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**Asesiad o  
Ddatganiad Amgylcheddol**

**Assessment of  
Environmental Statement**

gan Melissa Hall BA(Hons), BTP, MSc,  
MRTPI

by Melissa Hall BA(Hons), BTP, MSc,  
MRTPI

Arolygydd a benodir gan Weinidogion Cymru

an Inspector appointed by the Welsh Ministers

Dyddiad: 01/06/21

Date: 01/06/21

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Ref: DNS/3247619

Site address: Land at Gwernigrn Farm, The Roe, St Asaph, Denbighshire

- 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 Solar Century Holdings Ltd.
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## Introduction

1. An Environmental Statement (ES) was prepared to support a Development of National Significance application which has been submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for determination.
2. The ES was produced in response to a Scoping Direction<sup>1</sup> issued by the Planning Inspectorate (PINS Wales) on behalf of the Welsh Ministers.

## Preliminary Matters

3. The application and the accompanying ES the subject of this report was re-submitted on 11 May 2021 following PINS Wales confirmation of 30 April 2021 that the originally submitted ES was incomplete for the purposes of the relevant EIA regulations. The applicant sought to address the issues raised in the ES Completeness Report, resulting in the re-submission of the application.

## Proposed Development

4. The proposed development is described as the construction of a solar farm and energy storage hybrid park, together with all associated works, equipment and necessary infrastructure (62MW). It identifies the key elements of the proposed development as: Photovoltaic (PV) arrays (fixed panels); 25 Substations (40ft) positioned around the site; exporting substation; battery storage compound; approximately 2 metre high security fencing; a CCTV system on approximately 3m poles; associated access tracks (including a permanent access track and a temporary construction only access track); storage container(s) for spare parts etc.; underground grid connection cable; relevant

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<sup>1</sup> DNS: EIA Scoping Direction 3247619 Elwy Solar Farm, 3 June 2020

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communications and monitoring equipment. It is anticipated that the development would export renewable energy to the grid for 37 years.

5. A grid connection route corridor is included as part of the planning application. As this will require underground cabling to connect the site to the Bodelwyddan substation, this will involve horizontal directional drilling under the A55.
6. It was previously considered that certain elements of the proposed development would require Secondary Consent, as follows:
  - The construction and operation of a battery storage facility under Section 57 of the 1990 Act.
  - The Diversion of the Denbighshire County Council Public Rights of Way: 208/20 and 201/8 under Section 247(1) of the 1990 Act.
  - Works to the highway for the creation of a temporary construction access from the A525 under Section 248(2) of the 1990 Act.

However, the applicant has stated in a letter which accompanies the re-submitted application that Secondary Consents will no longer be applied for. The diversion of the PRoW will be undertaken separately with the intention being to secure consent for the stopping up and diversion of the footpaths under section 257 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 with the local authority, in parallel with the DNS application. Turning to the access works, it has been confirmed that this can be progressed with the local highway authority as streetworks applications. With regard to the Battery Storage Compound and facilities, the applicant states that a Section 57 is not required and that the solar and battery storage elements can be determined under the DNS. Nevertheless, these elements of the scheme must still be assessed for the purposes of the ES.

### **Completeness of Environmental Statements**

7. The aim of an Environmental Statement (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.

### **Description of the Development**

8. The application site and its surroundings are described in Chapter 3 of the ES. This includes details in relation to the location of the site and its physical characteristics, heritage assets and the presence of Public Rights of Way crossing the site. It also provides details of the application site context, including the characteristics of the surrounding area, the identification of ecological habitats, the absence of heritage designations and the proximity to designated landscapes.
9. Chapter 4 describes the proposed development, specifying the various key components of the scheme. The necessary physical alterations to the site are described as is the operational lifespan of the development, the construction compound and programme, access and traffic management, the construction methodology and the operation and decommissioning phases. This section of the ES also provides a description of the potential disasters or accidents applicable to the

development proposal, its potential effect on and vulnerability to climate change and the reasonable alternatives considered.

10. Figure 4.1 is the Proposed Development plan. The key elements of the scheme can be readily identified on this plan and correspond with that described and explained in the relevant chapters of the ES.
11. In view of the above, I am satisfied that the key components of the proposals are adequately and accurately described.

#### **Outline of the reasonable alternatives**

12. Chapter 4 of the ES includes consideration of alternative types of generating stations and alternative locations, the latter cross referencing the Sequential Assessment Report which accompanies the application submission.
13. Schedule 4 of the EIA Regs also states that alternatives could include development design, technology, location, size and scale. In this regard, the applicant considered the 'do nothing' alternative and alternative designs. Site specific requirements or modifications made to the design over the course of the design process as a result of statutory consultee and technical consultants' feedback include; heritage and transport considerations, locating the construction compound near to site entrances, ecology and biodiversity considerations and recycling of materials after end use. Further details on the above are provided in each of the respective technical chapters under the heading 'Mitigation and Enhancement'.
14. Overall, the consideration of the main alternatives is satisfactory.

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

15. The 2017 EIA Regulations list the aspects of the environment likely to be significantly affected as population, human health, biodiversity, land, soil, water, air, climate, material assets, cultural heritage and landscape.
16. In this case, the Planning Inspectorate's Scoping Direction for the proposed development identifies that there are likely to be significant impacts in relation to: landscape and visual impact, ecology and nature conservation, transport and traffic (construction only), human health, biodiversity, air quality and risk of major accidents. These key environmental aspects are detailed in the technical chapters of the ES.
17. Although scoped out of the ES, the application includes a stand-alone Heritage Statement detailing the significance of the heritage assets and how they will be affected by the proposed development. The applicant has also submitted a Flood Consequences Assessment and a Glint and Glare Study.
18. On the basis of the above, I am satisfied that the aspects of the environment likely to be significantly affected by the proposed development, which includes baseline data where necessary, have been correctly identified in the ES and in various stand-alone reports.

#### **Description of the likely significant effects of the development on the environment.**

19. The technical chapters of the ES generally provide adequate descriptions of the likely significant effects of the components of the scheme that have been assessed, taking into account the construction, operational and de-commissioning phases. This includes

the effects of emissions and traffic volume / movements, the effects on human health and the natural environment, the risk of major accidents and the cumulative effects with other existing and / or approved projects.

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

#### **Prevention and / or mitigation measures**

21. Details of the mitigation measures are outlined in the technical chapters of the ES. These measures, which address matters such as landscape and visual impact, ecology and ornithology, traffic, infrastructure and grid connection, 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.
22. The mitigation measures in the ES are satisfactorily described.

#### **Indication of any difficulties in compiling the required information**

23. The ES has been compiled using identified methodologies.
24. However, difficulty in obtaining information in relation to survey methods, timings and access (for example in relation to ecological surveys or noise monitoring) due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the associated restrictions have been noted.
25. The assumptions made in light of these difficulties is clearly set out in the ES, albeit these issues are not considered to have constrained baseline information gathering in any significant way.

#### **Provision of a Non-Technical Summary**

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

#### **Overall Conclusions**

27. I conclude that the Environmental Statement submitted by Solar Century Holdings Ltd be confirmed as containing the level of information identified in Schedule 4 of the EIA Regulations 2017 and being complete for the purposes of those Regulations.

*Melissa Hall*

**Inspector**

