

Environmental Statement: Technical Appendix 8.7 – Alaw Môn Echoes Project Minutes 6 July 2021

ES TA 8.7

Development of National Significance

Alaw Môn Solar Farm

Land west of the B5112, 415m south of Llyn Alaw, 500m east of Llantrisant and 1.5km west of Llannerch-y-Medd, Anglesey

February 2024



Alaw Môn Solar Farm: Echoes Project meeting - Greenland white-fronted geese

BSG Project Ref: P20-947

6 Jul 2021, 1:30pm (via Teams)

Attendees:

Dr Rachel Taylor (British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) / Echoes Project)

Rob Styles (Enso Energy, Project Developer)

Guy Miller (BSG Ecology, Principal Consultant Ecologist)

Note: These notes record the discussion points from a meeting held between Enso Energy, the developer of the Alaw Môn Solar Farm; Dr Rachel Taylor, a research scientist at the BTO, based in Bangor; and BSG Ecology the consultant providing ecological advice to Enso Energy.

Rachel Taylor contacted Enso energy after becoming aware of the Alaw Môn Solar Farm, through the initial public consultation work in late June 2021, to discuss the results of recent unpublished research work relating to Greenland white-fronted geese *Anser albifrons flavirostris* in the vicinity of Llyn Alaw, just to the north of the Site.

The meeting was arranged to discuss the findings of the research work, to provide further information relating to the project, and to identify any points that required further consideration in the Environmental Impact Assessment for the solar farm.

1. Echoes Project background

RT: RT introduced herself as act as science lead at BTO Wales. As part of this she is leading on spatial work/tagging on the Echoes project (a project researching wintering habitats for curlew and Greenland white-fronted geese (GWFG)); she is also part of GWFG Partnership for Wales.

GWFG is a rare species which breeds in Greenland and winters on the west coast of Britain and in Ireland.

A recently discovered flock of 18 birds, which RT explained is a significant flock in nature conservation terms, has been monitored since January 2021 using GPS tags.

Three birds within the flock have been tagged – field observations suggest that the flock tends to stay together in a group in autumn and winter; the tagged birds can therefore be used to give a good indication of patterns of field use by the flock.

Prior to the discovery of this flock records in Anglesey were sparse. It is however considered likely by RT that this flock has previously been present but unrecorded.

RT (BTO/Echoes Project) can provide scientific information but is not able to give consultancy advice.

2. Echoes Project data

RT: The results obtained to date show that the Anglesey population moves between two areas: the northern part of Llyn Alaw and two areas of farmland close to the northern end of Llyn Alaw (where birds feed on improved

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| | <p>pasture), and an area of farmland in the vicinity of Afon Cefni, approximately 15km to the south-east.</p> <p>The birds are thought to be very site faithful, sensitive to disturbance and hard to see – observation data is difficult to obtain.</p> <p>The data has not been published yet – the project is at an early stage; there are sensitivities about putting the data into the public domain that need to be resolved with stakeholders before it can be published.</p> <p>The birds arrive in late October/early November and this year (2021) left Anglesey on 28 March on spring migration to breeding grounds.</p> <p>This is an ongoing research project, and that data have not yet been gathered for a full winter season (i.e. there is currently no data for the period between October and December).</p> <p>The tags are expected to last for 1-2 years. The project is due to run until spring 2024.</p> <p>The following information was provided by RT, partly based on field observations and data obtained from the Echoes project to date:</p> <p>Birds appear to prefer improved grassland (improved leys) with a sward that is sufficiently long for nibbling. There may be a preference for wetter areas which hold shallow water after rain. The fields used to the north of Llyn Alaw are improved pasture/leys. The fields used in the Afon Cefni area are typically wet in winter, with a sward up to 15cm. Due to their characteristics these fields are challenging to graze with livestock.</p> <p>It is considered likely that geese prefer fields with a more open aspect and would be less inclined to use fields adjacent to trees and woodland, as such areas have poor visibility; this is needed for monitoring predators.</p> <p>It is not known why the birds move between the two sites on Anglesey, it may possibly be to do with nutritional benefits of foraging areas, but at this stage this is speculative.</p> <p>The GWFG do occur with flocks of other grey geese (e.g. greylag geese) but tend to aggregate separately in a sub-group, rather than mingle throughout the flock.</p> |
| <p>3. Alaw Môn Project overview</p> | <p>RS gave an overview of the project:</p> <p>Alaw Môn Solar Farm (the ‘Site’) is located in the centre of Anglesey to the east of Llantrisant village, centred at Ordnance Survey (OS) Grid Reference SH 38304 83896. Llyn Alaw SSSI, which is important for wildfowl, is c. 400m to the north of the Site.</p> <p>The Site is approximately 300 hectares in extent. The proposed development is a ground-mounted solar photovoltaic (PV) farm and energy storage facility, together with associated infrastructure.</p> <p>The array locations are not currently fixed; however initial layout designs are being devised to take account of ecological constraints including designated</p> |

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| | <p>sites (see below) and existing habitat features including hedgerows, scrub, ponds, and watercourses.</p> <p>The grid connection route would utilise the existing highway and therefore is unlikely to give rise to any significant ecological impacts.</p> <p>It was noted that there are other solar farm projects at a pre-planning stage in the vicinity of Llyn Alaw, that have also come to the attention of RT, and that may potentially be situated within areas used by GWFG.</p> <p>RS clarified that Alaw Môn is to the south of Llyn Alaw.</p> |
| <p>4. Alaw Môn Ecological survey</p> | <p>Guy Miller, BSG Ecology, provided an overview of the ecological character of the Site:</p> <p>The Site supports large areas of primarily sheep grazed improved grassland, with some localised species-poor acid, neutral and marshy rush-dominated grassland. Fields are typically separated by hedgerows with field boundary trees and fences; ditches and walls and shelter-belts are also present. The Site is undulating, the west side sloping down towards Llyn Alaw and a shallow valley formed by Cors-y-Bol, which is to the west of the Site boundary. Cors-y-Bol, a Local Wildlife Site (LWS), is an area of fen, marshy grassland and scrub.</p> <p>The bird survey work to date has involved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bird survey: Breeding bird characterisation survey (three visits, April, May, June 2020); • Wintering survey: Nine visits between October 2020-March 2021, including the site, adjacent fields, and the southern part of Llyn Alaw; • Desk study via Cofnod (Local Environmental Records Centre for North Wales): fewer than 10 records of GWFG were provided, these date from between 1995 and 2007; typically, one or two birds from Llyn Alaw. • Consultation has been carried out with Natural Resources Wales (NRW) via DPAS, on 23 June 2021. During this meeting, Patrick Lindley (NRW ornithologist) recommended that RT was consulted in relation to the Echoes Project GPS satellite tagging data. |
| <p>5. Use of the Site by GWFG</p> | <p>The data gathered by the Echoes project to date does not suggest that the Site is being used by GWFG. Activity concentrated in the northern part of Llyn Alaw, and in farmland on the north side of Llyn Alaw. Two areas of farmland are regularly used:</p> <p>a) fields immediately adjacent to, and up to approximately 700m from, the north/east shore of Llyn Alaw; and</p> <p>b) fields approximately 1.5km to the north of Llyn Alaw, between Penbol and Carreglefn.</p> <p>It should be noted that the dataset is incomplete and does not include early season data. There is therefore some uncertainty about geese movements during the period that has not been monitored.</p> |

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| | GWFG was not recorded from the Site during the nine visits undertaken by BSG Ecology. |
| 6. Actions | <p>RT stated that the current data set could be obtained by emailing the Echoes project. This data has subsequently been requested.</p> <p>RT is able to provide further information on GWFG.</p> <p>RT suggested that Julian Hughes (RSPB), who sits on the GWFG working group, may also be able to provide information in relation to GWFG.</p> |

Minutes taken by Guy Miller, BSG Ecology

14 July 2021