

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

1.1.1 This Environmental Statement (ES) has been prepared on behalf of Solarcentury (the "Applicant") in respect of land at Gwernigrn Farm, St Asaph, Denbighshire (the "Application Site") on which it is proposed to install a ground mounted solar photovoltaic and battery energy storage farm and associated infrastructure which will have a capacity of approximately 47.5 MW (the "Proposed Development"). The Application Site context is shown on **Figure 1.1** and the Application Site boundary is shown on **Figure 1.2**.

1.2 EIA REGULATIONS AND PROCEDURES

1.2.1 An Environmental Statement ("ES") is a document that sets out the findings of an Environmental Impact Assessment ("EIA"). An EIA is a process for identifying the "likely significance of environmental effects" (beneficial or adverse) arising from a proposed development, by comparing the existing environmental conditions prior to development (the baseline) with the environmental conditions during/following the construction, operational and, where relevant, the decommissioning phases of a development should it proceed. The EIA is carried out prior to the submission of a planning application.

1.2.2 The statutory requirements for carrying out an EIA, the content of the ES and the procedures for determining planning applications for 'EIA Development' are set out within the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Wales) Regulations 2017¹ (as amended) (the "EIA Regulations").

1.2.3 By virtue of its potential generating capacity exceeding 10MW, this project constitutes a Development of National Significance ["DNS"]. Therefore, instead of applying to the Local Planning Authority for Planning Permission, the application must be made to the Welsh Government for determination.

1.2.4 The Planning (Wales) Act 2015 established a new category of development named DNS. Provision in the Act came into force in March 2016 which requires the Welsh Minister to determine DNS projects, with applications being made directly to them. The process for applying for a Development of National Significance is set out by the Development of National Significance (Procedure) (Wales) Order 2016 and subsequent Regulations. The DNS application process is managed by Planning Inspectorate Wales on behalf of the Welsh Government. Decisions are made in the context of the Welsh Government's national planning policy and the local planning authority's Local Development Plan.

1.2.5 Where an application is made for planning permission for EIA Development, the Welsh Government is not permitted under the EIA Regulations to grant planning permission unless it has first taken the relevant environmental information into consideration.

¹ The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Wales) Regulations 2017 (Amended 2019, SI 2019 No.299 (W.76).

1.2.6 In order to determine if it is necessary to undertake an EIA to accompany a planning application, Regulation 31 of the EIA Regulations makes provision for an applicant to apply to the Welsh Ministers for a 'Screening Opinion' as to whether an EIA is required.

Screening Opinion

1.2.7 The EIA Regulations require that any proposed development falling within the categories set out within Schedule 2 should be considered as 'EIA Development' where the development is considered likely to have significant effects on the environment by virtue of such factors as its nature, size or location.

1.2.8 The Proposed Development falls within the category of "*Industrial installations for the production of electricity, steam and hot water*" under Schedule 2, paragraph 3(a). Given that the proposed development exceeds the screening threshold of more than 0.5 hectares in Schedule 2 (3 a), a request for a Screening Direction was submitted to the Welsh Ministers. A Screening Direction was received on 17/03/2020 confirming that the proposal constitutes an EIA development and accordingly the Applicant has prepared an ES.

Scoping

1.2.9 In order to determine the scope of an EIA, the EIA Regulations make provision for an applicant to request that the Planning Inspectorate on behalf of the Welsh Ministers provide a written opinion as to the information to be provided within the ES. This ES addresses those environmental issues which are considered pertinent and that could potentially result in "likely significant effects" as stated in the EIA Regulations. The Applicant submitted a request for scoping direction to the Welsh Ministers on 6th April 2020 with a response received on 3rd June 2020. Details of the scoping exercise carried out with regards the Proposed Development is set out in **Chapter 2: Assessment Scope and Methodology**.

1.3 STRUCTURE OF ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT

1.3.1 This ES comprises studies on each of the aspects of the environment identified as likely to be significantly affected by the Proposed Development (the 'technical chapters'), which are supported with figures and technical appendices where appropriate.

1.3.2 This ES is structured as follows:

- **Environmental Statement** Comprises the main text of the ES, including 'general chapters' that describe the EIA context, provide a description of the Application Site and Proposed Development, and set out the scope of the ES. This is followed by the 'technical chapters' for each environmental theme with the associated figures. The volume concludes with a summary. Supporting Technical Appendices are also provided.
- **Environmental Statement: Non-Technical Summary (NTS)** – this provides a concise summary of the ES identifying the likely significant

environmental effects and the measures proposed to mitigate or to avoid adverse effects of the Proposed Development.

1.3.3 The ES Main Text is split into the following chapters:

- Chapter 1 Introduction
- Chapter 2 Assessment Scope and Methodology
- Chapter 3 The Application Site
- Chapter 4 The Proposed Development and Alternatives Considered
- Chapter 5 Landscape and Visual
- Chapter 6 Biodiversity
- Chapter 7 Traffic and Transport (Construction Only)
- Chapter 8 Human Health
- Chapter 9 Air Quality (Construction Only)
- Chapter 10 Risk of Major Accidents
- Chapter 11 Summary

EIA Consultant Team

1.3.4 The EIA Regulations set out the requirements for EIA applications to be accompanied by confirmation that the Environmental Statement has been prepared by competent experts.

1.3.5 The ES has been coordinated and managed by Pegasus Group Limited. Pegasus is accredited under the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) 'Quality Mark' scheme which is a mark of excellence in EIA co-ordination and management. Pegasus Group has extensive experience of undertaking EIA work across a range of projects and development types including energy and renewable energy schemes.

1.3.6 The consultants who have contributed to the preparation of this ES are referenced in the project directory at the front of this document, along with information demonstrating their "sufficient expertise to ensure the completeness and quality of the ES" in accordance with the EIA Regulations.

1.4 ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT AVAILABILITY AND COMMENTS

Availability

1.4.1 The ES and planning application documents will be made available to view on the Planning Inspectorate website during its consideration of the submitted application. Details will be provided online at the following web address:

<https://dns.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/>

1.4.2 The Local Planning Authority will also place a copy of the application on the local planning register. The measures introduced in Planning Applications (Temporary Modifications and Disapplication) (Wales) (Coronavirus) Order 2020 means that currently a hard copy of the application will not be deposited to the Local Planning Authority and will be submitted electronically only. For details of how it can be viewed, please contact Denbighshire County Council who can be contacted by:

Planning Services
Denbighshire County Council
PO Box 62
Ruthin
LL15 9AZ
Website: <https://www.denbighshire.gov.uk/en/resident/planning-and-building-regulations/planning/planning.aspx>
Telephone: 01824 706727

1.4.3 Alternatively, the ES may be purchased, the costs for which are set out below:

- Main Text and Technical Appendices- £150
- Non-Technical Summary (NTS) - Free of charge
- Digital copies of the above documents on a CD - £10

1.4.4 Postage is payable on all orders. For copies of any of the above please contact Pegasus Group (quoting reference P19-2023) at the following address:

Pegasus Group
Pegasus House
Querns Business Centre
Whitworth Road
Cirencester
Gloucestershire
GL7 1RT
Telephone: [REDACTED]

Comments

1.4.5 Comments on the planning application should be forwarded to the Planning Inspectorate during its consideration and determination of the planning application.