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26th March 2021

Dear Mr Davies,

The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Wales) Regulations 2017

Formal Request for a Screening Opinion for Works at National Grid's Existing Above Ground Installation at Cilfrew Pressure Reduction Station

Neath and Port Talbot Council (NPTC) will be aware, from previous discussions, that National Grid proposes to undertake works to the gas network in the NPTC area at the existing Pressure Reduction Station (PRS) at Cilfrew. The works at this site form part of a wider upgrade programme (the Western Gas Network Upgrade (WGNU)).

I am writing on behalf of National Grid to request a formal Screening Opinion in accordance with Regulation 6 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)) Wales Regulations 2017 (EIA Regulations) for the proposed works at Cilfrew PRS.

The Wider Western Gas Network Upgrade (WGNU) Programme of Works

National Grid received a competent Planning and Advanced Reservation of Capacity Agreement (PARCA) application in accordance with their Gas Transporter Licence from South Hook Gas Company Limited in 2018. South Hook requested additional gas flow onto the NTS from the South Hook Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) Terminal at Milford Haven.

To meet the requirements of the PARCA, National Grid undertook an options appraisal. This process determined that to fulfil the PARCA the following will need to be delivered (these works are the WGNU):

- Pressure uprating of the existing National Transmission System (NTS) between Felindre Compressor Site and Cilfrew PRS and between Felindre Compressor Site and Three Cocks Above Ground Installation (AGI). The extent of pressure uprating has been reduced, following further analysis and system modelling, from that indicated in previous discussions when it was originally thought this was also required from Milford Haven to Felindre
- Works at some existing National Grid sites within South Wales (Felindre Compressor Site, Cilfrew PRS, Llanwrda Block Valve and Three Cocks AGI) and at Tirley PRS in England to facilitate pressure uprating and additional capacity.
- Two new gas pipelines between Wormington Compressor Site and Honeyborne AGI (approximately 9km) and at Churchover (approximately 2km).

The works listed above will be subject to separate screening and Development Control submissions with the relevant authorities. In each case, the screening of the works relevant to a particular authority will consider the potential to trigger EIA from the works individually as well as in cumulative terms with the effects of the programme of works as a whole and other relevant developments. This approach is consistent with other multi-element development projects and ensures that the potential environmental consequences are fully considered for individual sites and as a collective whole.¹

Pressure uprating of the existing NTS is covered within the existing pipeline consents for the pipelines (Milford Haven to Aberdulais and Felindre to Tirley) therefore there is no requirement for this screening request to consider pressure uprating. In particular:

- The existing pipelines were constructed pursuant to permitted development rights under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and under Regulation 14(1) of the Public Gas Transporter Pipe-line works (EIA) Regulations 1999). Conditions attached to the Regulation 14(1) consent required the pipelines to be installed in accordance with the Environmental Statements. Installation was completed in full compliance with those conditions.
- The relevant planning consent and conditions do not refer to the operation of the pipeline and National Grid concludes that increasing pipeline operating pressure is therefore not restricted by the existing planning consents. National Grid also concludes that increasing operating pressure does not of itself constitute development under the terms of Section 55 of the 1990 Town and Country Planning Act which sets out that development '*means the carrying out of building, engineering, mining or other operations in, on, over or under land, or the making of any material change in the use of any buildings or other land*'.
- The compliance of the uprated pipeline with safety standards is dealt with separately from land use planning and is subject to the approval of the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). National Grid is progressing engagement with HSE, following the completion of technical reviews, to confirm that the pipeline and equipment will continue to comply with relevant safety standards following uprating. Our initial understanding is that consultation zones may extend by around 30m but do not consider these impacts on any committed site allocations.

Description of the Proposed Works to be Screened

The location of the proposed works is shown in Figure 1 and Insert 1 and comprise:

- Permanent works to extend the Cilfrew PRS to the west to provide additional equipment to facilitate the pressure uprating along with minor modifications within the existing security fence on the existing operational land within the PRS boundary. The maximum extent of the permanent works will be 1.06 hectares. We understand the potential for this to lead to a requirement for PAC however the design is subject to ongoing review and may fall below the threshold for PAC (albeit not, in combination with the temporary works area, fall below the threshold for EIA screening). We aim to confirm this by the end of May 2021 and will then discuss the appropriate planning process arrangements with you.
- A temporary construction compound will be established within the land immediately adjoining the existing AGI to facilitate the construction of the permanent works. Part of the land proposed for the temporary works has previously been used by National Grid for this purpose. Temporary works will be over a three-month construction period. The maximum size of the temporary construction compound will be 17,000sqm² and accessed from the existing

¹ In December 2020 the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) confirmed that the two new pipelines and associated connections did not constitute EIA development. In March 2021 we have also confirmed with Swansea Council that the proposed works at Felindre Compressor Station do not constitute EIA development.

² This extent represents the worst-case scenario. It is likely as the design is refined that this area will reduce.

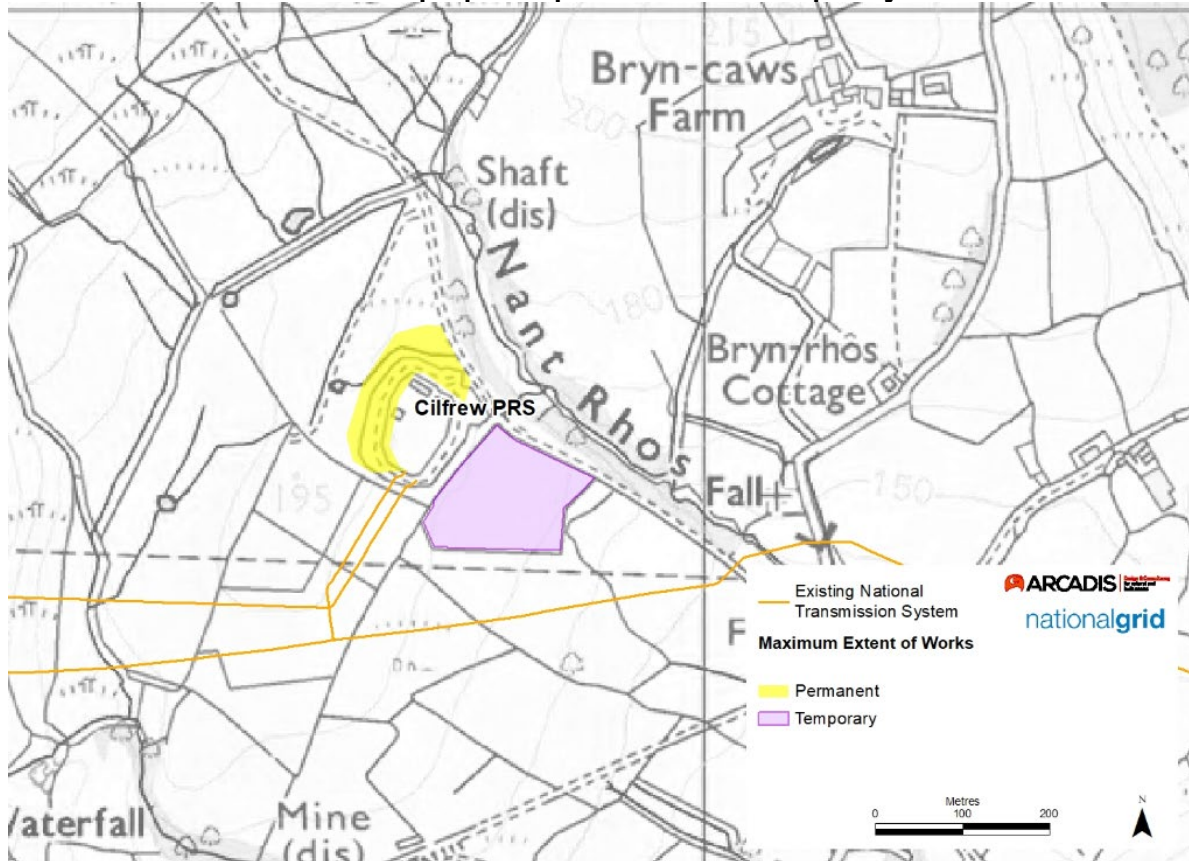
unclassified road that provides access to the existing PRS. The temporary construction compound will be fenced using a heras type fencing (approximately 2m in height) and comprise:

- Permeable hardstanding i.e. crushed stone
- Temporary security / site office / welfare cabins - a number of single storey portable cabins.
- Car parking for construction workers.
- Equipment and materials storage and laydown areas.

The proposed permanent extension works will require consent under The Town and County Planning Act (TCPA) whilst minor modifications within the existing PRS site on operational land, will be completed as permitted development works under Schedule 2 part 17 (Development by statutory undertakers) class F(f).

The temporary works are considered to fall within the definition of “permitted development” under Schedule 2, Part 4 (Temporary buildings and works) class A of The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) order 1995.

Insert 1: Location and extent of proposed permanent and temporary works at Cilfrew PRS



The EIA Screening Process

The EIA Regulations require certain types of development to always be accompanied by an EIA. These are known as ‘Schedule 1’ developments. The proposed works at Cilfrew PRS do not fall within Schedule 1 of the EIA Regulations.

Certain other types of development fall within 'Schedule 2' of the EIA Regulations and may require an EIA. Developments fall within Schedule 2 if the site exceeds the relevant threshold criteria for specific works listed or the site is within a sensitive area (e.g. a National Park, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) etc.). The proposed works fall under '*Energy Industry Project*' (paragraph 2, item 3 of Schedule 2) and '*an industrial installation for carrying gas (b)*'. The threshold criteria for this type of project is '*site area exceeds 1 hectare*'. The site area (which excludes any use of existing operational land) is derived from the combination of land required (excluding any works on operational land) for permanent works and temporary works.

The works at Cilfrew PRS exceed 1 hectare, therefore, the Schedule 2 threshold criteria is met. As such the proposed works are considered to be Schedule 2 development. It is for this reason that we are requesting a formal Screening Opinion in relation to the proposed works at Cilfrew PRS.

In accordance with the EIA Regulations information has been provided within this screening letter against all the points listed under Schedule 3 '*selection criteria for screening schedule 2 development*'. The selection criteria provided in Schedule 3 of the EIA Regulations comprise:

1. Characteristics of the development having regard to size and design, cumulative effects, use of natural resources, production of waste, pollution and nuisances, risk of major accidents and risks to human health.
2. Location of the development in relation to the environmental sensitivity of the site.
3. Types and characteristics of the potential impacts having regard to the likely significant effects of the development on the environment.

As required by Regulation 6(2) of the EIA Regulations the following is also provided within this screening letter:

- a) A plan sufficient to identify the land (plan included above along with *Figure 1*).
- b) A description of the development including physical characteristics and location.
- c) A description of the aspects of the environment likely to be significantly affected by the development.
- d) A description of any likely significant effects of the proposed development on the environment.
- e) Additional information including measures envisaged to avoid or prevent what might otherwise have been significant adverse effects on the environment.

1. Characteristics of Development

(a) Size and Design

This information is provided under the heading 'Description of the proposed works'.

(b) The Cumulation with Other Existing Development and/or approved development

Following the three month construction period and reinstatement of the temporary construction compound the permanent works will appear very similar to the existing PRS. In addition, there are no approved developments which will result in cumulative impacts with the proposed works.

The wider programme of works associated with the WGNU involve new works and modification works on operational land at existing AGI sites at Felindre, Llanwrda and Three Cocks in Wales with the closest works being at Felindre. Temporary works areas outside the operational land are required at Felindre and Three Cocks. The limited scale of these works and separation from Cilfrew mean that no cumulative effects with these other works are considered to have the potential to arise.

Other works associated with the WGNU comprise new pipelines planned in England between Wormington and Honeybourne and at Churchover along with modification works on operational land at the existing Tirley Pressure Reduction Site. The nature of the works proposed and

separation from Cilfrew mean that no cumulative effects with these other works are considered to have the potential to arise.

(c) The Use of Natural Resources (In Particular Land, Soil, Water and Biodiversity)

The following bullet points summarise the use of natural resources:

- Soils: Topsoil will be stripped (which is considered to be very poor quality Grade 5 agricultural land), vegetation cleared and replaced by permeable hardstanding (e.g. crushed stone) to accommodate the temporary construction compound. Topsoil will be stored appropriately in accordance with standard guidance and good practice before being reinstated following completion of the proposed works. As previously noted the temporary compound area has previously been used for this purpose. Soil removed from the permanent extension will be used to create a bund which will contribute to landscaping and screening. Overall there will be a limited loss of soil resources.
- Land: All temporary structures and temporary hardstanding will be removed on completion of the works and the land restored and previous use / vegetation re-established. Permanent works will result in a maximum loss of 1.06 hectares.
- Water: The proposed works will require limited use of water resources during construction and operation.
- Biodiversity: There are no statutory or locally designated sites within or adjacent to the proposed works. The temporary and permanent works will be located on a mixture of poor semi-improved and improved grassland. As there will need to be topsoil strip and vegetation cleared to accommodate the temporary construction compound and permanent works, a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) and any appropriate protected species surveys will be undertaken. Where necessary appropriate mitigation will be agreed with Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and implemented prior to the proposed works being undertaken. Following construction, all temporary structures and temporary hardstanding will be removed and land in these areas restored and previous land uses / vegetation re-established. Following construction, any required mitigation will have been implemented on the land permanent works are located (in consultation with NRW) therefore there will be no further loss of biodiversity resources.

(d) The Production of Waste

Some waste will be generated during construction for example packaging materials, cloths, wood / metal offcuts etc. All recyclable materials will be appropriately captured and disposed of through appropriately licenced recycling facilities. Non recyclable material will be disposed of at licenced waste disposal facilities. There will be no operational waste generated by the proposed works except minimal amounts arising from infrequent maintenance activities that will be removed and appropriately disposed of.

(e) Pollution and Nuisances

Pollution and nuisances will be controlled through a CEMP which will include standard construction practice. There are no watercourses that will be affected by the proposed works. The closest residential dwelling to the works is in excess of 500m to the west therefore noise and vibration impacts are likely to be limited and temporary in duration over the construction period only. Following construction, the risk of pollution and nuisance will be no different from the baseline.

(f) Risk of Major Accidents and/or Disasters

The safe operation of National Grid's gas NTS is regulated by the HSE. The proposed works at Cilfrew PRS will not change the risk of major accidents or disasters.

(g) Risks to Human Health

The proposed works will not cause risks to human health due to emissions leading to water contamination or air pollution during construction or operation.

2. Location of Development

The location of the proposed works are shown on Insert 1 and Figure 1.

(a) Existing and Approved Land Use

The temporary and permanent works will be located on a mix of poor semi-improved and improved grassland. The proposed works are located within the 'Dulais Valley', designated as a Special Landscape Area under Policy EN2 of Neath Port Talbot's Local Development Plan.

(b) Relative Abundance, Availability, Quality and Regenerative Capacity of Natural Resources

The proposed works will have limited impacts on soil quality, land take, water resources and biodiversity. The temporary construction compound will be reinstated following construction to its former use and the permanent works will be appropriately mitigated during construction and result in a limited loss of poor-quality agricultural soils.

(c) The Absorption Capacity of the Natural Environment

Owing to the scale of the proposed works it is considered that the natural environment has the absorption capacity to accommodate the works with limited impacts.

3. Types and Characteristics of the Potential Impact

The following paragraphs summarise the likely environmental impacts of the proposed works:

(a) Magnitude and Spatial Extent of the Impact

Air Quality and Climate. There are no Air Quality Management Areas or residential properties with close proximity of the proposed works. The closest property is in excess of 500m to the west. The works will have very limited impacts on climate owing to its scale. The magnitude and extent of impacts will be neutral.

Heritage. There are no designated heritage assests on the site or within the immediate vicinity. The closest is goose rearing shelters and mounting block at Tan-y-rhiw, a Grade II listed structure approximately 900m to the west of the temporary construction compound. Part of the proposed temporary construction compound has previously been used as a compound in the past by National Grid. However, as part of the site proposed for temporary and permanent works has not, a proportionate Heritage Appraisal will be undertaken to ensure any potential impacts to unknown archaeology are mitigated prior to construction. Following mitigation the magnitude and extent of impacts will be neutral.

Biodiversity. There are no statutory designated biodiversity sites on the site or within the immediate vicinity. However, there is a locally designated Site of Important Nature Conservaion (SINC) and area of ancient woodland located 10m (at its closest point) to the north east of the temporary construction compound on the opposite side of the road which provides access to the site. The temporary and permanent works will be located on a mix of poor semi-improved and improved grassland. A PEA will be undertaken of the site and any protected species surveys undertaken where required. Where necessary appropriate mitigation will be agreed with NRW and implemented prior to the proposed works being undertaken. Following mitigation the magnitude and extent of impacts will be neutral.

Geology and Soils. No geological SSSIs will be affected by the proposed works. Topsoil will be removed to accomodate the temporary construction compound, stored appropriately in accordance with good practice and subsequently reinstated following construction. The magnitude and extent of impacts will be neutral.

Health, Population and Socio-economics. There will be no impacts on existing businesses. Permanent and temporary works will not cause pollution or potentially hazardous impacts. The magnitude and extent of impacts will be neutral.

Landscape and Visual. The proposed works are not located within any statutory landscape designation. However, as previously noted, the proposed works are located within the 'Dulaish Valley', designated as a Special Landscape Area under Policy EN2 of Neath Port Talbot's Local Development Plan. Impacts will be limited on the landscape character and quality of the locally designated Special Landscape Area as the proposed works will form a very small and indistinct element in the local landscape. Following construction, the temporary construction compound will be returned to its former use and the extension to the Cilfrew PRS following construction will be imperceptible from the existing. However, a proportionate Landscape and Visual Appraisal is proposed to be undertaken for the proposed works to ensure the permanent works are integrated into the existing landscape. Where necessary appropriate mitigation will be proposed and discussed with the council prior to the proposed works being undertaken. Following mitigation the magnitude and extent of impacts will be limited.

Noise and Vibration. The closest residential property to the proposed works is in excess of 500m to the west. Noise and vibration from the three month construction works will be mitigated to a minimum through the adoption of Best Practical Means (BPM) which will be outlined within a CEMP. Following the implementation of BPM the magnitude and extent of impacts will be neutral.

Traffic and Transport. Access to the permanent and temporary works will use the existing access to the existing AGI. Over the three month construction period there will be small numbers of HGVs and construction vehicle movements required for plant, materials and equipment and for worker transport. The magnitude and extent of impacts will be neutral.

Water and Flooding. The site is not within an area identified as at risk from flooding. The potential sources of pollution from construction activities will be constrained by adoption of standard control measures which will be set out in a CEMP. Appropriate drainage will be incorporated into the permanent works. The magnitude and extent of impacts following mitigation will be neutral.

(b) Nature of the Impact

Potential impacts will only occur over the proposed three month construction period. No likely significant environmental effects are predicted to occur as only neutral / limited impacts are predicted owing to the scale and nature of the proposed works. Once construction works are complete, and the temporary construction compound has been reinstated to previous uses, there will be limited impacts arising from the permanent works as any required mitigation will have been implemented and the extension will be imperceptible from the existing.

(c) Transboundary Nature of the Impact

There will be no transboundary effects.

(d) Intensity and Complexity of the Impact

The impacts of the proposed works are not considered to be of a magnitude or complexity to warrant an EIA.

(e) Probability of the Impact

Potential impacts predicted are considered to be certain.

(f) Expected Onset, Duration, Frequency and Reversibility of the Impact

Construction activity is expected to occur over a three month period after which the temporary construction compound will be reinstated and returned to its previous land use. Permanent works will require some permanent land take however will appear imperceptible from the existing.

(g) Cumulation of the Impact with the impact of other existing and/or approved development

As previously noted within this EIA Screening letter there will be no cumulative impacts with other works whether associated with the wider WGNU programme or other development relevant to the Cilfrew site.

(h) Possibility of Effectively Reducing the Impact

The adoption and adherence to a CEMP together with implementing any required biodiversity / heritage / landscape mitigation will provide an appropriate and effective means to control and reduce residual impacts further.

EIA Screening Conclusion

This EIA Screening letter has been prepared owing to the total site area exceeding 1 hectare. The information presented in this letter has outlined that the proposed works are not likely to have any significant effects on the environment.

On this basis, National Grid considers that the proposed works do not constitute EIA development. Notwithstanding this view we look forward to receiving your formal Screening Opinion within the next 21 days.

Scope of material to support future Permitted Development notifications

As indicated above National Grid recognises that subsequent TCPA submissions and permitted development notification should be supported by relevant material. As indicated above we will confirm with you the requirement or not for PAC when we can confirm the design requirement towards the end of May. For the proposed works at Cilfrew PRS, in addition to necessary forms, site plans and possible PAC requirements, those notifications and applications will comprise the following:

- PEA (and any further protected species surveys identified)
- Landscape Appraisal
- Heritage Appraisal
- Planning Statement
- CEMP

We look forward to hearing from you, will welcome any comments and should you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact us. Please direct any response or correspondence to Paul Reaston Lead Consultant Consents Officer (paul.reaston@stephenson-halliday.com) and Kate Gapper Consultant Consents Officer (gapperk@rpsgroup.com).

Yours sincerely

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