

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 OVERVIEW OF THE PROJECT

- 1.1.1. This draft Environmental Impact Assessment ('EIA') has been prepared by WSP on behalf of Pennant Walters ('the Applicant') who are submitting an application to Planning and Environment Decisions Wales (PEDW) seeking consent for the proposed Foel Trawsnant Wind Farm electricity network infrastructure connection, consisting of 66 kilovolts (kV) overhead line (OHL) and underground cables (UGC). The Project is associated with the Foel Trawsnant Wind Farm and will provide a connection between the wind farm and the wider national grid.
- 1.1.2. The Project is located in the south of Wales, to the southwest of Llangnwyd, and travels partially through the town of Maesteg (see **Figure 1.1**). The proposed grid connection is centred at coordinates easting (E) 284175, northing (N)187428 and falls within two local authorities - Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) which the Project mostly resides, and Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council (NPTCBC), where the start and end sections of the connection are located.
- 1.1.3. This EIA Report has been prepared to accompany the application for the Project, which comprises:
- 4.4km of overhead lines, including 72 wooden poles;
 - 5.1km of underground cable, including cable ducts and 22 joint bay boxes;
 - Temporary working areas e.g. construction compound; and
 - Watercourse crossing(s).

1.2 EXISTING SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

- 1.2.1. Starting at the northernmost section, the route begins west of the A4063 as OHL for approximately 1.5km. To the north of Nantffyllon, the route transitions into UGC, travelling across semi-improved grassland for approx. 250m. It then proceeds south beneath the existing highway network for approx. 5.1km. At Sychbant Farm, the highway network ceases; this is where the route transitions back into OHL and continues south for approximately 2.9km.
- 1.2.2. The northern section of the proposed OHL travels predominantly through improved grassland and marshy grassland, with some areas encroaching on bracken, broadleaved woodland and scrub. The southern elements of the OHL cross an area of mainly improved and poor semi-improved grassland, with some minor areas of broadleaved woodland, bracken, and marshy grassland. The majority of the UGC is contained within the existing built environment. There is a small section – approximately 250m in length – to the north of Nantffyllon, which travels through poor semi-improved grassland and areas of bracken.
- 1.2.3. The nearest residential property is 150m east from the Site boundary, at E 284572, N 189256.

1.3 THE APPLICANT AND THE PROJECT TEAM

- 1.3.1. This EIA Report has been prepared on behalf of the Applicant by WSP with the support of:
- National Grid Electricity Distribution (designers); and
 - Trust for Welsh Archaeology (Archaeology Desk Based Assessment).

- 1.3.2. WSP is registered with the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA)'s EIA Quality Mark Scheme. The scheme allows organisations that lead the coordination of EIAs in the UK to commit to excellence in their EIA activities and have this commitment independently reviewed.
- 1.3.3. A statement outlining the relevant experience and qualifications of the competent experts who have prepared this EIA Report is provided in **Appendix 1A**, whilst a full description of the EIA process is provided within **Chapter 2: EIA Approach**.

1.4 PURPOSE OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT REPORT

- 1.4.1. The Project is considered a Development of National Significance (DNS) according to the Planning (Wales) Act 2015, the Development of National Significance (Wales) (Regulations) 2016 (as amended).
- 1.4.2. The requirement for a DNS is confirmed within recent DNS Procedural Guidance (2024)¹ which describes *'the installation of an electric line above ground up to 132kV which is associated with a devolved generation station'* as a DNS according to the regulations, set out above.
- 1.4.3. In relation to the England and Wales High Court (Administrative Court) Decisions (2019)², the Project is considered to be relevant to the following factors:
- *"iii. Functional interdependence - where one part of a development could not function without another, this may indicate that they constitute a single project (Burridge at [32], [42] and [78])"*
- 1.4.4. The Project is considered to be functionally interdependent with the consented Foels Trawsant Wind Farm; the wind farm will not be able to properly function without the proposed grid connection. The Environmental Statement (ES) will therefore consider in each ES chapter the in-combination effects between the consented Foels Trawsant Wind Farm, and the proposed electricity connection (the 'Project').
- 1.4.5. This draft EIA Report has been prepared as part of an EIA submission, which is required due to the Project being considered a DNS. This draft EIA Report has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the EIA Regulations. The draft EIA Report provides the environmental information that will be used within the pre-application consultation (PAC) by stakeholders to inform the process of determining the application.
- 1.4.6. A request for a Scoping Opinion was submitted 22nd November 2024 (DNS Application reference: DNS CAS-02505-N3T6M4). A response was initially received 27th February 2025, with a formal

¹Welsh Government (2024) Developments of national significance (DNS): guidance. Available at: <https://www.gov.wales/developments-national-significance-dns-guidance#:~:text=Explains%20the%20planning%20application%20process%20for%20developments,of%20national%20significance%20%28defined%20categories%20of%20infrastructure%20developments%29.>

² Wingfield, R (On the Application Of) v Canterbury City Council (2019) EWHC 1975 (Admin). Available at: <https://www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWHC/Admin/2019/1975.html>

response received on 14th March 2025 (**Appendix 2B**), including a consultation response from Bridgend County Borough Council and Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council, as well as other statutory consultees. Drawing upon the EIA Scoping Opinion and subsequent assessment work, the draft EIA Report includes an assessment of the likely significant environmental effects of the Project.

- 1.4.7. Further information on the EIA scoping process, as well as information about the approach used to prepare the draft EIA Report, is outlined in **Chapter 2: EIA Approach** of this document.

1.5 SCOPE OF THE EIA REPORT

- 1.5.1. As set out in Schedule 5, Section 17 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (EIA) (Wales) Regulations 2017, the following information should be included in the EIA Report:
- A description of the Project comprising information on the site, design, size, and other relevant features of the development;
 - A description of the likely significant effects of the Project on the environment;
 - A description of any features of the Project, or measures envisaged in order to avoid, prevent, or reduce and, if possible, offset likely significant adverse effects on the environment;
 - A description of the reasonable alternatives studied by the applicant or appellant, which are relevant to the Project and its specific characteristics, and an indication of the main reasons for the option chosen, taking into account the significant effects of the development on the environment;
 - A non-technical summary; and
 - Any additional information specified in Schedule 4 relevant to the specific characteristics of the development or type of development and to the environmental features likely to be significantly affected.
- 1.5.2. Column 1 of **Table 1-1** lists those topics that need to be considered when preparing an EIA Report and **column 2** lists where these are included in the EIA Reports supporting this application.

Table 1-1 - Scope of EIA Report

Topics to be assessed under the EIA Regulations	Chapter titles within this EIA Report
Population	Chapter 6 – Landscape and Visual Chapter 7 – Traffic and Transport
Human Health	Chapter 6 – Landscape and Visual Chapter 10 – Water Resources and Flood Risk
Biodiversity	Chapter 8 – Ecology

Land	Scoped out as significant effects unlikely. Standard mitigation measures are captured in a Land Quality Phase 1 desk study, including targeted peat surveys. A Coal Mining Risk Assessment has also been produced. These are considered in Chapter 4 – Description of the Project.
Soil	Scoped out as significant effects unlikely. Standard mitigation measures are captured in a Land Quality Phase 1 desk study, including targeted peat surveys. A Coal Mining Risk Assessment has also been produced. These are considered in Chapter 4 – Description of the Project.
Water Environment	Chapter 10 – Water Resources and Flood Risk
Air Quality	Scoped out as significant effects unlikely. Standard mitigation measures aimed at reducing air quality impacts are captured within a Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP), and considered within Chapter 4 – Description of the Project.
Pollutants	Scoped out as significant effects unlikely. Standard mitigation measures aimed at reducing impacts such as noise, are considered within a Noise Vibration Management Plan appended to the CEMP, and considered within Chapter 4 – Description of the Project.
Climate	N/A – scoped out
Material Assets	N/A – scoped out
Cultural Heritage	Chapter 9 – Historic Environment
Landscape	Chapter 6 – Landscape and Visual
The inter-relationship between the above factors and cumulative effects	These are assessed within each Chapter as relevant
Vulnerability to major accidents or disasters	N/A – scoped out

1.6 STRUCTURE OF THIS EIA REPORT

1.6.1. The EIA Report comprises five volumes:

- Volume 1 (this volume) is sub-divided into the following chapters:
 - Chapter 1: Introduction;
 - Chapter 2: Environmental Impact Assessment Approach, details the approach that has been adopted in preparing the EIA Report;
 - Chapter 3: Design Evolution and Alternatives, details the need for the Project, outlines the main alternatives considered and indicates the main reasons for the preferred choice;
 - Chapter 4: Description of the Project provides a description of the Project;
 - Chapter 5: Planning Policy, provides an overview of key policies and legislation that are relevant to the EIA Report;
 - Chapter 6 to 10 set out the technical assessments for the environmental topics considered in the EIA Report; and
 - Chapter 17 provides a summary of mitigation and residual effects.
- Volume 2 contains the Figures referred to in Volume 1;
- Volume 3 contains the Technical Appendices referred to in Volume 1; and
- Volume 4 is a Non-Technical Summary (NTS), which is also available as a standalone document, and summarises the findings of the EIA studies,

1.7 OTHER APPLICATION DOCUMENTS

1.7.1. The following documents are included as part of this submission for PAC consultation:

- Cover letter requesting consent;
- Green Infrastructure Statement;
- Planning Statement; and
- Design and Access Statement.

1.7.2. A PAC report will be submitted as part of the final ES submission to PEDW.

1.8 AVAILABILITY OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

1.8.1. The draft EIA Report and other documentation will be viewable at www.ftgrid.co.uk.

1.8.2. There will also be there public exhibitions events at the following locations, where the draft EIA Report will be available to view:

- St David's Church, Church Place, Maesteg, Bridgend CF34 9PA;
- Nantyffyllon Rugby Football Club, Nant Y Ffyrlling, Maesteg CF34 0BU; and
- Llangynwyd Village Hall; Bridgend Rd, Llangynwyd, Maesteg CF34 9SW.

1.8.3. Following submission of the application and accompanying final EIA Report to PEDW, notice will be given in accordance with Regulations 19 of the EIA Regulations (Wales). This will include details of the Project, state that this is subject to EIA and provide details of how the EIA Report can be inspected and copies obtained, including any associated cost for hard copies. The notice under Regulation 19 will also provide details of how representations can be made and detail arrangements for public participation in the decision-making process. The notice will be advertised in the Western Mail local newspaper.