

Environmental Statement: Technical Appendix 8.6 – IACC Letter And Response

ES TA 8.6

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



Our ref: P20-947 Alaw Môn IACC Consultation Letter

Your ref:

07 May 2021

Angharad Crump
Major Projects Planning Officer
Isle of Anglesey County Council
Llangefni
Anglesey
LL77 7TW

By email only (AngharadCrump@ynysmon.gov.uk)

Dear Angharad

Re: Alaw Môn Solar Farm Consultation

Enso Energy has commissioned BSG Ecology to complete ecological work with regard to the potential development of a ground-mounted solar photovoltaic (PV) farm and energy storage facility, together with associated infrastructure on land near Llantrisant, Anglesey. The proposed development, which has been named Alaw Môn, will have a generating capacity of approximately 160Mega-Watt (MW). The proposed development exceeds the 10MW threshold for energy generating projects in Wales and therefore constitutes a Development of National Significance ('DNS') under the Planning (Wales) Act 2015.

The site is located on the Isle of Anglesey in North Wales, within the administrative boundary of the Isle of Anglesey County Council (IACC) and extends to approximately 300 hectares (ha). The site is located approximately 500 metres to the east of the small hamlet of Llantrisant and approximately 1.5km to the west of the village of Llannerch-y-medd. A plan of the Site is attached.

The array locations are not currently fixed; however initial layout designs are being devised to take account of ecological constraints including designated sites (see below) and existing habitat features including hedgerows, scrub, ponds and watercourses.

A cabling route is currently being identified which links to an existing grid connection at Wylfa Power Station to the north. The route is likely to be within existing roads or verges.

The purpose of this letter is to inform you of the proposals and associated scope of ecological work to date. I would therefore be grateful if you could forward this letter to Dave Cowley, IACC's Biodiversity Officer.

Please note that we also have supplied this information to Natural Resources Wales to help inform a project discussion that we intend to have with via a Discretionary Planning Advice Service (DPAS). Alongside this request, a formal request for an EIA Scoping opinion has also been submitted to the Planning Inspectorate.

Ecological and Ornithological Work in 2020

BSG Ecology has been undertaking work on the site since spring 2020. The scope of work underway or planned is summarised below.

i) Desk Study and Consultation

A desk study has been carried out which has involved obtaining data on species and designated sites from Cofnod (North Wales Environmental Information Service) and via online sources: MAGIC.gov and a review of aerial photographs.

There are no European Protected Sites (SACs/SPAs) within or adjacent to the site. Corsydd Mon / Anglesey Fens SAC is the nearest European Protected Site, which is located approximately 6km to the east. SPAs are present around the Anglesey coast; the nearest is Liverpool Bay / Bae Lerpwl SPA, located approximately 9km from the site. Ynys Feurig, Cemlyn Bay and The Skerries SPA is a similar distance to the north, located close to Wylfa nuclear power station.

Nantanog SSSI, a nationally important geological exposure, is located within the site boundary; it will be excluded and buffered from the development area.

Llyn Alaw SSSI, a large mesotrophic open waterbody, lies approximately 325m to the north of the site at its nearest point. The citation refers to wintering wildfowl that approach the threshold (1 % of the population) of national importance: whooper swan, teal and shoveler. A variety of other waterfowl occur, and marginal vegetation features locally-rare plant species.

A Local Wildlife Site (LWS), Cors-y-Bol, is present in the western part of the site. The LWS supports marshy grassland and wetland vegetation and scrub in a shallow valley, with a ditch/watercourse that flows into Llyn Alaw. Another LWS (Tir Pori Traian LWS) is adjacent to, but located outside of, the northern part of the site boundary.

ii) Phase 1 Habitat Survey

An extended Phase 1 habitat survey of the site was carried out in April and May 2020. Habitats present at the site include considerable areas of improved grassland, predominantly grazed by sheep, some marshy grassland, occasional small patches of gorse and willow scrub close to field edges. Fields are separated by hawthorn-dominated hedgerows with occasional field boundary trees. Shelterbelts and small patches of woodland and trees are present, but infrequent, and the landscape is predominantly open.

Ponds are a feature of the area, both within the site and in the surrounding area. Cors-y-bol, a minor stream that discharges to Llyn Alaw to the north, is one of very few running watercourses within or close to the site.

iii) Protected Species (including Breeding and Wintering Birds)

There are 30 ponds within the site and a 500m perimeter area around its boundary; 17 of these were accessed and assessed for great crested newt in spring 2020; eDNA samples were taken from suitable ponds. A positive result was recorded from one pond (Pond 7); this is currently subject to further great crested newt survey to inform the assessment. Three survey visits have been carried out in spring 2021 to date. No great crested newts have been recorded so far from Pond 7, suggesting that the population is likely to be small.

Of the 30 ponds, 13 were not accessed in 2020; they are all off-site on third party land, and access was not possible/obtained. Of these, three are considered to offer no potential to support great crested newt populations as they are managed/stocked fishing lakes; five are distant, being over 250m from the site boundary. Aerial photos suggest that, of the remaining five, three may no longer be present; we are seeking to carry out further assessment on these ponds in spring 2021, if access can be obtained.

The assessment will consider the significance of any access limitations; overall, given the results of the survey work to date, the access limitations are considered unlikely to significantly affect the ability to carry out the assessment or to identify a proportionate mitigation approach. Further survey work for

great crested newt is ongoing in spring 2021 (HSI and eDNA survey of any additional accessible ponds, and population class assessment survey of Pond 7).

Breeding bird surveys were undertaken in spring 2020 (three visits, one in April, one in May and one in June) and wintering bird surveys have been carried out in winter 2020/21 (monthly visits from October to March). The breeding bird assemblage is considered to be typical of improved pasture farmland, being dominated by common and widespread passerines typically of scrub and hedgerow habitats. Curlew occurred on spring passage, but there was no evidence they attempted to breed; foraging buzzard were noted. Few birds are breeding within the open fields: meadow pipit and skylark were recorded occasionally and in very low numbers and were found absent from the majority of the Site.

The focus of the wintering survey work was to determine whether the wildfowl species for which the Llyn Alaw SSSI was notified use the site. Twice monthly visits were completed between October 2020 and March 2021, inclusive. Whooper swan was not recorded using the fields. Small numbers of wildfowl (wigeon, teal) were found to use the larger open pond at Nantanog, Occasional small flocks of waders (golden plover and lapwing) were recorded. Snipe occurs in the wetter areas.

Further checks of water courses for evidence of use by water vole and otter will also be carried out in spring 2020.

iv) Baseline Reports

We are in the process of producing baseline ecological reports for the site. When complete these can be provided for your information and further comment.

v) Principles of mitigation and enhancement

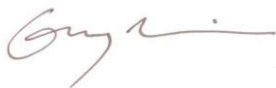
Ecology will be taken into account in the design and layout of the proposed together and as part of the landscape management strategy. This is likely to include avoiding and buffering existing habitat features wherever possible, and carrying out enhancement, such as gapping up hedgerows. Such measures will help to demonstrate how the ecological resilience required of development under Welsh planning policy is being delivered through enhancement of existing ecological networks.

Next Steps

We would like to understand whether you have concerns with regard to the proposals, and ideally would like to agree that the work completed / in progress is sufficient to assess impacts on key ecological features.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely



Guy Miller

Principal Ecologist

For and on behalf of BSG Ecology

From: Angharad Crump <AngharadCrump@ynysmon.gov.uk>
Sent: Wednesday, 12 May, 2021 12:49 PM
To: Guy Miller
Cc: Ben Lewis; Ben Kwok; Robert Styles; Simon Chamberlayne
Subject: RE: P20-947 - Alaw Môn Solar Farm, Consultation Letter, Ecology

Guy,

Further to your email below, I can confirm that I have shared both the email and your letter dated 07th May 2021 with Dave Cowley, the Council's Ecological and Environmental Adviser.

I can confirm that the Council is satisfied with the proposed outlined with regards to assessing the potential impacts of the Alaw Môn proposed Solar Farm on the ecological receptors identified.

The principles set out in section v) of the letter is notes that the Council welcomes the commitment to enhance existing ecological networks, this being in line with S6 duty from Environment Wales Act, under which there is a need for the IACC to seek to conserve and enhance biodiversity overall. There requirements are also set out in the Local Development Plan policies AMG5 and AMG6. We would welcome further discussion in due course in order to get a better understanding of what this commitment would include and how it will be secured within the planning process.

The Council trusts that the area of Cors y Bol Local Wildlife Site within the proposal area will be enhanced, and seek confirmation that there will not be any adverse impacts on other parts of the site.

The letter mentions further checks for water vole. Please note also the need to include checks for otter also as appropriate to do so (if any habitat likely to be used by otters).

It is noted that separate consultation is taking place with NRW, which of course has various specialists who can advise with regards to the scope of the ecological surveys mentioned including great crested newts and birds. We trust that any advice given by NRW will be taken into consideration.

I trust that the above is of assistance to you and we thank you for sharing this information with the

Council to seek our views.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of any further assistance to you.

Kind regards

Angharad

Angharad Wyn Crump MRTPI

Swyddog Achos Arweiniol Prosiectau Mawr (Amgylchedd)

Lead Case Officer Major Projects (Environment)

Rheoleiddio a Datblygu Economaidd

Regulation and Economic Development

Cyngor Sir Ynys Mon / Isle of Anglesey County Council,

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