



Asesiad o Ddatganiad Amgylcheddol

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Arolygydd a benodir gan Weinidogion Cymru

Dyddiad: 09/09/2025

Assessment of Environmental Statement

by Richard Duggan BSc(Hons) Dip TP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Welsh Ministers

Date: 09/09/2025

Ref: DNS-02505-N3T6M4 – Foel Trawsant Windfarm Grid Connection

- The Environmental Statement which is the subject of this assessment has been submitted in relation to the above case in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Wales) Regulations 2017 (as amended).
 - The application is made by Pennant Walters Limited.
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Finding on Completeness

1. That the Environmental Statement (ES) as submitted is complete for the purposes of the 2017 Regulations.

Introduction

2. An ES was prepared to support a Development of National Significance (DNS) application which has been submitted to Planning & Environment Decisions Wales (PEDW) for determination.
 3. The ES was produced in response to a Scoping Direction, dated 12 March 2025, issued on behalf of the Welsh Ministers. The Scoping Direction required the ES to address the following matters:
 - i. Decommissioning
 - ii. Climate Change (not necessarily as standalone chapter)
 - iii. Major Accidents and Disasters (not necessarily as a standalone chapter)
 - iv. Landscape and Visual
 - v. Traffic and Transport
 - vi. Ecology
 - vii. Historic Environment
 - viii. Water Resources and Flood Risk
 - ix. Electromagnetic Fields Material Assets and Waste (not necessarily as a standalone chapter)
 - x. Population and Human Health (not necessarily as a standalone chapter)
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Proposed Development

4. The proposed development subject to the DNS application is for a 66kv electricity network infrastructure connection comprising overhead lines and underground cables and associated development. The application will be to construct and operate a proposed grid connection connecting the consented Foel Trawsnant Wind Farm to the national grid. The connection will consist of approximately 5.1km of underground cabling and approximately 3.9km of overhead lines.

Completeness of Environmental Statements

5. The ES covers all aspects of the applicant's proposed development. The aim of an ES is to provide a systematic and objective account of the significant environmental effects likely to arise from the proposed development, including sufficient information to verify the conclusions and identify the source of the information provided. Regulation 17 and Schedule 4 of the 2017 Regulations specifies the information to be included in an ES. My assessment of completeness is based on these requirements.

The Environmental Statement

6. The ES covers the matters listed in the Scoping Direction (other than Climate and Major Accidents or disasters which have been scoped out) and its findings supported by figures, technical studies and assessments, and comprises the following parts:
 - Volume 1: Main Written Statement
 - Volume 2: Supporting Figures and Plans
 - Volume 3: Supporting Technical Appendices
 - Volume 4: Non-Technical Summary
 - Volume 5: Confidential Appendix (Ornithology Report – Protected Species Results)

Description of Development

7. The application site and its environs are described with supporting plans and illustrations in chapter 1 and 4 of the ES. Chapter 4 contains a detailed description of the proposed development and its constituent parts, and the objectives and purpose of the scheme are also described. Figure 4.1 provides a project location plan.
8. The ES lists and describes the key features of the scheme, including the cable, overhead line poles, cable trenches, joint bay boxes, temporary construction compounds and watercourse crossings. Access to the site is described along with general construction traffic. Chapter 4 of the ES also provides a description of the environmental management aspects of the scheme during the construction period as well as the operation and decommissioning periods. These aspects are also assessed within other technical chapters of the ES.
9. In view of the above, I am satisfied that the key components of the proposals are adequately and accurately described.

Description of the reasonable alternatives

10. Chapter 3 includes an assessment of the design of the scheme, the site selection process and consideration of alternatives.
11. An initial assessment of the feasibility of the site was conducted using Geographical Information Systems ('GIS') to look at high-level constraints and key criteria for the proposed grid connection. This process allowed early identification of key technical, environmental, planning and commercial issues which could either support or potentially hinder the scheme.
12. Potentially suitable sites were evaluated using assessment criteria such as Land Availability; Land Use and Context (suitability of the existing land use and ensuring that the chosen site is not within international or national environmental or planning designations); Electricity Grid (whether the site is within appropriate proximity of a suitable connection point to the electricity grid network; Transport Infrastructure (ensuring the site is accessible via public road infrastructure to allow the construction, operation and maintenance of a wind farm; Landscape and Visual (landscape and visual effects of the proposed grid connection on important receptors (i.e. ensuring it is not located within a statutory designated landscape and taking into account considerations of landscape sensitivity and potentially sensitive visual receptors); and Nature Conservation Sites (distance of statutorily designated sites such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), National Nature Reserves ('NNRs'), Ramsar Sites, Special Areas of Conservation ('SACs') and Special Protection Areas ('SPAs').
13. The layout of the route has progressed through a number of design iterations and has evolved following consultations with stakeholders such as Natural Resources Wales (NRW). The alternative layouts considered are set out in Table 3.1 'Design Iterations' which identifies the main iterations of the route design and the rationale for such changes.
14. I am satisfied that the ES demonstrates that reasonable alternatives have been properly considered by the applicant.

Description of the aspects of the environment likely to be significantly affected

15. The ES is supported and informed by a suite of surveys including studies explaining the baseline conditions and likely impacts of all elements of the proposed development. I am satisfied that the surveys remain current and the aspects of the environment that are likely to be significantly affected are sufficiently described. On this basis, I am satisfied that the aspects of the environment likely to be significantly affected by the proposed development have been correctly identified in the ES and in various stand-alone reports.

Assessment Methodology

16. The process and methodology used in producing each assessment is described in the relevant chapter and technical appendices. The ES includes explanations of the approach to setting the baseline, identifying receptors and assessing the magnitude and significance of effects. The EIA methodology is described clearly in the ES.

Description of the likely significant effects of the development on the environment

17. The likely significant effects of the development on the environment have been assessed in line with the methodology set out in each chapter, taking into account the construction, operational and

de-commissioning phases of the scheme. The information requested in the Scoping Direction has been provided and includes an assessment of cumulative effects.

18. The likely significant effects of the development on the environment have been systematically assessed and are sufficiently described.

Prevention and / or mitigation measures

19. Details of the mitigation measures that have either been embedded in the design of the development or would be subject to provision through the imposition of conditions, are outlined in the technical chapters of the ES. These measures are dealt with during the construction, operational and decommissioning phases. Arrangements for monitoring and management of mitigation measures over the life of the scheme are proposed where appropriate and are addressed within the technical chapters of the ES.
20. Chapter 11 and Table 11-1 usefully sets out a summary of significant effects and the subsequent mitigation and enhancement measures that the Applicant has committed to implementing prior to and during the construction, operation and decommissioning phases of the development.
21. The mitigation measures described in the ES are satisfactory insofar as they relate to the components of the scheme that have been assessed.

Indication of any difficulties in compiling the required information

22. The ES has been compiled using identified methodologies. The ES is based on desk and site surveys, publicly available data and information from consultees. Each assessment notes the assumptions adopted and limitations affecting its findings, none of which are significant.

Provision of a Non-Technical Summary

23. A non-technical summary has been provided and the information contained therein is sufficient.

Overall Conclusions

24. I conclude that the Environmental Statement submitted by Pennant Walters Limited on 15 August 2025 be confirmed as containing the level of information identified in Regulation 17 and Schedule 4 of the 2017 EIA Regulations and being complete for the purposes of those Regulations.

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Inspector