

Inception Meeting: DNS CAS-03547-X3S2B5
Butterfly Solar Farm
Thursday 08 August 2024 at 11:00
Via Microsoft Teams

Attendees:

Axis

Andrew Russell

RWE

Robin Johnson

**Planning and Environment Decisions
Wales (PEDW)**

Marloes Holtkamp – Planning Officer

Tanya Leck – Planning Officer

Robert Sparey – Planning & Environment Manager

Meeting note:

Representatives from PEDW met with the above-named project team regarding Butterfly Solar Farm located within the Wrexham County Borough Council area.

The project team provided an overview of RWE, Axis and the proposed project, which consists of three solar array areas with an export capacity of around 100 MW. The site is located to the south of Wrexham and to the east of Johnstown. The scheme also involves battery energy storage system (BESS) and associated ancillary development including connection to the Legacy National Grid substation. The BESS is proposed to be smaller, co-located batteries within each array, as an alternative to a single larger BESS. The project team advised this flexibility means that the batteries can be located away from sensitive noise receptors and can reduce their visual impact. The project team are considering two route options for the grid connection, via the B5605 or Corkscrew Lane.

The project team set out the main constraints outside of but adjacent to the site including areas of ancient woodland, Johnstown Newt Sites Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and the Wat's Dyke scheduled ancient monument. The project team advised that a small area of the site (approx. 10%) is grade 2 and 3 best and most versatile agricultural land.

In terms of landscape impact, the project team shared analysis of landscape character and potential visibility. They advised that the visibility of the western and central array areas would be limited due to the enclosed landscape and existing vegetation. The project team also highlighted that some areas of the site are located

within the area of search for solar as set out in Wrexham's Local Development Plan (LDP) 2013-2028.

The project team confirmed their design approach involved mapping the key constraints and applying appropriate buffers to avoid impacts i.e. Public Rights of Way, trees, hedgerows, watercourses and utilities. A number of habitat and species surveys have been undertaken including Tree Surveys, breeding and wintering bird surveys, great crested newt surveys and bat surveys.

The project team advised they are also developing a landscaping masterplan to provide new green infrastructure and footpaths, focusing on linking to local interest points such as Wat's Dyke scheduled monument.

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Scoping

The project team advised they intend to submit a scoping direction request by Autumn 2024. PEDW confirmed the scoping request should be submitted to PEDW.Infrastructure@gov.wales. Files exceeding 30 MB cannot be received by email, so should any documents exceed this size, the project team should get in touch prior to submission for a file sharing workspace to be set up. PEDW also advised that any documents over 50 MB should be split to ensure they are able to be published on PEDW's casework portal. PEDW recommended that the survey work undertaken is included with the scoping request, this will allow PEDW and consultees to provide meaningful advice.

The project team queried the timescales for receipt of PEDW's scoping direction. PEDW confirmed the timescales for issuing a scoping direction are currently 8 weeks. However, this is subject to receipt of consultee comments. PEDW will keep the applicant up to date should the timescale for issuing the scoping direction be greater than 8 weeks.

Application submission procedure

PEDW provided an overview of the DNS procedure. PEDW advised that there are currently delays from submission to formal acceptance of DNS applications and advised the applicant monitors [PEDW's Service Update for DNS](#) for updates. PEDW highlighted that the aim is to undertake validation checks shortly after submission, however this is reliant on Inspector resource.

The project team advised there are no secondary consents anticipated but they will continue to review as the project progresses.

The project team queried the transitional arrangements for the Infrastructure (Wales) Act 2024 (the 2024 Act). PEDW advised that if notification of the applicant's DNS submission is still valid (i.e. within one year of acceptance of notification), the applicant can choose to whether to continue with the DNS system or opt in to the new regime. The transitional arrangements for the 2024 Act are found in Section

146: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asc/2024/3/section/146/enacted>. PEDW further advised that the secondary legislation is under development by Planning Directorate of the Welsh Government, therefore PEDW are currently unable to advise on any changes to procedure i.e. pre-application requirements. The project team may wish to contact Planning Directorate for further information: planning.directorate@gov.wales.

Updates to Planning Policy Wales (PPW)

PEDW highlighted the recent updates to [PPW](#), notably the reinforcement of the step-wise approach, the requirement for a Green Infrastructure Statement and the tree replacement ratios.

Pre-application Advice

The project team confirmed they have submitted a pre-application advice request to Wrexham CBC alongside the request to PEDW. PEDW advised that a scoping direction is likely to provide meaningful advice on specific matters, such as supporting documents to be submitted with the application. The project team advised they will consider their request for pre-application advice from PEDW, given the scoping direction request is due to be submitted shortly.

Confidentiality

The project team asked for the note of this meeting to be kept confidential until the project is in the public domain.

Further information

PEDW is currently updating the DNS Procedural Guidance and the latest working draft is appended to this meeting note for information. Further detail regarding DNS Specialist Consultees has also been included.