Pennant Walters Ltd

FOEL TRAWSNANT

Planning Statement

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

OVERVIEW

This Planning Statement has been prepared on behalf of Pennant Walters Ltd by WSP UK Ltd (WSP) as one of a suite of documents to be submitted to Planning and Environment Decisions Wales (PEDW) for the installation of a 66 kV overhead line and underground cable connection from the approved Foel Trawsnant Wind Farm, situated within South Wales, to the wider national grid (referred to as the 'Project' from here on).

The Planning Statement has been prepared to provide a background and overview of the application and to demonstrate the suitability of the Project in planning terms. It supports the submission of an application to PEDW, on behalf of the Welsh Government, as a Development of National Significance (DNS). The Planning Statement has been informed by the findings of the Environmental Statement (ES), which sets out an assessment of the likely significant environmental effects of the Proposed Development.

SUMMARY OF ACCORDANCE WITH PLANNING POLICY

The Planning Statement identifies the primary role of Future Wales in the determination of DNS applications. Future Wales has development plan status, and, by law, DNS applications must be assessed against it. Future Wales includes two policies that provide the strategic and detailed policy wording for consideration of renewable and low carbon energy developments:

- Policy 17 – Renewable and Low Carbon Energy and Associated Infrastructure
- Policy 18 – Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Developments of National Significance

Whilst the focus of Policy 18 is to provide a decision-making framework for renewable and low carbon energy technologies, it is the most pertinent policy for the assessment of a grid connection proposal. The policy is also highly applicable because the Project is directly related to the distribution of power from a 'renewable energy' development, namely the approved Foel Trawsnant wind farm. A detailed assessment of the Project against these policies is set out in Section 4.6 of this Planning Statement. Section 4.6 also sets out a detailed assessment of the compliance with the Bridgend County Borough Council and Neath Port Talbot LDPs.

An assessment of the benefits of the Proposed Development and the adverse environmental impacts, as assessed in the accompanying ES, concludes that the Project is considered to accord with Policy 17 and Policy 18 of Future Wales, and the planning balance weighs heavily in favour of the Proposed Development.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 OVERVIEW

1.1.1. This Planning Statement (PS) has been prepared on behalf of Pennant Walters Ltd (the Applicant) by WSP Ltd (WSP) to support a submission to Planning and Environment Decisions Wales (PEDW) on behalf of the Welsh Government for consent as a Development of National Significance (DNS). The Project is directly connected to the Foel Trawsnant Wind Farm's on-site electricity infrastructure. It comprises both 66 kilovolts (kV) overhead lines (OHL) and underground cables (UGC) which will provide the connection between the National Grid and the Foel Trawsnant Wind Farm. The Project falls within the bounds of two local planning authorities, the central aspect of the line is situated within the Bridgend Borough County Council, however, the start and end of the connection falls within Neath Port Talbot Borough Council (NPTBC).

1.1.2. Further information regarding the Project is provided within **Section 2** of this report.

1.2 PURPOSE OF THE PLANNING STATEMENT

1.2.1. As identified within Planning Policy Wales, planning applications should be determined in accordance with the approved or adopted development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

1.2.2. This PS seeks to provide a background and overview of the application and aims to display the suitability of the Project in planning terms. This document should be read in conjunction with the accompanying Design and Access Statement (DAS), which sets out the approach taken to the design and access of the Proposed Development, and the Environment Statement (ES), which sets out the assessment of the likely significant environmental effects of the Proposed Development.

1.2.3. Further to the above, the purpose of this Planning Statement is:

- Provide a brief description of the Project including its site history and approach to the preparation of the proposal;
- Set out the objectives of the Project and other design considerations;
- Explain the benefits of the Project in the context of the need for renewable energy and summarise the overall environmental performance of the scheme; and
- Review the planning policy framework and set out the conformity of the scheme with the framework.

1.2.4. It has been prepared as part of a suite of documents to support the process of pre-application consultation before the submission of the final proposals to Planning and Environment Decisions Wales (PEDW) on behalf of the Welsh Government for consent as a Development of National Significance (DNS).

1.3 REASON FOR DNS CONSENT AND EIA

1.3.1. The Project is considered a DNS according to the Planning (Wales) Act 2015[1], the Development of National Significance (Wales) (Regulations) 2016 (as amended)[2], and the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Wales) Regulations 2017 (as amended)[3].

1.3.2. The Project does not fall under the development types set out within Schedule 1 of the EIA regulations. However, the Project is described within Schedule 2 of the EIA Regulations; specifically, Schedule 2 (3)(k): the transmission of electrical energy by overhead cables.

1.3.3. This is further confirmed within recent DNS Procedural Guidance (2024)[4] 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.

1.3.4. Regarding the association with a devolved generation station, the England and Wales High Court (Administrative Court) Decisions (2019)[5], is of relevance stating:

- "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])"

1.3.5. In relation to the Proposed Development, it will provide a Grid Connection between the devolved Foel Trawsnant wind farmand the wider national grid, further solidifying the Project as a DNS.

1.4 THE APPLICANT

1.4.1. Pennant Walters ('the Applicant'), is a key provider of onshore sustainable wind energy within Wales. Based in Wales, Pennant Walters Ltd is a Walters Group company with a focus on renewable energy having developed a wide variety of schemes including onshore wind, solar, small-scale hydro and battery storage.

1.4.2. The Applicant is seeking permission for a low voltage (66kV) grid connection consisting of Underground Cables and Overhead Lines to connect the consented Foel Trawsnant wind farmto the wider National Grid.

[1] Welsh Government (2015). Planning (Wales) Act 2015. Available online: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2015/4/contents. [Accessed 26 February 2025].
[2] Welsh Government (2016). The Development of National Significance (Wales) Regulation 2016. Available online: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/wsi/2016/56/contents. [Accessed 26 February 2025].
[3] Welsh Government (2017). Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Wales) Regulations (as amended). Available at: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/wsi/2017/567/contents. [Accessed 26 February 2025].
[4] Welsh Government (2024). Development of National Significance (DNS): procedural guidance. Available online: https://www.gov.wales/developments-national-significance-dns-procedural-guidance. [Accessed 26 February 2025].
[5] 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

1.5 PRE-APPLICATION CONSULTATION / SCOPING REPORT

1.5.1. A Scoping Report Request was submitted by WSP to the Welsh Ministers in November 2024. The Scoping Report set out the topics that would be scoped in (and the environmental studies that would be undertaken to establish the effects of the project) and the topics that would be scoped out.

1.5.2. A draft Planning Statement along with other supporting documents for the proposed DNS planning application, including a draft ES, will be subject to six weeks of pre-application consultation between March and April 2025. The results of that consultation will be used to refine and update (where necessary) the application documents prior to final submission to PEDW. A Pre-Application Consultation Report will also be prepared and is submitted with the application.

1.6 STRUCTURE OF THE PLANNING STATEMENT

1.6.1. The remainder of the document provides the following information:

- **Section 2** – Provides a description of the applicant, the site, the Proposed Development, planning history and Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) approach;
- **Section 3** – considers the need for the development. The section demonstrates how the Project could contribute to reducing the effect of climate change and improving the security of supply;
- **Section 4** – this section summarises the national and local policy context and analyses how the scheme performs against national planning policy requirements. It also sets out how the scheme performs against the highlighted Local Development Plans and any other material considerations; and
- **Section 5** – concludes how the scheme meets the planning policy requirements through the application of the planning balance.

2 OVERVIEW OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

2.1 INTRODUCTION

2.1.1. This section of the PS aims to provide a description of the Site and the surrounding area, due to the lateral nature of the Project the project falls

2.2 THE SITE

ADMINISTRATIVE BOUNDARIES

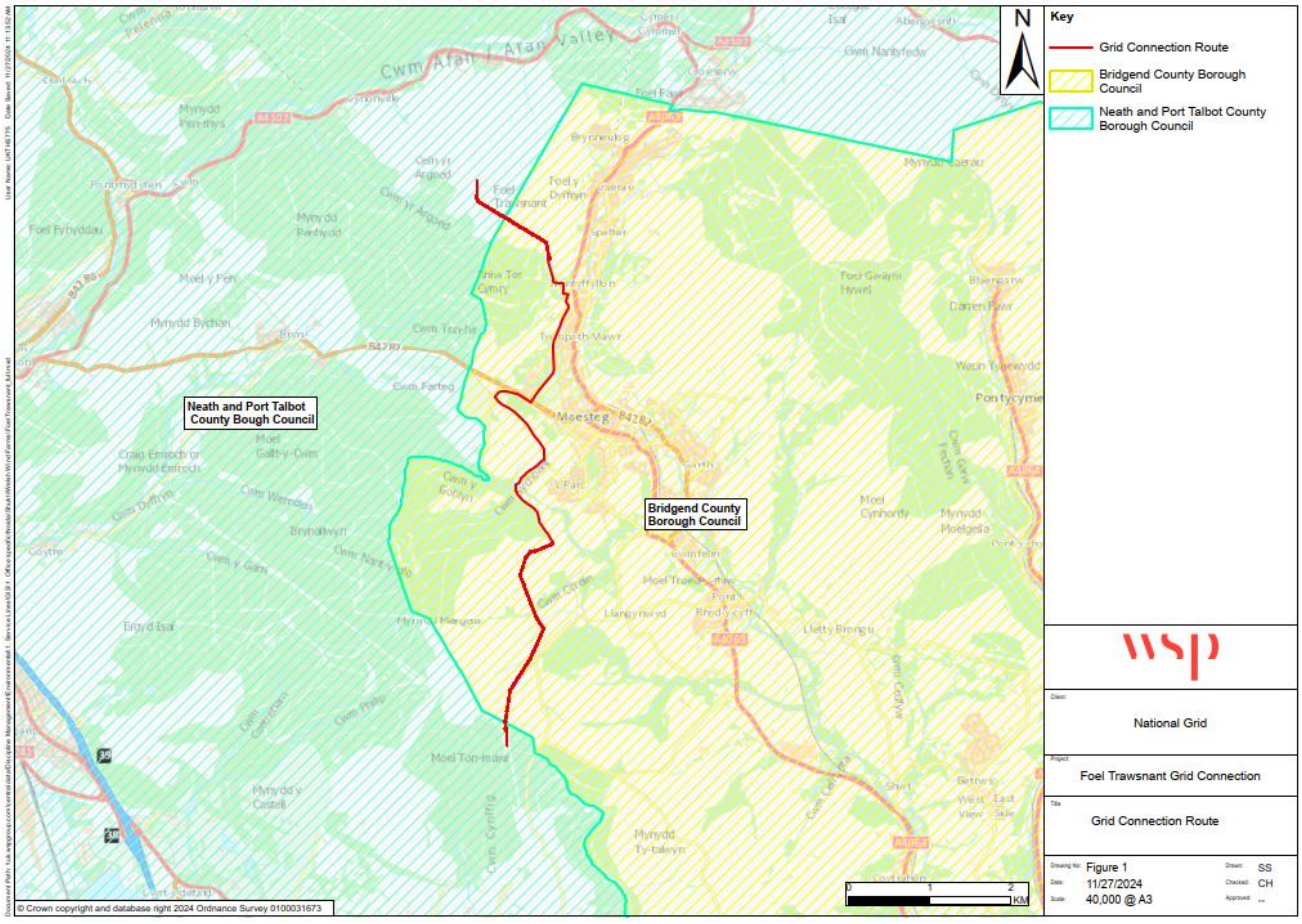
2.2.1. The Project falls within the administrative bounds of two Local Planning Authorities.

- Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC); and
- Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council (NPTCBC).

2.2.2. In total, approximately 8.8 kilometres (km) of the Project falls within BCBC and approximately 0.9km of cable falls within NPTCBC.

2.2.3. The Project covers a total length of 9.7km. **Figure 2.1** depicts the site location and the relevant local authority boundaries.

Figure 2-1 - Site Location and Local Authority Boundaries



2.2.4. Starting at the northern-most section, the grid connection begins as an overhead line, running for approximately 350m from the Foel Trawsnant wind farm to a location north west of Nantyffyllon at which point in transitions to underground cables laid in roads and lanes, from Kings Terrace heading south. The cable route then mainly follows the existing highway network south for approximately 5.1km. Once south of Maesteg the connection reverts back to an overhead line on private land and continues for approximately 3.1km, where it then connects into the existing wider national grid.

2.2.5. The northern section of overhead line falls within the pre-assessed area (PAA) No.9 for wind.

2.2.6. In terms of the general ecology, 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.

2.2.7. The majority of the UGC is contained within the existing built environment. There is a small section, approximately 250m in length, to the north Nantyffyllon which travels through poor semi-improved grassland and areas of bracken before connecting to existing tracks. In the southern section of the route, approximately 350m of underground cable passes through parcels of semi-improved acid grassland south of Maesteg.

2.3 THE PROJECT

2.3.1. The main elements of the Project consist of the following:

- 4.6km of Over-Head Line cables:
- 5.1km of Under-Ground Line;
- Wooden H-Poles carrying the OHL;
- Underground cables laid in trenches; and
- Temporary Construction Compound.

2.3.2. A full description of the development is provided in Draft ES **Chapter 4: Development Description**.

2.4 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

2.4.1. A 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.

2.4.2. A request for a Scoping Opinion was submitted 22nd November 2024 (DNS Application reference: DNS CAS-02505-N3T6M4) with a formal response received on 13th March 2025 (**Appendix 2B of** Draft **ES Chapter 2: EIA Approach**), 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 responses received to date and subsequent assessment work, the draft EIA Report includes an assessment of the likely significant environmental effects of the Project.

2.4.3. 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.

2.4.4. The Draft ES should be reading in conjunction with this Planning Statement, the Design and Access and the Green Infrastructure Statement.

3 ENERGY POLICY

3.1 BACKGROUND

3.1.1. The Project is associated with the approved Foel Trawsnant wind farmand will provide a connection between the wind farm and the wider national grid. Without the Project, the wind farm would not be able to serve its purpose in providing renewable energy. The requirement for renewable energy is accepted at national policy level with wind energy widely recognised as the most mature renewable energy technology currently available, as reflected in the approval of the Foel Trawsnant Wind Farm.

3.1.2. In light of the above, the Project directly assists in meeting the energy, climate and net zero objectives of the following International, UK and Welsh energy legislation, policy and strategies:

- International Agreements
  - Paris Agreement 2015; and
  - Glasgow Climate Pact 2021.
- UK energy and legislation and policy
  - Climate Change Act 2008 (as amended);
  - Energy Act (2008, 2011, 2013, 2016);
  - UK Renewable Energy Strategy (2009);
  - Clean Growth strategy (2017);
  - Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener (2021); and
  - British Energy Security Strategy (2022);
  - Powering up Britain – March 2023 Energy Security Secretary Statements
  - Carbon Budget Delivery Plan (March 2023)
- Welsh energy and legislation and policy
  - Energy Wales: A Low Carbon Transition (2012);
  - Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015;
  - Environment Wales (Act) 2016 (as amended);
  - Policy Statement: Local Ownership Of Energy Generation In Wales – Benefitting Wales Today And For Future Generations (2020)
  - Energy Generation in Wales Report 2021 (2022)
  - Programme for Government (2021)
  - Net Zero Wales (2021)
  - Energy Generation Targets For Wales: Statement To Assembly Members (2017) And 2023 Update

3.1.3. With specific regard to the grid connection the following legislation and policy is considered to be particularly relevant to the Project:

- NPS EN-1
- Future Wales: National Plan 2040
- Planning Policy Wales Edition 12 (2024)
- Technical Advice Notes

4 PLANNING POLICY REVIEW

4.1 BACKGROUND

4.1.1. This section of the Planning Statement sets out the key planning policies relevant to the consideration of the Project at the UK, Wales and local levels. It begins with an assessment of performance against UK and Welsh planning policy. It is then followed by consideration of the scheme against the key policies contained within both Bridgend and Neath Port Talbot County Borough Councils and the associated guidance in non-statutory Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG).

4.2 UK PLANNING POLICY

4.2.1. This section sets out the relevant UK-wide policy context set out in the National Policy Statements (NPS). In Wales, DNS applications are determined in accordance with Future Wales: The National Plan 2040 (considered in detail in section 4.3 of this Planning Statement), in line with the revised legal framework since the NPS was first enacted in 2011. However, the NPSs are useful in providing a broader context on energy policy that applies across England and Wales and are therefore briefly reviewed here.

OVERARCHING NATIONAL POLICY STATEMENT FOR ENERGY (EN-1) (2023)[6]

4.2.2. A revised version of NPS EN-1 came into force on 17th January 2024. EN-1 sets out national policy for energy infrastructure and provides the primary policy for decision by the Secretary of State.

4.2.3. In section 2 of the NPS refers to the target of achieving net zero carbon emissions in 2050 and a 78% reduction in GHG emission by 2035. The Project would support the overarching aims of EN-1 by delivering renewable energy by providing key infrastructure to connect a devolved onshore wind farm to the wider national grid.

4.2.4. Section 3 discusses the urgent need for new electricity networks. Paragraph 3.3.65 states that

"There is an urgent need for new electricity network infrastructure to be brought forward at pace to meet our energy objectives".

4.2.5. Paragraph 3.3.66 goes on to state that *"the security and reliability of the UK's current and future energy supply is highly dependent on having an electricity network which will enable new renewable electricity generation, storage, and interconnection infrastructure that our country needs to meet the rapid increase in electricity demand required to transition to net zero while maintaining energy security. The delivery of this important infrastructure also needs to balance cost to consumers, accelerated timelines for delivery and the minimisation of community and environmental impacts".*

[6] Department of Energy and Climate Change (2024). Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy (EN-1). (Online) Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-policy-statements-for-energy-infrastructure (Accessed 07 February 2025).

4.3 WELSH PLANNING POLICY

FUTURE WALES: THE NATIONAL PLAN 2024 (2021)

4.3.1. Future Wales: The National Plan 2040 (FWNP)[7] was published in February 2021 and sets out the national development framework for development in Wales up to 2040. FWNP sets out a strategy for addressing key national priorities through the planning system, including sustaining and developing a vibrant economy, achieving decarbonisation and climate resilience, developing strong ecosystems, and improving the health and well-being of communities. Future Wales is the policy document against which DNS (including the Proposed Development) must be determined in accordance with unless material considerations indicate otherwise, in line with Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

4.3.2. Future Wales was prepared to provide a clear, long-term spatial direction for Government policy, action and investment in Wales, it sets out a framework for addressing key national priorities through the planning system. It is stated on page 46 of the plan *"Future Wales together with Planning Policy Wales will ensure the planning system focuses on delivering a decarbonised and resilient Wales through the places we create the energy we generate, the natural resources and materials we use and how we live and travel".*

4.3.3. Future Wales recognises the role that Wales can play in supporting the use of renewable energy, the plan recognises on page 48 that *"Wales can become a world leader in renewable energy technologies"*. It is further recognised that Wales' potential for wind, tidal, and solar energy generation and commitment and willingness to support both large and community-scaled projects provide *"a strong lead for renewable energy development […] support the renewable sector, attract new investment and reduce carbon emissions"*.

4.3.4. This sentiment is further highlighted on page 96, where it is stated that *'Wales is abundant in opportunities to generate renewable energy, and the Welsh Government is committed to maximising this potential'* as such, Future Wales has set the target for 70% of electricity consumption to be generated from renewable energy by 2030.

4.3.5. It is also highlighted (via Policy 18) that the Welsh Government is supportive of both on- and off-shore wind infrastructure, further to this the government is supportive of associated infrastructure (cables).

4.3.6. Page 99 of the FWNP states that *'the Welsh Government acknowledges the significant challenge that grid infrastructure and capacity will have on the potential for new on-shore and off-shore renewable energy developments across Wales. We are committed to working with energy networks and developers to identify opportunities and barriers as well as working collaboratively to find solutions'.*

4.3.7. The following FWNP Policies of relevance to the Project are listed below:

[7] The Welsh Government (2021). Future Wales: The National Plan 2040. (Online) Available at: https://www.gov.wales/future-wales-national-plan-2040 (Accessed 06 February 2025).

- Policy 17 – Renewable and Low Carbon Energy and Associated Infrastructure; and
- Policy 18 – Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Developments of National Significance.

Policy 17 – Renewable and Low Carbon Energy and Associated Infrastructure

4.3.8. Policy 17 states that *"The Welsh Government strongly supports the principle of developing renewable and low carbon energy from all technologies and at all scales to meet our future energy needs"* whilst policy makers are required to give *"significant weight to the need to meet Wales' international commitments and our target to generate 70% of consumed electricity by renewable means by 2030 in order to combat the climate emergency"*. It should be noted that the 30% target has now been superseded by Welsh Government (2023b) to 100% by 2035.

4.3.9. Policy 17 also states that *"New strategic grid infrastructure for the transmission and distribution of energy should be designed to minimise visual impact on nearby communities".*

Policy 18 – Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Developments of National Significance

4.3.10. Whilst the focus of Policy 18 is to provide a decision-making framework for renewable and low carbon energy technologies, it is considered to be the most pertinent policy for the assessment of a grid connection proposal. The policy is also highly applicable because the Project is directly related to the distribution power from a 'renewable energy' development, namely the approved Foel Trawsnant wind farm. In addition, the northern section of overhead line falls within PAA No.9 for wind. Future Wales makes clear that landscapes within PAA are capable of accommodating development (onshore wind) in an acceptable way and provides a presumption in favour of large-scale wind energy development. The methodology used for defining the boundaries of the PAA areas in Future Wales specifically considered the landscape impacts of wind turbines up to 250 m in height.

4.3.11. As a development qualifying as a Development of National Significance, Policy 18 sets out the following criteria that are applicable to the Proposed Development:

- *1. outside of the Pre-Assessed Areas for wind developments and everywhere for all other technologies, the proposal does not have an unacceptable adverse impact on the surrounding landscape (particularly on the setting of National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty);*

- *2. there are no unacceptable adverse visual impacts on nearby communities and individual dwellings;*

- *3. there are no adverse effects on the integrity of Internationally designated sites (including National Site Network sites and Ramsar sites) and the features for which they have been designated (unless there are no alternative solutions, Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest (IROPI) and appropriate compensatory measures have been secured);*

- *4. there are no unacceptable adverse impacts on national statutory designated sites for nature conservation (and the features for which they have been designated), protected habitats and species;*

- *5. the proposal includes biodiversity enhancement measures to provide a net benefit for biodiversity;*

- *6. there are no unacceptable adverse impacts on statutorily protected built heritage assets;*
- *7. there are no unacceptable adverse impacts by way of shadow flicker, noise, reflected light, air quality or electromagnetic disturbance;*
- *8. there are no unacceptable impacts on the operations of defence facilities and operations (including aviation and radar) or the Mid Wales Low Flying Tactical Training Area (TTA-7T);*
- *9. there are no unacceptable adverse impacts on the transport network through the transportation of components or source fuels during its construction and/or ongoing operation;*
- *10. the proposal includes consideration of the materials needed or generated by the development to ensure the sustainable use and management of resources;*
- *11. there are acceptable provisions relating to the decommissioning of the development at the end of its lifetime, including the removal of infrastructure and effective restoration.*
- *The cumulative impacts of existing and consented renewable energy schemes should also be considered.*

PLANNING POLICY WALES (EDITION 12) (2024)

4.3.12. Planning Policy Wales (Edition 12)[8] was published in July 2024 and sets out the land use planning policies of the Welsh Government. The PPW is also supplemented by a series of Technical Advice Notes (TANs), Welsh Government Circulars, and policy clarification letters.

4.3.13. It is stated, in paragraph 1.2, that the primary objective of PPW is to *"ensure that the planning system contributes towards the delivery of sustainable development and improved the social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being of Wales, as required by the Planning (Wales) Act 2015, and other key legislation"*.

4.3.14. In paragraph 3.30, PPW states that *"in 2019 the Welsh Government declared a climate emergency in order to coordinate action nationally and locally to help combat the threats of climate change. The planning system plays a key role in tackling the climate emergency through the decarbonisation of the energy system and the sustainable management of natural resources."*

4.3.15. Paragraph 5.7.7 goes on to state that *"the benefits of renewable and low-carbon energy, as part of the overall commitment to tackle the climate emergency and increase energy security, is of paramount importance".*

4.3.16. In relation to electricity grid network and energy storage the following is relevant to the Project:

[8] The Welsh Government (2024). Planning Policy Wales (Edition 12). (Online) Available at: https://www.gov.wales/planning-policy-wales (accessed 06 February 2025)

- the need for appropriate energy infrastructure is contextualised within paragraph 5.7.2 which states *"overall power demand is expected to increase as a result of growing electrification of transport and heat."* This is further solidified by the PPW stating that "*in order to ensure future demand can be met, significant investment will be needed in energy generation, transmission and distribution infrastructure".*
- paragraph 5.7.8 states that *"an effective grid network is required to fulfil the Welsh Government's renewable and low carbon ambitions".*
- paragraph 5.7.9 states that the *"Welsh Government's preferred position on new power lines is that, where possible, they should be laid underground.* ***However,*** *it is recognised that a balanced view must be taken against costs which could render otherwise acceptable projects unviable" (bolding is our emphasis).*
- Paragraph 5.7.10 states *"Planning authorities should plan positively for grid infrastructure. Development plans should facilitate the grid infrastructure required to support the renewable and low carbon energy potential for the area, particularly areas identified for such development. Planning authorities should support appropriate grid developments, whether or not the developments to be connected are located within their authority".*

TECHNICAL ADVICE NOTES

Technical Advice Note 5: Nature Conservation and Planning (2009)[9]

4.3.17. TAN 5 provides advice about how the land use planning system should contribute to protecting and enhancing biodiversity and geological conservation within Wales. It sets out the key principles of planning for nature conservation for both local development plans and when deciding planning applications that may affect nature conservation. These include:

- Being mindful of the principles of sustainable development, environmental limits, the precautionary principle;
- Contributing to the protection and improvement of the environment;
- Promoting the conservation and enhancement of statutorily designated areas and undeveloped coast;
- Ensuring that appropriate weight is attached to designated sites of international, national and local importance;
- Protecting wildlife and natural features in the wider environment;
- Ensuring that all material considerations are taken into account and decisions are informed by adequate information about the potential effects of development on nature conservation;
- Ensuring that the range and population of protected species is sustained; and
- Avoiding harm to nature conservation, minimising unavoidable harm by mitigation measures, offsetting residual harm by compensation measures and looking for new opportunities to enhance nature conservation.

[9] Welsh Assembly Government (2009). Technical Advice Note 5: Nature Conservation and Planning. (Online) Available at: https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-09/tan5-nature-conservation.pdf (Accessed April 2024).

Technical Advice Note 11: Noise (1997)[10]

4.3.18. TAN 11 provides advice on how the planning system can be used to minimise the adverse impact of noise, without placing unreasonable burdens on applicants. Local planning authorities must ensure that noise generating development does not cause an unacceptable degree of disturbance. They should also bear in mind that if subsequent intensification or change of use results in greater intrusion, consideration should be given to the use of appropriate conditions.

Technical Advice Note 12: Design (2016)[11]

4.3.19. The purpose of this TAN is to equip all those involved in the design of development with advice on how "promoting sustainability through good design" may be facilitated through the planning system and the preparation and validation of mandatory design and access statements. There are a number of key objectives in relation to design which are set out by TAN 12:

- Access - Ensuring ease of access for all;
- Character - Sustaining or enhancing local character, promoting legible development, promoting a successful relationship between public and private space, promoting quality, choice and variety and promoting inclusive design;
- Community Safety - Ensuring attractive, safe public spaces and security through natural surveillance;
- Environmental Sustainability - Achieving efficient use and protection of natural resources, enhancing biodiversity and designing for change; and
- Movement - Promoting sustainable means of travel.

Technical Advice Note 24: The Historic Environment (2017)

4.3.20. TAN 24 provides guidance on how the planning system should consider the historic environment during development plan preparation and decision making on planning applications.

4.4 THE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

4.4.1. As described in Section 4.3 above, Future Wales forms the highest tier of the Development Plan and contains the primary planning policies against which DNS are determined. This section of the Planning Statement sets out the key LDP policies relevant to the consideration of the Proposed Development. The Project is situated within the following two administrative areas:

- Bridgend County Borough Council; and
- Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council.

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

4.4.2. BCBC adopted its Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP) in March 2024. The policies of relevance to the Project are:

[10] Welsh Assembly Government (1997). Technical Advice Note 11: Noise. (Online) Available at: https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-09/tan11-noise.pdf (Accessed April 2024).
[11] Welsh Government (2016). Technical Advice Note 12: Design. (Online) Available at: https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-09/tan12-design.pdf (Accessed April 2024).

- DNP 1: Development in the Countryside
- Policy DNP 4: Special Landscape Areas
- Policy DNP 5: Local and Regional Nature Conservation Sites
- Policy DNP 6: Biodiversity, Ecological Networks, Habitats, and Species
- Policy DNP 7: Trees, Hedgerows, and Development
- Policy SP 13: Decarbonisation and Renewable Energy
- Policy SP 18: Conservation of the Historic Environment

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

4.4.3. NPTCBC adopted its Local Development Plan in January 2016. The policies of relevance to the Project are:

- Policy SP 1: Climate Change
- Policy SP 15: Biodiversity and Geodiversity
- Policy EN 2: Special Landscape Area
- Policy SP 18: Renewable and Low Carbon Energy

4.5 OTHER LOCAL PLANNING CONSIDERTIONS

SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE

BCBC

SPG 19: Biodiversity and Development (July 2014)12

4.5.1. SPG 19, which was published in July 2014, is part of a wider suite of Planning Practice Guidance published by the Council and used to inform and expand upon the existing biodiversity and green infrastructure policies within the LDP.

4.5.2. This SPG outlines how the Council will expect habitats to be considered as part of development proposals within the County Borough of Bridgend. Section A of the document introduces the concept of the ‘green infrastructure approach’.

4.5.3. Paragraph 5.2 states that ‘green infrastructure provides the spatial framework for a range of natural functions and uses. By adopting the Green Infrastructure Approach, development schemed may be adapted or designed to provide a range of important benefits.

[12] Bridgend Borough Council (2014). SPG 19: Biodiversity and Development. Available at: https://uat.bridgend.gov.uk/residents/planning-and-building-control/local-development-plan/supplementary-planning-guidance/ [Accessed March 2025]

NPTCBC

SPG: Landscape and Seascape (May 2018)13

4.5.4. This SPG was published in May 2018 and provides information and guidance setting out the expectations on all development proposals to protect and enhance all landscapes and seascapes. Paragraph 3.1.5 of the SPG states that 'opportunities to enhance landscape character and minimise negative impacts should be addressed through the development, location, and design process'.

SPG: Biodiversity and Geodiversity (May 2018)14

4.5.5. The biodiversity and geodiversity SPG was published in May 2018 and provides information and guidance setting out the expectations on all development proposals to protect, conserve, enhance and manage important habitats, species and sites of geological interest.

EMERGING LDP

4.5.6. Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council are currently in the process of adopting a Replacement Local Plan for the 2023 – 2038 planning period. The NPTCBC website states that the Replacement Local Development Plan should be adopted in April 2027.

4.5.7. The policies of relevance to the Project are identified below in **Table 4.1.**

4.6 PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

ASSESSMENT OF COMPLIANCE WITH NATIONAL POLICY

4.6.1. Future Wales is the primary planning policy document against which applications qualifying as DNS are to be assessed as the highest tier of the development plan. Future Wales (page. 96) confirms:

"As set out in legislation, applications for Developments of National Significance must be determined in accordance with Future Wales, which is the national development plan for Wales."

4.6.2. Future Wales is the most up-to-date development plan and in accordance with the latest PPW. Therefore, an assessment of the Project against the policies of Future Wales is crucial to establishing the planning merits of the Proposed Development. However, understanding the compliance with the aims of PPW is also important to the assessment of compliance with national policy.

BENEFITS OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

4.6.3. As noted above, the proposal enables an wind farm to be connected to the national grid. The benefits of the Project are therefore directly linked to the benefits of the wind farm, which were

[13] Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council (2016). Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council (NPTCBC) Local Development Plan (Online) Available at: https://www.npt.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/ (Accessed on 07 February 2025).
[14] Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council (2018). SPG: Landscape and Seascape. Available at https://media.npt.gov.uk/media/j42dzulp/spg_landscape_seascape_may18.pdf?v=20241209172432 [Accessed March 2025].

established and supported through the approval of the wind farm. In summary those benefits related to:

- assisting in meeting targets for the delivery of renewable energy;
- helping to tackle the climate emergency;
- helping to meet decarbonisation targets; and
- increasing energy security.

IMPACTS OF THE PROPSED DEVELOPMENT

LANDSCAPE & VISUAL

4.6.4. Future Wales Policy 17 states that "New strategic grid infrastructure for the transmission and distribution of energy should be designed to minimise visual impact on nearby communities". Similarly Criterion 1 of Future Wales Policy 18 concerns effects upon the landscape and states that "outside of the Pre-Assessed Areas for wind developments and **e**verywhere for all other technologies, the proposal does not have an unacceptable adverse impact on the surrounding landscape (particularly on the setting of National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty)".

4.6.5. The landscape impacts have been assessed within Draft **ES Chapter 6: Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA).** It confirms that there are no statutory landscape designations, such as National Parks or National Landscapes, within the Site or Study Area.

4.6.6. The LVIA then goes on to assess the likely effects on Local Character Areas (LCAs) within the Study Area. The LVIA concludes that there would only be significant effects on one LCA, that being LCA 1: Llangynwyd Rolling Uplands and Forestry (which contains Special Landscape Areas, SLA1: Foel y Dyffryn and SLA 3: Western Uplands).

4.6.7. The LVIA also considers the effects on six LANDMAP Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas (VSAAs) and concludes that significant effects would only occur at one VSAA CYNONVS473 – Mynydd Baedan.

4.6.8. Whilst significant effects have been identified, these are inherent given the type of development proposed (ref: NPS EN-1). Policy 18 places a particular emphasis on avoiding unacceptable adverse impacts on *"the setting of National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty".* The Project has no significant effects on national parks or AONBs (now referred to as National Landscapes). In addition significant effects are limited to localised areas within the LCA. Whilst a matter to be included within the planning balance, the presence of significant effects upon local landscape designations is not considered to be fundamental to the consideration of the application.

4.6.9. It should also be noted that the northern section of overhead line falls within PAA No.9 for wind. Future Wales makes clear that landscapes within PAA are capable of accommodating development (onshore wind) in an acceptable way and provides a presumption in favour of large-scale wind energy development. The methodology used for defining the boundaries of the PAA areas in Future Wales specifically considered the landscape impacts of wind turbines up to 250m in height. It is therefore our strong contention that if 250m turbines are acceptable in this landscape then 15m H-poles would clearly be acceptable.

Cumulative Landscape and Visual Assessment

4.6.10. The LVIA also assesses cumulative landscape effects which is concerned with the evaluation of the effects that could be generated were the Project to become operational along with developments

that have been consented and separately with developments that have been consented and that are proposed i.e. planning applications within 3 km radius cumulative study area. The focus of the assessment is to identify which, if any, of the landscape or visual receptors that would not experience significant effects as a result of the introduction of the Project alone, may experience significant effects as a result of the incremental contribution of the Proposed Development. The LVIA assesses the effects under two scenarios:

- **Consented Development Scenario** – the Project with Consented Schemes; and

- **Application Development Scenario** – the Project in addition to Consented Development plus Schemes in Planning. In reality, not all the energy developments proposed under the Application Development scenario will be granted planning consent. As a result, it represents a worst-case scenario that may never come to pass.

Consented Development Scenario

4.6.11. In terms of the cumulative landscape effects under the Consented Development Scenario **Table 6-14** of Draft **ES Chapter 6: Landscape**, of the four landscape character areas identified three were found to have significant effects (LCA 1: Llangynwyd Rolling Uplands and Forestry; LCA 3: Llynfi & Garw Uplands and Forestry; and LCA 13: Foel Trawsnant) and four VSAAs:

- CYNONVS473 – Mynydd Baedan
- NPTVS358 – Foel Trawsnant
- NPTVS927 – Mynydd Margam
- CYNONVS811 – Garth Hill

4.6.12. In terms of cumulative visual effects under the Consented Development Scenario, **Table 6-15** of Draft **ES Chapter 6: Landscape** confirms there would be significant effects on four of the seven viewpoints selected.

Application Development Scenario

4.6.13. In terms of cumulative landscape effects under Application Development Scenario, **Table 6-15** of Draft **ES Chapter 6: Landscape** confirms there would be significant effects at all four LCAs.

4.6.14. In terms of cumulative visual effects under Application Development Scenario, **Table 6-15** of Draft **ES Chapter 6: Landscape** confirms there would be significant effects on six of the seven viewpoints selected.

4.6.15. Whilst significant cumulative landscape effects and visual effects are identified, for the northern overhead line section, the Project is not the main scheme or key contributing factor that leads to the creation of significant cumulative effects. The wind farms are and this Project does not tip the balance between significant and not significant. In addition the point made above in paragraph 4.6.9 applies: if 250m high wind turbines are acceptable in the PAA it stands to reason that 15m high H-poles would be acceptable.

4.6.16. In terms of the southern of overhead line, from some viewpoints, the Project does become the main contributing factor to a cumulative effect. This is because the windfarms are less prominent due to their distance further north in the landscape compared to the Project which would be in the foreground. However, whilst the Project would be noticeable and create significant effects, those effects are localised and not considered to be so severe as to be unacceptable. The proposal is for H-Poles s of a maximum height of 15m. H-Poles s are common features in the countryside and

whilst the introduction of them will be evident they are not considered to be harmful to the landscape.

Conclusion on Landscape

4.6.17. The Project would create a significant effect upon the two SLA (local designations) within which H-Poles s would be sited. Effects upon SLAs should not be taken as reasons in themselves to refuse a grid connection. This is because Policy 18 of Future Wales places an emphasis on avoiding unacceptable adverse impacts on "*the setting of National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty"*, which the Project has no significant effects upon. In addition, for the northern section of overhead line, the point made above in paragraph 4.6.9 applies: if 250m high wind turbines are acceptable in the PAA it stands to reason that 15m high H-poles would be acceptable. Whilst the southern section is not in a PAA, and the Project would be noticeable, those effects are localised and not considered to be so severe as to be unacceptable. The proposal is for H-Poles s of a maximum height of 15m. H-Poles s are common features in the countryside and whilst the introduction of them will be evident they are not considered to be harmful to the landscape.

4.6.18. When considered in the context of Future Wales Policies 17 and 18, which clearly promote the increased production of renewable energy, and by association the required grid connections, the Project is not considered to be so significant to outweigh the benefits of the Proposed Development; it is not unacceptable.

POLICY 18 CRITERIA

4.6.19. Policy 18 sets out a range of criteria for DNS applications which inform consideration of impacts. The majority of the criteria (2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9) refer to 'unacceptable adverse impacts' which implies that a planning judgement has to be made to determine acceptability (or otherwise) of any adverse impacts.

4.6.20. As demonstrated in Table 4-1, when taken as a whole, and the planning merits weighed, the Project accords with the criteria in Policy 18. (Criteria 1 has been considered above).

Table 4-1 – Assessment against Future Wales Policy 18 Requirements

Policy 18 criteria	Compliance
2. There are no unacceptable adverse visual impacts on nearby communities and individuals;	Draft **ES Chapter 6: Landscape and Visual Impact** assesses the likely visual impacts of the Proposed Development. The LVIA assessment finds that there are likely significant visual effects on a range of receptors categorised as recreational and some limited residential receptors in the southern section of the route as a result of the Project. Whilst users of two footpaths and one long distance footpath/bridleway could also experience significant effects, it should be recognised that these routes are by their nature of considerable length and the effects would be localised and transitory in nature. Grid connections by their nature create visual effects and the role of the decision maker is to consider the extent to which these effects outweigh the positive benefits of the project such that the application could be considered unacceptable. Recognition should also be given to the fact that the ES assessment commonly considers views of grid connections to be negative when the experience of the individual may

	often be more nuanced. This is particularly the case for this Project when the connection will use wood poles, which are also only a maximum height of 15m. This means the Project is likely to blend into the landscape to a far greater degree than higher voltage connections that require taller and more prominent structures (such as steel lattice pylons). Future Wales calls for significant weight to be attached to the positive benefits of onshore wind, which this Project directly facilitates. The significant effects identified within the draft ES are those which could be anticipated as arising from a development of this kind and are not so significant or widespread as to outweigh the benefits which would derive from its operation.
3. There are no adverse effects on the integrity of Internationally designated sites (including National Site Network sites and Ramsar sites) and the features; for which they have been designated (unless there are no alternative solutions, Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest (IROPI) and appropriate compensatory measures have been secured);	Draft **ES Chapter 8: Ecology** examines the likely effects on internationally designated sites. It lists the designations that will need consideration (of which there are only three; Glaswelltiroedd Cefn Cribwr/Cefn Cribwr Grasslands Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Kenfig/Cynffig SAC and Blackmill Woodlands SAC) and then identifies if there are likely to be any significant effects on them. Given the distance and a lack of pathways from the site it is concluded that significant effects arising from the Project are not likely to occur and the sites are scoped out from further assessment.
4. There are no unacceptable adverse impacts on national statutory designated sites for nature conservation (and the features for which they have been designated), protected habitats and species;	Draft **ES Chapter 8: Ecology** confirms there are no nationally statutory designated sites that will be adversely affected by the Project. No national statutory designated sites were identified within the zone of influence for potential impact pathways to the Proposed Development.
5. The proposal includes biodiversity enhancement measures to provide a net benefit for biodiversity;	The Applicant will prepare a Conservation Plan. It will set out the objectives for biodiversity protection, mitigation, monitoring and habitat enhancement (where applicable). This will include measures to address any temporary impacts to SINCs, Priority Habitats and Ancient Woodland. The Conservation Plan will identify how the Project will achieve a net benefit for biodiversity, deliver ecosystem resilience and accord with the stepwise approach. It will set out a timetable for ecological measures throughout the lifetime of the Project, including any pre-construction measures that are required. The Conservation Plan will be agreed with the planning authority at the pre-construction stage either as part of the CEMP or as a standalone document
6. There are no unacceptable adverse impacts on statutorily protected built heritage assets;	Draft **ES Chapter 9: Historic Environment** identifies the locations of historic assets in the vicinity of the site. The chapter confirms that there 9 scheduled monuments, 9 listed buildings, and one Historic Landscape have been scoped-in for further assessment within this ES. However, the Draft ES concludes that subject to the to the implementation of the environmental measures set out Section 9.8 of Draft **ES Chapter 9: Historic Environment** (which includes an archaeological watching brief, secured by condition) there would be no significant effects on any historic assets.

7. There are no unacceptable adverse impacts by way of shadow flicker, noise, reflected light, air quality or electromagnetic disturbance;	Due to the nature of the project (i.e. no moving parts) there will be no shadow flicker effects. In terms of noise, this topic was scoped out of the ES. Notwithstanding this, a Noise and Vibration Management Plan (NVMP) has been produced. Whilst noise and vibration will occur, this will only be during the construction phase. The NVMP sets out measures and procedures that will be implemented by the Applicant and its appointed contractors to minimise effects during the construction phase. In terms of reflected light, due to the nature of the Project (wooden H-Poles s with conductors and insulators and underground cables) there would be limited to negligible reflected light. Impacts on Air Quality were scoped out of the EIA. In terms of electromagnetic disturbance, Electric and Magnetic Fields (EMFs) arise from generation, transmission, distribution and use of electricity and will occur around power lines. All overhead power lines produce EMFs. These tend to be highest directly under a line and decrease to the sides at increasing distance. Although putting cables underground eliminates the electric field, they still produce magnetic fields, which are highest directly above the cable. The Project has a relatively low voltage of 66kV, and has been designed and phased so that there will be no significant effects related to EMFs.
8. There are no unacceptable impacts on the operations of defence facilities and operations (including aviation and radar) or the Mid Wales Low Flying Tactical Training Area (TTA-7T);	Due to the nature of the Project, with the maximum height of the H-Poles being 15mthere would be no effect on aviation or radar.
9. There are no unacceptable adverse impacts on the transport network through the transportation of components or source fuels during its construction and/or ongoing operation;	Draft **ES Chapter 7: Traffic and Transport** examines the potential effects on the transport network and assess sections of the A4063, Neath Road (B4282) and an unnamed road to Sychbant Farm. The site construction compound would be accessed via a forestry track accessed from Neath Road (B4282), there would be additional Project access points from the local road network providing access to various areas of the Site for works. There may be some off-site works along the construction traffic routes on the local road network, for example construction of temporary passing areas. The details of off-site works will be discussed with the Local Highway Authority including if the works are to be retained permanently. In addition to impacts relating to construction traffic movements the Project will impact on the transport network through highways works relating to the construction of the UGC element of the Project, anticipated to take between five and six months. The routes for HV (Heavy Vehicle) construction traffic to route from the Strategic Road Network (SRN) have been developed with reference to various criteria such as avoidance of sensitive receptors and settlements where reasonably practicable and based on the hierarchy of road classes with 'A' roads being preferred followed by 'B', 'C' and unclassified roads. An Outline Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) has been prepared (**ES Appendix 7A).** This sets out the management of daily delivery profiles and controls construction vehicle movements and

	routeing of HVs to/from the site. The Outline CTMP will be developed into a final CTMP and agreed with the Local Highway Authorities to ensure appropriate mitigation is implemented to minimise the impact of the Project on the transport network. Similarly, an Outline Public Rights of Way Management Plan (PRoWMP) has been prepared (**ES Appendix 7B**) which details the anticipated temporary impacts on the PRoW network and identifies mitigation measures. The Outline PRoWMP will be developed into a final PRoWMP and agreed with the Local Highway Authorities to ensure appropriate mitigation is implemented to minimise the impact of the Project on the transport network. Within the Draft **ES Chapter 7: Traffic and Transport** assessment of likely significant traffic and transport effects the peak number of average daily construction traffic movements on a highways receptor was estimated as 24 HV movements (i.e. 12 HV movements going to the Site and leaving the Site) and 17 LV movements. For each road, excluding the narrow single track roads, assessed within Draft ES Chapter 7 the peak average daily construction vehicle movements would increase traffic levels by between 0.25% and 0.41% and HV traffic levels by 3.67% and 12.29%. The chapter outlines that while percentage increases in traffic on the unnamed roads in the traffic and transport study area would be high, this is simply the result of low baseline traffic flows on these roads, and that with appropriate mitigation measures on these roads the traffic and transport effects would be Not Significant. Overall, the chapter concludes that effects on the transport network would be Not Significant with appropriate mitigation implemented via the CTMP.
10. The proposal includes consideration of the materials needed or generated by the development to ensure the sustainable use and management of resources;	Draft **ES Chapter 4: Description of Development** confirms that no stone or concrete is required for the Project, as no new access tracks are being built, and none is required for the construction of the OHL and UGC works. Soils excavated for the cabling would be stored on site in accordance with the **Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) (see Appendix 4A)** which will be updated prior to construction. Excavated materials will then be used to re-fill trenches. Any surplus excavated material, which is expected to be minimal, would be removed from site in HGVs and taken to an appropriate waste recycling or disposal facility. As a result the Project will only result in a very small permanent land take, which is unlikely to result in significant environmental effects in relation to the use and management of resources.
11. there are acceptable provisions relating to the decommissioning of the development at the end of its lifetime, including the removal of infrastructure and effective restoration.	It is very unlikely the Project would require decommissioning. Should the Foel Trawsnant Wind Farm, which the Project is connected to, cease operate in the future the grid connection would likely remain in place as an asset that could be used to connect future energy generation in the area.
12. The cumulative impacts of existing and consented renewable energy schemes should also be considered.	Draft **ES Chapter 2: EIA Approach** outlines the approach to the assessment of cumulative effects. The individual chapters then assess the cumulative effect of the Project in combination with consented and planned developments. Overall, whilst the cumulative assessment identifies significant effects these are localised and it is considered that

	the overwhelming need to reduce carbon and GHG emissions, meet climate targets, and increase renewable energy, outweighs the harm as the Project directly facilitates the distribution of power form the wind farm to the wider national grid.

4.6.21. **Section 4.3** sets out the TANs considered relevant to the Project. The performance of the Project against the TANs is set out within **Table 4.2**

Table 4-2 - Compliance with Technical Advice Notes

Technical Advice Note	Assessment of Proposed Development
Technical Advice Note 5: Nature Conservation and Planning (1996)	The ES does not identify significant effects on ecological receptors or ornithological receptors.
Technical Advice Note 11: Noise (1997)	In terms of noise, given the nature of the of the Project, this topic was scoped out of the ES. Notwithstanding this, a Noise and Vibration Management Plan (NVMP) has been produced. Whilst noise and vibration will occur, this will only be during the construction phase. The NVMP sets out measures and procedures that will be implemented by the Applicant and its appointed contractors to minimise effects during the construction phase
Technical Advice Note 12: Design (2016)	The Project is designed to distribute power from an approved wind farm into the national grid with effects mitigated as far as is possible for development of this type. The DAS provides further detail about the site context and character, movement and access arrangements and considerations, and community safety. The Project complies with the requirements of TAN 12.
Technical Advice Note 24: The Historic Environment (2017)	Draft **ES Chapter 9: Historic Environment** concludes that subject to the to the implementation of the environmental measures set out Section 9.8 of the chapter (which includes an archaeological watching brief, secured by condition) there would be no significant effects on any historic assets.

ASSESSMENT OF COMPLIANCE WITH LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

4.6.22. **Table 4-3** summarises the development's performance against the key policy criteria set out on a topic basis in the BCBC RLDP. **Table 4-4** summarises the development's performance against the key policy criteria set out on a topic basis in the NPTCBC LDP. The conclusion of the assessment in **Table 4-3** and **4-4** is that the proposed grid connection is compliant with both the BCBC LDP and the NPCBC LDP.

Table 4-3 – Bridgend Revised Local Development Plan

Adopted LDP Policy	Policy Summary	Compliance with Policy
Policy DNP 1: Development in the Countryside	Policy DNP1 aims to protect the countryside from inappropriate development. The policy states that *"all development outside defined settlement*	The Project is directly linked to an approved wind farm which is a source of renewable energy. As a result, it complies with this policy which lists

	boundaries must ensure that that integrity of the countryside is conserved and enhanced" while the policy states that overall, there is a presumption against development in the countryside, renewable energy is listed under point 8, as an acceptable use.	renewable energy as an acceptable use in the countryside.
Policy DNP 4: Special Landscape Areas	Policy DNP4 seeks to ensure that the character and quality of the County's Landscape is protected from inappropriate development.	The Project will travel through two SLAs in the BCBC area. Namely: ▪ SLA 1: Foel y Dyffryn (which the northern overhead line will pass through). ▪ SLA 3: Western Uplands (which the southern overhead line will pass through). Draft **ES Chapter 6: Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment** refers to these SLAs and the visual and sensory aspect areas as outlined with the LANDMAP database that cover these SLAs. The chapter concludes that that significant effects would only occur at one VSAA CYNONVS473 – Mynydd Baedan which falls within SLA 1: Foel y Dyffryn and SLA 3: Western Uplands. Whilst significant effects have been identified, these are inherent given the type of development proposed (ref: NPS EN-1). Whilst a matter to be included within the planning balance, the presence of significant effects upon local landscape designations is not considered to be fundamental to the consideration of the application. It should also be noted that the northern section of overhead line falls within PAA No.9 for wind. Future Wales makes clear that landscapes within PAA are capable of accommodating development (onshore wind) in an acceptable way and provides a presumption in favour of large-scale wind energy development. The methodology used for defining the boundaries of the PAA areas in Future Wales specifically considered the landscape impacts of wind turbines up to 250 m in height. It is therefore our strong contention that if 250m turbines are acceptable in this landscape then 15m H-poles would clearly be acceptable. Whilst the southern section is not in a PAA, and the Project would be noticeable, those effects are

		localised and not considered to be so severe as to be unacceptable. The proposal is for H-Poles s of a maximum height of 15m. H-Poles s are common features in the countryside and whilst the introduction of them will be evident they are not considered to be harmful to the landscape.
Policy DNP 5: Local and Regional Nature Conservation Sites	Policy DNP5 seeks to provide protection to locally and regionally important areas of nature conservation, stating the development within or adjacent to highlighted sites *"must be compatible with the nature conservation or scientific interest of the area"* .	Draft **ES Chapter 8: Ecology** confirms that the Project will have no significant effects any international or national statutory designated sites. In terms of local conservation sites, Draft **ES Chapter 8: Ecology** confirms short term effects upon SINCs, Priority Habitats and ancient woodland and those species occupying these habitats including bats, birds, otter, water vole and reptiles cannot be avoided, as temporary habitat loss is necessary within the construction footprint. The significance of this will be confirmed once the data from the further surveys is available. However, in the longer term, habitat enhancement will improve the condition and provision of Priority Habitat and ancient woodland. The benefits will be realised during the operational phase and offset the short-term adverse effects.
Policy DNP 6: Biodiversity, Ecological Networks, Habitats, and Species	Policy DN6 aims to achieve a balance between the need for development, and the need to conserve biodiversity. The policy states that *"all development proposals must provide a net benefit for biodiversity and improved ecosystem resilience".*	The Applicant will prepare a Conservation Plan. It will set out the objectives for biodiversity protection, mitigation, monitoring and habitat enhancement (where applicable). This will include measures to address any temporary impacts to SINCs, Priority Habitats and Ancient Woodland. The Conservation Plan will identify how the Project will achieve a net benefit for biodiversity, deliver ecosystem resilience and accord with the stepwise approach. It will set out a timetable for ecological measures throughout the lifetime of the Project, including any pre-construction measures that are required. The Conservation Plan will be agreed with the planning authority at the pre-construction stage either as part of the CEMP or as a standalone document.

Policy DNP 7: Trees, Hedgerows, and Development	Policy DNP7 recognises the importance of retaining trees and seeks to ensure that suitable trees are not harmed due to development. Where trees are to be replaced a scheme for tree replacement must be agreed prior to the commencement of development, including details of planting and aftercare.	Draft **ES Chapter 8: Ecology**, confirms tree removal will be required at one location only (**Figure 8.5**) and will affect 0.01 Ha of tree habitat at this location. No tree removal will take place in ancient woodland with existing gateways used for access avoiding the need to disturb linear features for bats. Removed trees will be replaced at a 3:1 ratio.
Policy SP 13: Decarbonisation and Renewable Energy	Policy SP13 supports renewable and low-carbon development proposals which contribute to meeting national and local renewables and low-carbon energy and energy efficiency targets. Part "d" of Policy SP13 specifically relates to grid connections. It states proposals will be permitted where: *"d) The proposal can facilitate a connection to the grid network"*	The Project complies with this policy as it facilitates a connection to the grid network. It also complies with the other tests in the policy as it does not cause any unacceptable impact son the natural or historic environment, it has sought to minimise the landscape and visual impact through its design and micro-siting, there is no unacceptable impact on access and highway safety; and there would not be unacceptable impact on the amenity of residential properties or tourist accommodation.
Policy SP 18: Conservation of the Historic Environment	Policy SP18 aims to protect the historic environment within the County Borough, the policy states that *"development proposals must protect, conserve, and where appropriate, preserve and enhance historic assets"*.	The ES concludes that subject to the to the implementation of the environmental measures set out Section 9.8 of Draft **ES Chapter 9: Historic Environment** (which includes an archaeological watching brief, secured by condition) there would be no significant effects on any historic assets.

4.6.25. The policies of relevance to the Project are identified below in **Table 4.2.**

Table 4-4 – Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council Local Development Plan

Adopted LDP Policy	Policy Summary	Compliance with Policy
Policy SP 15: Biodiversity and Geodiversity	Policy SP15 aims to conserve, enhance and protect important species, habitats and sites of geological interest. Overall, it is considered that the Project will not result in significant negative impacts to important sites for nature and biodiversity.	Draft **ES Chapter 8: Ecology** confirms that the Project will have no significant effects any international or national statutory designated sites. In terms of local conservation sites, Draft **ES Chapter 8: Ecology** confirms short term effects upon SINCs, Priority Habitats and ancient woodland and those species occupying these habitats including bats, birds, otter, water vole and reptiles cannot be avoided, as temporary habitat loss is necessary within the construction footprint. The

		significance of this will be confirmed once the data from the further surveys is available. However, in the longer term, habitat enhancement will improve the condition and provision of Priority Habitat and ancient woodland. The benefits will be realised during the operational phase and offset the short-term adverse effects
Policy EN 2: Special Landscape Area	Policy EN2 highlights Special Landscape Areas which are *"protected as far as possible from any development that would harm their distinctive features and characteristics"*	The Project falls within two SLAs (EN2/6 Foel Trawsnant and SLA 4 Margam). Draft **ES Chapter 6: Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment** refers to these SLAs and the visual and sensory aspect areas (VSAA) as outlined with the LANDMAP database that cover these SLAs. Whilst significant effects have been identified, these are inherent given the type of development proposed (ref: NPS EN-1). Whilst a matter to be included within the planning balance, the presence of significant effects upon local landscape designations is not considered to be fundamental to the consideration of the application. It should also be noted that the northern section of overhead line falls within PAA area No.9 for wind. Future Wales makes clear that landscapes within PAA are capable of accommodating development (onshore wind) in an acceptable way and provides a presumption in favour of large-scale wind energy development. The methodology used for defining the boundaries of the PAA areas in Future Wales specifically considered the landscape impacts of wind turbines up to 250 m in height. It is therefore our strong contention that if 250m turbines are acceptable in this landscape then 15m H-poles would clearly be acceptable. Whilst the southern section is not in a PAA, and the Project would be noticeable, those effects are localised and not considered to be so severe as to be unacceptable. H-poles are common features in the countryside and whilst the introduction of them will be evident they are not considered to be harmful to the landscape.

Policy SP 18: Renewable and Low Carbon Energy	Policy SP18 aims to accord with national guidance and strategy and seeks to deliver proportionate contributions to meet Wales' national renewable energy targets and energy efficiency targets. Point (1) of the Policy states that, where appropriate all forms of renewable energy and low-carbon technology will be encouraged. Point (3) of the Policy seeks to ensure that development will not have an unacceptable impact on the environment and amenity of local residents.	Whilst significant landscape effects and visual effects are identified, effects upon SLAs should not be taken as reasons in themselves to refuse a grid connection. This is because Policy 18 of Future Wales places an emphasis on avoiding unacceptable adverse impacts on "*the setting of National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty"*, which the Project has no significant effects on. When considered in the context of Future Wales Policies 17 and 18, which clearly promote the increased production of renewable energy, and by association the required grid connections, the project is not considered to be so significant to outweigh the benefits of the Proposed Development; it is not unacceptable.

5 CONCLUSION

5.1 THE PLANNING BALANCE

5.1.1. Future Wales is clear that decision-makers must give significant weight to the need to meet Wales' international commitments and to generate 70% of the energy used from renewable sources by 2030 (since amended to now be 100% by 2035).

5.1.2. The Applicant is seeking consent for a grid connection which will enable the distribution of the power from the approved Foel Trawsnant wind farm. In total the Project proposes 4.6km of overhead line and 5.1km of underground cable.

5.1.3. Whilst it is recognised that the ES confirms that significant effects will occur, this would only be in relation to the landscape and visual amenity. Grid connections by their nature create landscape and visual effects and the role of the decision maker is to consider the extent to which these effects outweigh the positive benefits of the project such that the application could be considered unacceptable. Moreover, the northern section of overhead line falls within the PAA No.9 for wind. Future Wales makes clear that landscapes within PAA are capable of accommodating development (onshore wind) in an acceptable way and provides a presumption in favour of large-scale wind energy development. The methodology used for defining the boundaries of the PAA areas in Future Wales specifically considered the landscape impacts of wind turbines up to 250 m in height. It is therefore our strong contention that if 250m turbines are acceptable in this landscape then 15m H-poles would clearly be acceptable. Whilst the southern section is not in a PAA, and the Project would be noticeable, those effects are localised and not considered to be so severe as to be unacceptable. H-Poles are common features in the countryside and whilst the introduction of them will be evident they are not considered to be harmful to the landscape

5.1.4. Recognition should also be given to the fact that the ES assessment commonly considers views of grid connections to be negative when the experience of the individual may often be more nuanced. This is particularly the case for this Project when the connection will use wood H-Poles, which are also only a maximum height of 15m. This means the project is likely to blend into the landscape to a far greater degree than higher voltage connections that require taller and more prominent structures (such as steel lattice pylons).

5.1.5. When the overwhelming need to reduce carbon and GHG emissions, meet climate targets, and increase renewable energy production is taken into account, which this Project is directly linked to as it enables the distribution of renewable energy from an approved wind farm, it is considered these factors substantially outweigh the limited significant effects identified. As a result it is considered consent for this grid connection Project should be forthcoming.

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