

Habitat Regulations Assessment: No Significant Effects Report

Development of National Significance
Pre-Application Consultation

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

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 This document is a No Significant Effects Report; it is intended to inform Stage 1 Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) for Alaw Môn Solar Farm, Anglesey (“the Development”).
- 1.2 Stage 1 of Habitats Regulations Assessment is to determine whether a plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on any European Site (i.e. internationally designated sites: Special Protection Area (SPA), Special Area of Conservation (SAC), and Ramsar Sites), either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.
- 1.3 Where no likely significant effects are identified for all the European sites considered, then the report can take the form of a No Significant Effects Report (NSER) and further HRA stages (i.e. Stages 2-4) will not be required. The term No Significant Effects Report is used in relation to Developments of National Significance (DNS) projects.
- 1.4 This report is prepared to aid the competent authority with respect of HRA matters.

2 Project summary

- 2.1 The Site, Alaw Môn Solar Farm, is located on land to the west of the B5112 and to the south of Llyn Alaw at Llantrisant, Anglesey, centred at Ordnance Survey (OS) grid reference SH 383 838.
- 2.2 The Development is ground-mounted solar photovoltaic (PV) farm and battery energy storage system facility (BESS), together with associated infrastructure. The Development will have a generating capacity of approximately 160 Mega-Watt (MW). The Development will involve the installation of solar PV panels in across the Site as well as the BESS facility, in fields which are currently used as grazed pasture.
- 2.3 The Site, including grid connection, is approximately 268 hectares in extent. It supports mainly improved grassland; with some areas of species-poor semi-improved grassland and localised patches of marshy grassland. Fields are typically separated by hedgerows with field boundary trees and fences; ditches and walls are also present. At the western boundary of the Site is an area of fen, marshy grassland and scrub that forms part of the Cors-y-Bol Local Wildlife Site (LWS). Within the Site boundary is the Nantanog Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), a geological SSSI; approximately 400m to the north of the Site boundary is Llyn Alaw SSSI, which is a large mesotrophic open waterbody. Ponds are present within the Site and in the surrounding landscape. The Site is considered to be typical of the farmland in the surrounding area.
- 2.4 The Development will connect to the electricity network via the National Grid Substation at Wylfa. The connection will be provided by underground cabling located within the adopted highway and will not affect vegetated areas.
- 2.5 Baseline survey and desk study data has been obtained between 2020 and 2023, including habitat survey, great crested newt survey, and winter and breeding bird survey. The desk study data involved obtaining species and protected site data from Cofnod (North Wales Environmental Information Service) and consultation with the BTO/Echoes Project, in relation to Greenland white-fronted goose. The results of this work are detailed in Chapter 8 Biodiversity of the Environmental Statement (ES) in support of the DNS application for the Alaw Mon Solar Farm.
- 2.6 The Development's layout has been devised to take account of ecological constraints including designated sites (see below) and existing habitat features including hedgerows, scrub, ponds and watercourses; these features will be retained and protected within the development area. The landscape strategy includes habitat creation around including new areas of scrub, woodland, grassland and ponds; the approach has taken into account policy requirements to demonstrate biodiversity net benefit and ecosystem resilience.
- 2.7 During the construction period, which is expected to last for 12 months, there will some localised disturbance from noise and construction activities within the Site; different parts of the Site will be affected during different types. Precautionary mitigation is proposed during the construction phase to avoid impacts on birds (but this mitigation is not relevant to SPA qualifying species). Further mitigation details are set out within Chapter 8 Biodiversity of the ES.

3 Consideration of likely significant effects on nearby European Sites

- 3.1 Nearby European Sites have been identified using <https://magic.defra.gov.uk/>.
- 3.2 European Site interest features have been identified from <https://sac.jncc.gov.uk/> (these are summarised in Table 1 below; the JNCC data was most recently accessed in August 2023). The locations of these Sites are shown on the European Protected Sites Plan in the Appendix.
- 3.3 European Sites within 15km of the Development have been considered in this document. Those over 15km from the Site have been scoped out.
- 3.4 There are no European Sites within the Site boundary or within 7km of the Site (excluding the cabling route required for the Grid Connection, which is all within adopted highway of local roads, and which is discussed separately below).
- 3.5 All nearby European Sites (i.e. those within 15km from the Site) are described in Table 1 below. This table provides summary information on the European Sites, including location from the Site, qualifying interest features, possible impact pathways and the likely significant effects that could occur alone or in combination with other plans or projects.

Table 1. Alaw Môn Solar Farm: nearest European Sites (SAC/SPA/Ramsar)

Site Name	Site interest features*	Location	Consideration of likely significant effects
Corsydd Môn / Anglesey Fens SAC / Ramsar Site	3140 Hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic vegetation of Chara spp. 7210 Calcareous fens with <i>Cladium mariscus</i> and species of the <i>Caricion davallianae</i> 7230 Alkaline fens 4010 Northern Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica tetralix</i> 6410 Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (<i>Molinion caeruleae</i>) 1013 Geyer's whorl snail <i>Vertigo geyeri</i> 1044 Southern damselfly <i>Coenagrion mercuriale</i> 1065 Marsh fritillary butterfly <i>Euphydryas aurinia</i> General Site Character: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inland water bodies (Standing water, Running water) • Bogs, Marshes, Water fringed vegetation, Fens • Heath, Scrub, Maquis and Garrigue, Phygrana • Dry grassland, Steppes • Humid grassland, Mesophile grassland • Mixed woodland 	Approximately 6.5km to the east.	The SAC is distant and not hydrologically connected to the Site. Further details relating to hydrology are set out in the ES. There is no identified impact pathway. <u>No likely significant effects.</u>

<p>Llyn Dinam SAC</p>	<p>3150 Natural eutrophic lakes with Magnopotamion or Hydrocharition - type vegetation</p> <p>General Site Character:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inland water bodies (Standing water, Running water) • Bogs, Marshes, Water fringed vegetation, Fens • Dry grassland, Steppes • Humid grassland, Mesophile grassland <p>Broad-leaved deciduous woodland</p>	<p>8.3km to the south</p>	<p>The SAC is distant and not hydrologically connected to the Site.</p> <p>Further details relating to hydrology are set out in the ES.</p> <p>There is no identified impact pathway.</p> <p><u>No likely significant effects.</u></p>
<p>North Anglesey Marine / Gogledd Môn Forol SAC</p>	<p>Protected feature: Harbour porpoise <i>Phocoena phocoena</i></p>	<p>At closest point is 8.5km to west, and continues around the coast to the north, the north coast being approximately 10km from the Site.</p>	<p>A marine SAC.</p> <p>The SAC is distant and not ecologically connected to the Site.</p> <p>There is no identified impact pathway.</p> <p><u>No likely significant effects.</u></p>
<p>Y Fenai a Bae Conwy / Menai Strait and Conwy Bay SAC</p>	<p>1110 Sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time 1140 Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide 1170 Reefs 1160 Large shallow inlets and bays 8330 Submerged or partially submerged sea caves</p> <p>General Site Character:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marine areas, Sea inlets • Tidal rivers, Estuaries, Mud flats, Sand flats, Lagoons (including saltwork basins) • Salt marshes, Salt pastures, Salt steppes • Shingle, Sea cliffs, Islets 	<p>At its closest point is 11km to east, and continues around the coast further eastwards, the north coast being approximately 10km from the Site.</p>	<p>A marine SAC.</p> <p>The SAC is distant and not ecologically connected to the Site.</p> <p>There is no identified impact pathway.</p> <p><u>No likely significant effects.</u></p>
<p>Anglesey Terns / Morwenoliaid Ynys Môn SPA</p>	<p>During the breeding season the area regularly supports: Roseate tern <i>Sterna dougallii</i>, 3 pairs representing 5% of the GB breeding population; Common tern <i>Sterna hirundo</i>, 189 pairs representing 1.5% of the GB breeding population; Arctic tern <i>Sterna paradisaea</i>, 1,290 pairs representing 2.9% of the GB breeding Population; Sandwich tern <i>Sterna sandvicencis</i>, 460</p>	<p>Within the coastal waters surrounding Anglesey, at its nearest point it is 8.5km to the west.</p>	<p>A marine SAC.</p> <p>The SAC is distant and not ecologically connected to the Site.</p> <p>There is no identified impact pathway.</p> <p><u>No likely significant effects.</u></p>

	pairs representing 3.3% of the GB breeding population.		
Glannau Ynys Gybi / Holy Island Coast SPA	Over winter the area regularly supports: Chough <i>Pyrhocorax pyrhocorax</i> (7% of the GB population)	11.6km to the south-west around the coastline of Holy Island Ynys Gybi.	Assessment on impacts on Chough are considered in the Alaw Môn ES Ecology Chapter (excerpt below): “Chough is a rare species which nests on sea cliffs on Anglesey (for which Holy Island Coast SPA is classified) but ranges more widely in winter (Pritchard et al., 2021). Data from Cofnod includes seven chough records; these are from between 2006 and 2010 and relate to small groups of birds from a 1km grid square (SH3980) which at its closest point is c. 1.5km to the south of the Site; the precise location of the records is not specified. The Welsh Chough Project holds no records of choughs feeding at the Site or in immediate surrounding areas. There are generally very few records from the interior of Anglesey, away from Parys Mountain and Llyn Traffwll (Adrienne Stratford, pers. comm, 6 July 2021.). Chough was not recorded during any of the surveys.” The Site is not assessed to be important for chough and no impact pathway is identified. <u>No likely significant effects.</u>
Liverpool Bay / Bae Lerpwl SPA	Used regularly by 1% or more of the Great Britain populations of red-throated diver <i>Gavia stellata</i> , little gull <i>Hydrocoloeus minutus</i> , little tern <i>Sterna albifrons</i> , common tern <i>Sterna hirundo</i> . Used regularly by 1% or more of the biogeographical populations of regularly occurring migratory species: common scoter <i>Melanitta nigra</i> . Used regularly by over 20,000 waterbirds in any season (including those listed above, red-breasted merganser <i>Mergus serrator</i> and great cormorant <i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>).	At its closest point is 11km to east.	A marine SAC. The SAC is distant and not ecologically connected to the Site. There is no identified impact pathway. <u>No likely significant effects.</u>

<p>Y Twyni o Abermenai i Aberffraw / Abermenai to Aberffraw Dunes SAC</p>	<p>2110 Embryonic shifting dunes 2120 "Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> (white dunes)" 2130 "Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation ("grey dunes")" 2170 Dunes with <i>Salix repens</i> ssp. <i>argentea</i> (<i>Salicion arenariae</i>) 2190 Humid dune slacks</p>	<p>At its closest point is 12km to south</p>	<p>The SAC is distant and not ecologically connected to the Site. There is no identified impact pathway. <u>No likely significant effects.</u></p>
<p>Glannau Môn: Cors heli / Anglesey Coast: Saltmarsh</p>	<p>1310 Salicornia and other annuals colonizing mud and sand 1330 Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae</i>) 1130 Estuaries 1140 Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide</p>	<p>At its closest point is 14km to south-east</p>	<p>The SAC is distant and not ecologically connected to the Site. There is no identified impact pathway. <u>No likely significant effects.</u></p>

* Source: JNCC/NRW SPA/SAC Site information (<https://sac.jncc.gov.uk/>)

The Development's Grid Connection

3.6 In addition, the Development will connect to the electricity network via the National Grid Substation at Wylfa. The grid connection will be provided by underground cabling located within the adopted highway. The point of connection at Wylfa is approximately 0.5km from the Anglesey Terns/ Morwenoliaid Ynys Môn SPA and North Anglesey Marine / Gogledd Môn Forol SAC. As above, the cabling route is within adopted highway, and connects into an existing substation at Wylfa; it will not affect vegetated areas or any habitats that are ecologically connected to these European sites, and there is no identified impact pathway. There will be no likely significant effects.

Air quality

3.7 An air quality assessment has been carried out as part of the EIA for the Development. No air quality impacts on European Sites have been identified through this assessment; as detailed in Chapter 11 Air Quality of the ES.

Consultation

3.8 The need for HRA has not been identified during consultation with NRW (7 May 2021 and 23 June 2021) and Isle of Anglesey Council (7 May 2021). Further details are set out in Chapter 8 Biodiversity of the ES.

4 Conclusion: Screening - No Significant Effects

- 4.1 The following outcome is preliminary to help inform the competent authority in their decision making, both in relation to their assessment and conclusion.
- 4.2 The SAC/SPAs listed in Table 1 above are distant and are not assessed to be ecologically (and/or hydrologically) connected to the Site.
- 4.3 No impact pathways are identified between these sites and the Development.
- 4.4 Accordingly, Likely Significant Effects have not been identified. As such no further “in combination” assessment is required. No mitigation measures are required. No further assessment (i.e. Stage 2 HRA “appropriate assessment”) is therefore considered necessary.
- 4.5 Effects on European Protected Sites (SACs/SPAs) are scoped out in in Chapter 8 Biodiversity of the ES.

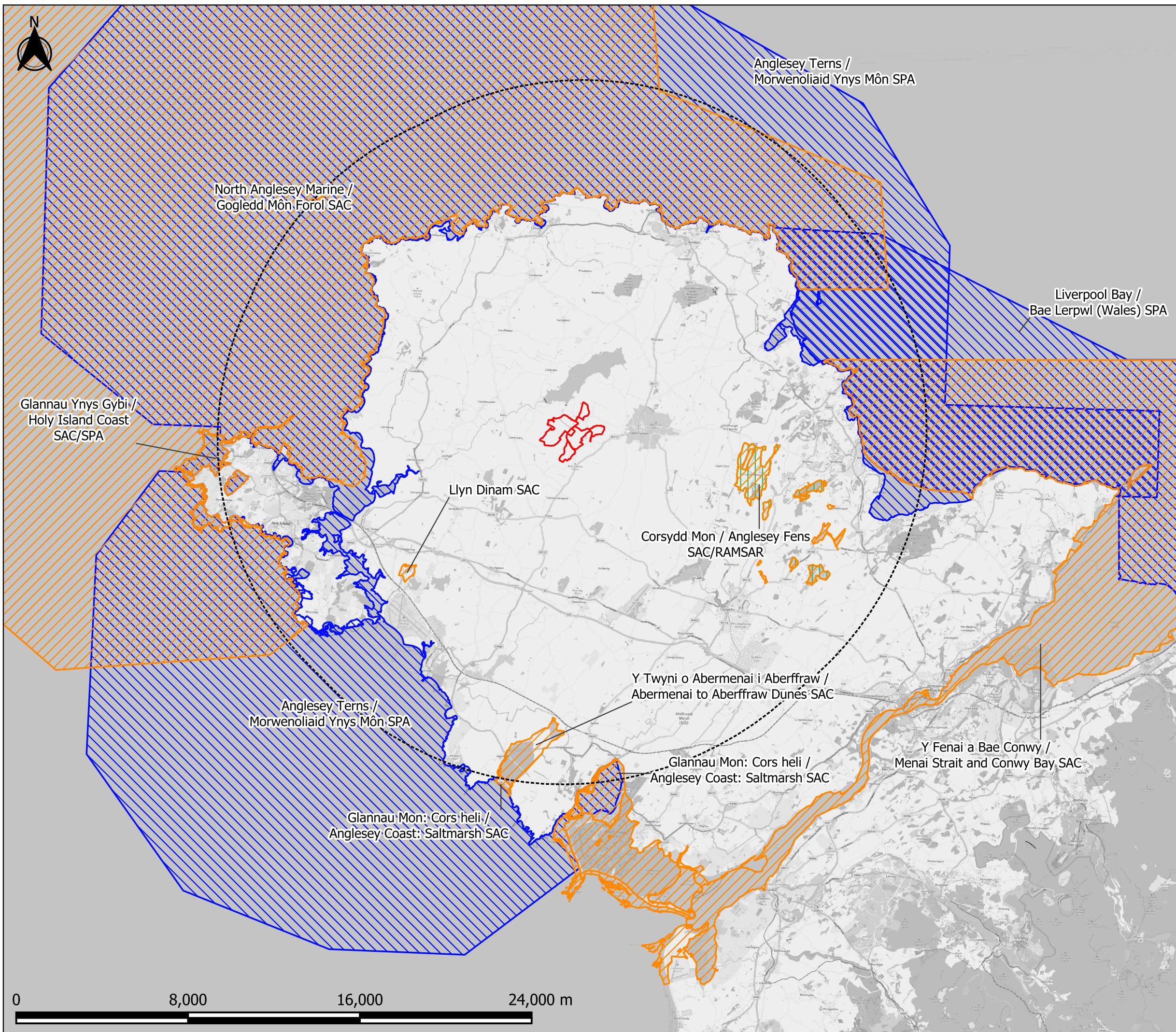
5 References

Pritchard R, Hughes, J, Spence I.M, Haycock, B and Brenchley, A, (2021) *The birds of Wales*. Welsh Ornithological Society. Liverpool University Press.

6 Appendix: European Protected Sites Plan



- Legend
-  Ramsar
 -  Special Area of Conservation
 -  Special Protection Areas
 -  Site boundary
 -  15km from site boundary



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PROJECT TITLE
ALAW MON SOLAR FARM

DRAWING TITLE
Figure : European Protected Sites

DATE: 09/10/2023 CHECKED: GM SCALE: 1:170,000
DRAWN: SL APPROVED: GM VERSION:1.0

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