural Resources Body for Wales ²	Not under this paragraph.
(h)	(i) Development which has a direct physical impact on a scheduled monument. (ii) Development likely to be visible from a scheduled monument and which meets one of the following criteria— a) it is within a distance of 0.5 kilometres from any point of the perimeter of a scheduled monument; b) it is within a distance of 1 kilometre from the perimeter of a scheduled monument and is 15 metres or more in height, or has an area of 0.2 hectares or more; c) it is within a distance of 2 kilometres from the perimeter of a scheduled monument and is 50 metres or more in height, or has an area of 0.5 hectares or more; d) it is within a distance of 3 kilometres from the perimeter of a scheduled monument and is 75 metres or more in height, or has an area of 1 hectare or more; or e) it is within a distance of 5 kilometres from the perimeter of a scheduled monument and is 100 metres or more in height, or has an area of 1 hectare or more. (iii) Development likely to affect the site of a registered historic park or garden or its setting; (iv)	The Welsh Ministers i.e. Cadw: Cadwplanning@gov.wales	Yes, under criterion (h) (iii) due to proximity to Fonmon Castle and other assets.

 $^2 \ NRW \ contact \ details: \ \underline{https://naturalresources.wales/guidance-and-advice/business-sectors/planning-and-development/contact-details-for-planning-enquiry/?lang=en$

	Development within a registered historic landscape that requires an Environmental Impact Assessment; or (v) Development likely to have an impact on the outstanding universal value of a World Heritage Site		
(i)	Development involving the carrying out of works or operations in the bed of or on the banks of a river or stream	The Natural Resources Body for Wales	Not under this paragraph.
(j)	Development for the purpose of refining or storing mineral oils and their derivatives	The Natural Resources Body for Wales	Not under this paragraph.
(k)	Revoked by 2019 amendment.	N/A	N/A
(1)	Development relating to the retention, treatment or disposal of sewage, trade-waste, slurry or sludge (other than the laying of sewers, the construction of pumphouses in a line of sewers, the construction of septic tanks and cesspools serving single dwellinghouses or single caravans or single buildings in which not more than ten people will normally reside, work or congregate, and works ancillary thereto)	The Natural Resources Body for Wales	Not under this paragraph.
(m)	Development affecting the use of land as a cemetery	The Natural Resources Body for Wales	Not under this paragraph.
(n)	(i) in or likely to affect a site of special scientific interest; or (ii) within an area which has been notified to the Welsh Ministers by the Natural Resources Body for Wales and which is within two kilometres, of a site of special scientific interest,of which notification has been given, or has effect as if given, to the Welsh Ministers by the Natural Resources Body for Wales, in accordance with section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (sites of special scientific interest)	The Natural Resources Body for Wales	Yes – there are a number of SSSIs within a 3km radius of the site.
(0)	Development involving any land on which there is a theatre	The Theatres Trust	No.
(p)	Development which is not for agricultural purposes, is not in accordance with the provisions of a development plan and involves—	The Welsh Ministers i.e. Welsh Government's Agriculture Directorate. LQAS@gov.wales	No. however the applicant should review following the proposed ACL survey.
	(i) the loss of not less than 20 hectares of grades 1, 2 or 3a agricultural land which is for the time being used (or was last used) for agricultural purposes; or		
	(ii) the loss of less than 20 hectares of grades 1, 2 or 3a agricultural land which is for the time being used (or was last used) for agricultural purposes, in circumstances in which the development is likely to		

	lead to a further loss of agricultural land amounting cumulatively to 20 hectares or more		
(q)	Development within 250 metres of land which—	The Natural Resources Body for Wales	No.
	(i) is or has, at any time in the 30 years before the relevant application, been used for the deposit of refuse or waste; and		
	(ii) has been notified to the Welsh Ministers by the Natural Resources Body for Wales for the purposes of this provision		
(r)	Development which—	The Sports Council for Wales	No.
	(i) is likely to prejudice the use, or lead to the loss of use, of land being used as a playing field; or		
	(ii) is on land which has been:		
	(aa) used as a playing field at any time in the 5 years before the making of the relevant application and which remains undeveloped; or		
	(bb) allocated for use as a playing field in a development plan or in proposals for such a plan or its alteration or replacement; or		
	(iii) involves the replacement of the grass surface of a playing pitch on a playing field with an artificial, man-made or composite surface		
(s)	Development likely to affect—	The Canal & River Trust	No.
	(i) any inland waterway (whether natural or artificial) or reservoir owned or managed by the Canal & River Trust; or	(Map of managed waterways available online: https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/about-us/where-we-work/wales-and-south-west)	
	(ii) any canal feeder channel, watercourse, let off or culvert,		
	which is within an area which has been notified for the purposes of this provision to the Welsh Ministers by the Canal & River Trust		
(t)	Development—	(a) The control of major accident hazards competent	No.
	(i) involving the siting of new establishments;	authority; and (b) in relation to development falling within paragraph (iii), any person who is the person in control of the land on which any existing establishment in question is located either— (i) according to the register held by the hazardous substances authority under regulation 22 of the Planning (Hazardous Substances) (Wales) Regulations 2015; or (ii) where the control of major accident hazards competent	
	(ii) consisting of modifications to existing establishments covered by Article 11 of Directive 2012/18/EU; or		
	(iii) which is new, including transport routes, locations of public use and residential areas in the vicinity of existing establishments, where the siting or development may be the source of or increase the risk or consequences of a major accident		

		authority has notified the local planning authority pursuant to regulation 34(3) of those Regulations.	
(u)	Development— (i) on land designated as Flood Zone C2; (ii) involving or including emergency services development or highly vulnerable development on land designated as Flood Zone C1 or on land that has been notified to the local planning authority by the Natural Resources Body for Wales for the purpose of this provision NB, as of 1 December 2021 the above is amended to i. on land within Rivers and Sea — Flood Zone 3; ii. on land within Rivers and Sea — Flood Zone 2; iii. on land within TAN 15 Defended Zones.	The Natural Resources Body for Wales	No.
(v)	Any development	The water and sewerage undertaker concerned https://www.water.org.uk/advice-for-customers/find-your-supplier/	Yes.
(w)	Development— i. involving waste development; ii. involving the provision of a building or buildings where the floor space to be created by the development is 1,000 square metres or more; or iii. carried out on a site having an area of 1 hectare or more. NB, this paragraph comes into force on 24 January 2022 but does not apply to: a. proposed applications notified to the Welsh Ministers and local planning authorities in accordance with article 5 of the 2016 Order before 24 January 2022; b. applications made to the Welsh Ministers under section 62D of the 1990 Act before 24 January 2022.	The Fire and Rescue Authority concerned https://gov.wales/find-your-local-fire-and-rescue-service	No, provided the applicant's Notification of Proposed DNS is accepted by PEDW prior to 24 January 2022.

Although not listed at Schedule 5 of the DNS Procedure Order, and thus not considered Specialist Consultees, PEDW notes that the proposed solar farm is located within a Ministry of Defence (MOD) Safeguarding Zone connected with the RAF site at St. Athan and close to Cardiff Airport. PEDW records suggest that environmental and planning restrictions apply to the Safeguarding Zone. It is recommended that the MOD and NATS operating at Cardiff Airport are contacted during pre-application consultation and any potential constraints considered in

the emerging layout. The results of any consultation should be presented in the Consultation Report.

MOD can be contacted at: DIO-Safeguarding-Statutory@mod.gov.uk

NATS Cardiff Airport can be contacted at: aidan.cottee@nats.co.uk

2. Whether any secondary consents will be required and Relevant Persons to be consulted (incorporating points 2 & 8 of the request)

The other consents that may be required to enable a development to be brought forward and the consenting strategy to pursue are matters for the developer. It is not for PEDW to determine what other consents may be necessary, and which of those are best pursued via the Secondary Consent route.

Relevant persons are defined by Section 62G of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) as "the person by whom (but for section 62F) the decision as to whether to grant the secondary consent would have been made", i.e. the consenting body that would have determined the application if it were not being made as a secondary consent to a DNS application.

Once the applicant has determined if they wish to pursue any Secondary Consents PEDW may be able to provide procedural advice regarding those required.

Table of potential 'relevant persons' based on the Schedule to <u>The Developments of National Significance (Specified Criteria and Prescribed Secondary Consents) (Wales)</u>
Regulations 2016 (as amended in 2016 & 2019).

Paragraph	Secondary Consent Sought by Applicant	Relevant Person
1	Scheduled Monument Consent:	The Welsh Ministers, i.e. <u>Cadw</u>
	i.e. Consent under section 2(3) of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 (control of works affecting scheduled monuments).	
2	Consent under section 178(1) Highways Act 1980 (restriction on placing rails, beams etc over highways).	Local Highway Authority
3	Listed Building Consent:	Local Planning Authority
	i.e. Consent under section 8(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 19901 (authorisation of works: listed building consent)	
4	Conservation Area Consent:	Local Planning Authority
	i.e. Consent under section 74(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (control of demolition in conservation areas).	

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5	Hazardous Substances Consent:	The Hazardous Substances Authority (HSA), i.e. the relevant Local Authority.
	i.e. Consent under section 4(1) of the Planning (Hazardous Substances) Act 19901 (requirement of hazardous substances consent).	Local Authority.
6	Hazardous Substances Consent Variation:	The Hazardous Substances Authority (HSA), i.e. the relevant Local Authority.
	i.e. Consent under section 13 of the Planning (Hazardous Substances) Act 19901 (application for hazardous substances consent without condition attached to previous consent).	, in the second
7	Hazardous Substances Consent Revocation:	The Hazardous Substances Authority (HSA), i.e. the relevant Local Authority.
	i.e. Consent under section 17 of the Planning (Hazardous Substances) Act 19901 (revocation of hazardous substances consent on change of control of land).	
8	Planning permission (full) for associated development which is not integral to the main DNS development:	Local Planning Authority
	i.e. Planning permission under section 57(1) of the Town and Country Planning 1990 Act (planning permission required for development) other than outline planning permission.	
9	Stopping Up or Diversion of a Highway:	The Welsh Ministers, i.e. Transport Orders Branch of the Welsh Government
	i.e. Authorisation under section 247(1) of the 1990 Act 1 (order authorising stopping up or diversion of highway).	TransportOrdersBranch@gov.wales
		Please note that if the Order sought from the Welsh Ministers would normally be sought from the Local Authority under section 257 please ensure that the Local Highways Authority is also consulted.
10	Authorisation under section 248(2) of the 1990 Act (order authorising the stopping up or diversion of highway crossing or entering route of proposed new highway).	The Welsh Ministers, i.e. Transport Orders Branch of the Welsh Government TransportOrdersBranch@gov.wales
11	An order under section 251(1) of the 1990 Act (order extinguishing public rights of way over land held for planning purposes).	The Welsh Ministers, i.e. Transport Orders Branch of the Welsh Government TransportOrdersBranch@gov.wales
12	i.e. Consent requested under section 16(1) of the Commons Act 20061 (deregistration and exchange: applications).	The Welsh Ministers, i.e. Agriculture, Sustainable Development Division of Economy, Skills and Natural Resources. CommonsAct2006@gov.wales
		Please also ensure that the Commons Registration Authority (the Local Authority) is consulted.
13	Works on Common Land: i.e. Consent required by section 38(1) of the Commons Act 2006 (prohibition on works without consent).	The Welsh Ministers, i.e. Agriculture, Sustainable Development Division of Economy, Skills and Natural Resources. CommonsAct2006@gov.wales
		Please also ensure that the Commons Registration Authority (the Local Authority) is consulted.

3. Confirmation that the proposal qualifies as a DNS

The status of the development as a DNS can only be formally confirmed via the 'Notification of proposed development' (Notification) process set out at Article 5 of the DNS Procedure Order. However, for the purposes of this advice, it is considered that the proposal does fall within the thresholds for generating stations set out in the Developments of National Significance (Specified Criteria and Prescribed Secondary Consents) (Wales) Regulations 2016 (as amended).

4. An outline of the relevant policy framework

Development Plans

The National Development Framework – <u>Future Wales: the national plan 2040</u> (the NDF) The Vale of Glamorgan <u>Local Development Plan 2011-2026</u> (June 2017 - the LDP)

National Planning Policy

<u>Planning Policy Wales</u> edition 11 (PPW) Technical Advice Notes (TANs)

Supplementary Planning Guidance

Adopted SPGs for the Vale of Glamorgan can be viewed online.

The following documents are not part of the planning policy framework but may still be relevant to this application.

Welsh Government Policy Statement

Local ownership of energy generation in Wales: policy statement

Welsh Government Guidance

Planning implications of renewable and low carbon energy development: practice guidance

It would be in the interest of an effective examination process if the applicants submit a Planning Statement which addresses the project's consistency with:

- The development plan (including the Future Wales and the LDP)
- The National Sustainable Placemaking Outcomes identified in PPW
- Other relevant local and national planning guidance
- The Ways of Working identified in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

5. An overall assessment of the proposal based on the information provided and a view of its merits from a planning perspective

The NDF is the most recent part of the development plan hierarchy that applies to the proposed development. The NDF is supportive of renewable and low carbon energy projects that will not have unacceptable adverse effects on the environment (see policies 17 and 18).

PPW addresses the Welsh Government's support for renewable energy in section 5.9. As noted by the applicant, PPW also makes clear that development of renewable and low carbon energy generation may be appropriate in a green wedge where it preserves openness and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within the green wedge.

The application site does not fall within a Potential Solar Energy Area, as designated by policy MG30 of the LDP and the Council's Renewable Energy Supplementary Planning Guidance (March 2019). However, policy MG30 is not restrictive and only seeks to identify areas of greatest solar potential. The fact that the site is located outside these areas does not present an immediate barrier in policy terms.

Policy MD19 of the LDP is supportive of low carbon and renewable energy generation, provided it can be demonstrated that there would be no unacceptable impacts in certain areas (see bullet point list in policy MD19). As noted by the applicant, MD19 states that the cumulative impacts of such schemes are an important consideration and that where necessary, applications should be supported by a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA). This will likely be important given the site's proximity to the Nant Llancarfan Special landscape Area (policy MG17).

The LDP places the application site outside the settlement boundary in an area of green wedge. However, policy M18 makes clear that the presumption is against *inappropriate* development in the green wedge and refers back to PPW (albeit an earlier version due to the adoption date of the LDP). As noted above, PPW allows that development such as that proposed may be considered *appropriate* development in a green wedge, in the correct circumstances. The applicant will need to make the case that their proposal satisfies the requirements of paragraph 3.77 of PPW and Policy M18 of the LDP.

It is noted that the site lies adjacent to the St Athan – Cardiff Enterprise Zone, but given the type of development proposed and the purpose of policy MG10 of the LDP, it is not considered that there is any direct policy conflict in this respect.

This analysis is not exhaustive, but based on the supportive policy framework and the nature of the scheme, it is considered that there is no immediate conflict based on the type and location of the proposed development. The scheme is therefore considered acceptable in principle, subject to detailed assessment of its specific impacts.

The main issues and considerations that are likely to be relevant to the application and the scope and form of assessment required to address them (if the proposal is not EIA development)

It is noted that the applicant will be seeking an EIA Screening Direction in due course. Based on the submitted request, this advice is written on the assumption that the scheme is not EIA development. Should that change, the applicant is encouraged to seek an EIA Scoping Direction in order to establish the necessary content of any Environmental Statement.

In light of the relevant policy framework and the information provided, PEDW agrees with the applicant's assessment of the likely main issues, which largely tie in to the requirements of policy MD19 of the LDP.

However, the applicant's attention is drawn to the proposed demolition of Aberthaw Power Station which is currently undergoing EIA screening by the Welsh Ministers. Depending on timescales, the construction of the solar farm and the demolition of the power station may give rise to cumulative impacts in terms of traffic, noise, air quality, ecology and landscape and visual impact. Although temporary in nature, the potential for cumulative impacts would need to be addressed in the scope of assessment where necessary and the significance of effects clearly identified.

PEDW has not identified any additional assessments that should be required at this stage, with the potential exception of air quality (should it become necessary), but offers the following comments, which are based on the situation as it currently stands. All assessment should take account of the potential for cumulative effects at the time the application is submitted.

Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

Should be undertaken in line with the methodology set out in Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (Third Edition) and include an assessment of cumulative impact.

Transport Assessment and Construction Traffic Management Plan

The submission of a TA and a draft CTMP is welcomed.

Heritage Assessment

The Heritage Assessment should assess the impact of the proposed development on the setting of all relevant designated historic assets. Given the proximity to a number of such assets, early consultation with Cadw is recommended. The assessment should be carried out in accordance with the Welsh Government guidance set out in Setting of Historic Assets in Wales (May 2017).

Archaeological Assessment

Archaeological Assessment based on detailed walkover and desk-based assessment is welcomed. The walkover survey should be undertaken following the completion of desk-based research, so that it can be conducted in light of the full site context. It is recommended that the applicant contact Glamorgan Gwent Archaeological Trust for a view on the proposed approach.

Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy

The intention to submit a flood risk assessment is noted. The applicant is reminded of the potential requirement for SuDS consent and the need for any drainage strategy to be consistent with that requirement. Early engagement with the SuDS approving body is recommended.

Ecological Assessment

The approach to ecological assessment set out in the request is considered appropriate. If no ES is to be prepared, where further ecological assessment is required, steps should be taken to ensure consistency across the various assessments. For example where issues such as Transport and Noise have the potential to impact sensitive ecological receptors.

Glint and Glare Assessment

No Comment.

Noise Assessment

The intention to undertake a noise assessment is welcomed.

Agricultural Land Classification

The site's predicted ALC grade of 3b is noted, but the applicant's intention to undertake a site-specific ALC survey is considered appropriate. Whilst each application is dealt with on its own merits, the applicant's attention is drawn to the Inspector's Report and subsequent Ministerial Decision on the recent Blackberry Lane Solar DNS application, which dealt with the issue of reversibility in relation to solar development on agricultural land graded as BMV.

7. The documents required for a valid application

The requirements for a valid application are set out in Article 12 of the DNS Procedure Order. On the basis that this application does not involve Crown Land, mining operations or the use of land for mineral working deposits, and does not include an overhead electric line, the following documents are the statutory requirements:

All DNS Applications must include:

- Completed application form
- Copy of the Inspectorate's acceptance of Notification
- Site location plan
- Any other plans, drawings and information necessary to describe the development which is the subject of the application
- Copy of land ownership certificates (Article 17)
- A Design and Access Statement (in line with Article 14)
- A Pre-Application Consultation Report (in line with Article 11)
- A written statement regarding obligations under S106 of the 1990 Act

NB: All plans and drawings must be drawn to a scale identified by the applicant and all plans must show the direction of north.

 The applicant has requested advice based on the proposal not being considered EIA development. It is noted that they will seek an EIA Screening Direction to confirm whether or not this is accurate and thus whether an ES would be required.

If the application involves Secondary Consents:

 A written statement outlining any secondary consents must accompany the application; there may also be additional validation requirements in respect of the Secondary Consent application, depending on the type. PEDW is working on updating its Secondary Consent guidance to address each type, but in the interim period applicants are free to raise case specific queries once they have identified what Secondary Consents they intend to seek.

It would assist in the Acceptance process and enable an effective examination if the application documents include an Index of submitted documents that specifies the version number and date of each document, which also helps to signpost where matters are addressed in the application documents. This could be updated as the examination progresses should any additional documents / updated versions be submitted.