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Ref: HE/47/2023 Dream Fields Solar

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STATEMENT, DREAM FIELDS SOLAR FARM, GELLI BWCH FARM.

Introduction

The Green Infrastructure Assessment is a requirement placed upon Local Planning Authorities (LPA) to adopt a strategic and proactive approach to the green infrastructure (ecological connectivity for example), biodiversity and ecosystem resilience (Planning Policy Wales (PPW) Section 6, Biodiversity Duty, updated October 2023). The LPA is required to produce regularly updated mapped outputs offering appropriate information on Green Infrastructure at a Landscape Scale, i.e. *'habitats, species and other green features and resources,'* to allow development management decisions to be based on current data relating to it.

A further strand to this is that all planning applications must be accompanied by a Green Infrastructure Statement that will be *'proportionate to the scale and nature of the development proposed and will describe the how the Green Infrastructure has been incorporated into the proposal'*. The Statement should demonstrate how a step wise approach, reflecting the Mitigation Hierarchy, has been utilised to maintain and enhance biodiversity, build resilient ecological networks and deliver net benefits for biodiversity.

The current proposals for Dream Fields Solar Farm were designed prior to the requirement in PPW Section 6 being enforced, however this document demonstrates how the requirements have largely been met. This statement should be read in conjunction with the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, Dream Fields Mitigation Document (December 2024) and drawing number 23-011-SK01C.

Statement for the proposed development of Dream Fields Solar Farm at Gelli Bwch Farm, Llandarcy.

Proposals are made to erect a solar farm at Gelli Bwch Farm on agricultural fields currently managed by hay/silage cuts and grazing. Ecological survey prior to the application evidenced some removal of unmanaged and spreading former hedgerows from the fields which affected the Jersey Marine Woodlands Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC). A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal was undertaken by Hawkeswood Ecology in January and reported in March 2023 followed by a re-assessment of the grassland at an appropriate time of year reported in July 2023.

The habitat assessments found that the grasslands affected were largely heavily modified by modern agricultural practices, however there remained some areas of species poor semi-improved acid grassland at the south of the Site. Unmanaged hedge banks to the east and south have been affected by works either by breakthrough for machinery or clearance of woody scrub which is predominantly gorse.

When measured against the requirements for sustaining Ecological Resilience, the works were considered to be of minor negative significance without mitigation to enhance and protect the Site.

Following meeting with the NPT Biodiversity Unit representative, further recommendations are made on a wider scale across the farm ownership that include biodiversity enhancements along with other recommendations to ensure that the development is sustainable and enhances both connectivity and biodiversity across the Site. The wider Farm mitigation recommendations are made in the document 'Dream Fields Proposed Mitigation, December 2024'.

In addition to those wider recommendations a number of Site specific mitigations are recommended. These include:

- Planting a species rich native hedgerow on the western hedge bank (TN4 in the PEA);
- Removing and safely storing turves from the semi-improved acid grassland (TN7) where trenching occurs and relaying on filled trenches following completion;
- Seeding with a wildflower mix on areas where cable trenches have been laid in the agriculturally modified field at TN3.
- Future management by sustainable grazing and possible mowing, Site to be monitored.

In addition, a landscape drawing shows other details specific to the solar farm area, drawing number (Drawing number 23-011-SK01C)

In conclusion, the proposals offer both positive enhancements for biodiversity and mitigation for lost habitat and are considered more than proportionate to the development proposals.

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