

Planning East Team
Neath Port Talbot Council
Civic Centre
Port Talbot
SA13 1PJ

27th August 2025

Dear Sir / Madam

Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Wales) Regulations 2017

Request for EIA Screening Opinion for development comprising a new solar farm Land at Caegarw Farm, Margam, Port Talbot SA13 2TL ('Bedwen Arian Solar Farm')

1. Introduction

Arise Renewable Energy UK Ltd (via their subsidiary ASUK HoldCo 5 Ltd) ('the applicant') intend to submit a full planning application to deliver a proposed ground mounted solar PV array with a generating capacity of up to 9.9MW at Land at Caegarw Farm, Margam, Port Talbot SA13 2TL ('the site').

We write to request an Environmental Impact Assessment ('EIA') Screening Opinion from Neath Port Talbot Council ('the Council') in accordance with regulation 6 (1) of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Wales) Regulations 2017 (as amended) ('EIA Regulations').

In accordance with regulation 6 (6) (a) of the EIA Regulations, we request that a Screening Opinion be provided by the Council as to whether the Council consider the proposals form EIA Development which requires an Environmental Statement to accompany the forthcoming planning application. The suggested description to accompany the request is as follows:

"Request for Screening Opinion under Regulation 6 of the Town and Country Planning (Environment Impact Assessment) (Wales) Regulations 2017 for a temporary development of a solar farm (9.9MW) and ancillary infrastructure including security fencing, access, and landscaping works to generate power to feed into the local electricity distribution network"

The advice in the Welsh Office Circular 11/99: Environmental Impact Assessment is that the number of cases of EIA required developments *"will be a very small proportion of the total number of Schedule 2 developments"* is pertinent.

This report summarises the baseline conditions of the Site and identifies key environmental characteristics of the Site. This is in order to determine whether there is a likelihood of significant environmental effects as a result of the Proposed Development and to enable an informed decision to be made on the requirement for EIA.

Without prejudice to the request for the Screening Opinion, if the Council determine that the proposals forms EIA Development, then in accordance regulation 14 (1) of the EIA Regulations we would request a Scoping Opinion as to the scope and level of detail of the information to be provided in the Environmental Statement.

The following items are included as part of the submission:

- Location Plan (With cable route)
- Location Plan (Zoomed in view of main body of site)
- Cover Letter incl. Screening Assessment (this letter)
- Ecology Technical Note and Preliminary Ecological Assessment (Prepared by Logika / EBD)
- Landscape and Visual Assessment (Prepared by Briarwood Landscape)
- Written Scheme of Investigation: Cultural Heritage Assessment (Prepared by Abrams Archaeology)
- LQAS confirmation of ALC Classification

2. Site and Surroundings

The site is located approximately 600m to the north of the village of Coed Hirwaun in the south-east of the Neath Port Talbot Council area. The nearest larger settlements are the town of Port Talbot (approximately 4km to the north-east) and Bridgend (approximately 8km to the south-east). It is located relatively close to the M4 motorway (approximately 1.6km to the west) and the A48 trunk road (approximately 0.7km to the south). There are no public rights of way across the site.

The area of land upon which the proposed solar farm is proposed to be located extends to approximately 35 hectares, and comprises relatively flat farmland, sloping from north to south in some areas. The potential cable routing to the substation is also included within the red line boundary for the purposes of the request for completeness (though it is envisaged that this will be constructed via the DNO's permitted development rights). The land in the immediate vicinity of the site is generally of mixed agricultural character and is dominated by grazing land. The fields of the site and the surrounding area are bounded by hedgerows, fences and ditches. The scattered woodlands serve to give variety to distant views, and some of them comprise ancient woodland. Streams flowing down from the hills to the east to the sea traverse the wider area. Dispersed settlement in the surrounding area consists mostly of scattered farmsteads and villages, the latter often being sheltered by mature trees.

The site is very well-suited to host a solar farm with an open aspect to the south and close proximity to local electrical distribution infrastructure as well as good accessibility. This will allow a low-impact delivery and grid connection of the proposed solar farm into the local grid network. The site also benefits from good existing enclosure in terms of woodland and vegetation on the boundaries, which provides it with significant pre-existing natural screening from the wider landscape. The main body of the site is approximately 35ha in size, and the size of the solar PV scheme will be approximately 25ha. Note that the exact layout is still to be finalised: this will occur once we are in receipt of the full suite of survey data.

Margam Country Park, which includes the Grade I listed Margam Castle, are located to the west of the site, and are very well screened through a combination of the topography of the area and significant existing intervening vegetation.

3. Proposed Development

The proposed development will comprise the construction and operation of a solar photovoltaic farm (anticipated to be 9.9MW) including fencing, internal service tracks, inverters, transformer stations, cabling, CCTV, landscaping, substations and ancillary cabins. The development will be temporary and will have a lifespan of 40 years (with one year either side for construction and decommissioning).

As the proposed development will have a maximum generating capacity of below 10MW, it is not considered to be a Development of National Significance.

4. Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations

EIA development is defined by the EIA Regulations as development which is either:

- Schedule 1 development; or
- Schedule 2 development likely to have significant effects on the environment by virtue of factors such as its nature, size or location.

Where a relevant planning authority adopts a screening opinion, the authority must:

(a) state the main reasons for their conclusion with reference to the relevant criteria listed in Schedule 3;

(b) if it is determined that the proposed development is not EIA development, state any features of the proposed development and measures envisaged to avoid, or prevent what might otherwise have been, significant adverse effects on the environment; and

(c) send a copy of the opinion or direction to the person who proposes to carry out, or who has carried out, the development in question EIA development falls into two Schedules of the EIA Regulations. EIA is mandatory for developments listed within Schedule 1. Schedule 2 developments require EIA if they would lead to likely significant effects on the environment.

5. EIA Screening Assessment

The process of identifying whether or not EIA is required for a development is known as screening. In determining whether the proposed development constitutes EIA development, consideration should be had to the following:

- 1) If the proposed development is of a type listed in Schedule 1;
- 2) If not, whether it is listed in Schedule 2;

- a) Is it located within a sensitive area;
- b) It meets any of the relevant thresholds and criteria set out in Schedule 2; and/or
- c) Would it lead to likely significant effects on the environment.

The application site does not fit the definition of any of the types of development listed in Schedule 1 of the EIA Regulations.

Schedule 2 section 3 includes developments for '*Industrial installations for the production of electricity, steam and hot water*'. As the development involves the creation of electricity from solar PV arrays, it is considered to be Schedule 2 development.

The application site is not in a sensitive area, but the applicable threshold and criteria set out in schedule 2 for energy production is "*an area of development which exceeds 0.5 ha*". The application site measures approximately 35ha in size and so is above the threshold and criteria where assessment is required to determine if the proposals would lead to likely significant effects on the environment.

The selection criteria for screening Schedule 2 development are provided within Schedule 3 of the EIA regulations. This is based on the characteristics of the development, location of the development and the types and characteristics of the potential impact. The detailed considerations for each are outlined below.

Characteristics of Development, Location of Development and Types and Characteristics of Potential Impacts

The table below sets out a review of the requirements and specifically addresses the proposed development at the site. The screening criteria in the table below originate from Schedule 3 of the EIA Regulations. The questions below expand on these criteria by asking concise questions, many of which are from the Screening Checklist published by the Planning Inspectorate to help ensure that an Authority giving development consent for a project makes its decisions knowing the likely effects on the environment.

Table 1: Screening Checklist vs the Proposed Development

Question	Answer to the question and explanation of reasons		Is a Significant Effect Likely?	
	Yes, No, Not Known (?) or N/A		Yes, No, Not Known (?) or N/A	
	Briefly explain answer and, if applicable and/or known, include name of feature and proximity to site.		Is a significant effect likely, having regard particularly to the magnitude and spatial extent (including population size affected), nature, intensity and complexity, probability, expected onset, duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact and the possibility to effectively reduce the impact?	
	If answer is 'No', the likelihood of a significant effect is 'N/A'.		If the finding of no significant effect is reliant on specific features or measures of the project envisaged to avoid, or prevent what might otherwise have been, significant adverse effects on the environment these should be identified in bold.	
1. Natural Resources				
1.1 Will construction, operation or decommissioning of the project involve actions which will cause physical changes in the topography of the area?	No	The proposed solar panels would work with the existing ground levels and would be ground mounted. The general physical topography within the site will not change as part of the proposed development or as part of the restoration of the land after the use ceases.	No	Any slight impacts will be localised in nature.
1.2 Are there any areas on/around the location which contain important, high quality or scarce resources which could be affected by the project, e.g. forestry, agriculture, water/coastal, fisheries, minerals?	No	The site does not contain any important, high quality or scarce resources. Whilst the land is used for agriculture it is grade 3b – 5 classified and so is not best and most versatile agricultural land (this has been confirmed by the Welsh Government (LQAS)).		
1.3 Will construction or operation of the project use natural resources above or below ground such as land, soil, water, materials/minerals or energy which are non-renewable or in short supply?	Yes	The proposed solar panels will be ground mounted and would not require the use of soil, water, materials or minerals. Whilst the development would require the use of land, the land would be restored back to agricultural use once the operations cease at the site.	No	The proposals would not use significant levels of land, soil, water, minerals or energy. The development is temporary and reversible. No significant effect is likely.

2. Waste				
2.1 Will the project produce solid wastes during construction or operation or decommissioning?	Yes	Solid waste is likely to be produced during construction (such as packaging, waste from site workers' facilities). During operation, limited waste would be produced given the nature of the development.	No	Waste would be managed in line with standard good practice through the construction of the development. Any levels of waste would be limited and so no significant effect is likely to occur.
3. Pollution and Nuisances				
3.1 Will the project release pollutants or any hazardous, toxic or noxious substances to air?	Yes	Emissions associated with traffic generated by the development during the construction phase.	No	Small amount of vehicle exhaust pollutants during construction would be unlikely to result in significant effects on air quality.
3.2 Will the project cause noise and vibration or release of light, heat, energy or electromagnetic radiation?	Yes	Noise including light pollution may be associated with the construction phase. During the operation phase energy will be produced but this would be captured and transferred away from the site for beneficial use and / or storage.	No	Noise and perhaps light disturbance likely during construction but this will be temporary in nature and unlikely to result in a significant impact. It could also be controlled by way of a Construction Management Plan . The production of energy would have an overall beneficial impact and would not result in significant effects.
3.3 Will the project lead to risks of contamination of land or water from releases of pollutants onto the ground or into surface waters, groundwater, coastal waters or the sea?	No	The site is not in a source protection zone and the level of intrusive groundworks would be limited to the erections of the structures to support the ground mounted panels and cabling. This would not result in releases of pollutants into the ground.	No	
3.4 Are there any areas on or around the location which are already subject to pollution or environmental damage, e.g. where existing legal environmental standards are exceeded, which could be affected by the project?	No		N/A	

4. Population and Human Health				
4.1 Will there be any risk of major accidents (including those caused by climate change, in accordance with scientific knowledge) during construction, operation or decommissioning?	No	Health and safety during construction is covered by other legislation and the development does not entail the use of any hazardous substances.	No	
4.2 Will the project present a risk to the population (having regard to population density) and their human health during construction, operation or decommissioning? (for example, due to water contamination or air pollution).	No	<p>The site is located within an area of low population density and the nearest properties are approximately 100m from the proposed development area. Therefore, the construction and operation at the site would have limited interaction with the nearby population.</p> <p>Furthermore, the operation doesn't pose any risk to nearby residents, given the nature of the proposed use.</p>	No	
5. Water Resources				
5.1 Area there any water resources including surface waters, e.g. rivers, lakes/ponds, coastal or underground waters on or around the location which could be affected by the project, particularly in terms of their volume and flood risk?	Yes	<p>The application site includes surface water drains and a small pool of water to the east of the existing barn.</p> <p>Given that the solar panels will be frame mounted, they will not increase flood risk or cause drainage issues within the application site.</p>	No	A Flood Consequences Assessment and Drainage Strategy will be submitted as part of the planning application and any necessary secondary consents will be applied for.
6. Biodiversity (Species and Habitats)				
6.1 Are there any protected areas which are designated or classified for their terrestrial, avian and marine ecological value, or any non-designated/non-classified areas which are important or sensitive for reasons of their terrestrial, avian and marine ecological value, located on or around the location and which could be affected by the project? (e.g. wetlands, watercourses or other waterbodies, the coastal zone, mountains, forest or woodlands, undesignated nature reserves or parks. (where designated indicate level of designation (international, national, regional or local)).	Yes	<p>During the habitat survey, 'other neutral grassland' was recorded as the predominant habitat onsite. Purple moor and rush pasture was recorded in four fields to the east of the Site.</p> <p>This habitat is protected under UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP) Priority Habitat9 and is included in the Section 7 list of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016.</p> <p>However, no devil's bit scabious <i>Succisa pratensis</i> was recorded across the Site, this plant typically grows in purple</p>	No	The nature of the development is that the solar panels are mounted off the ground, with buffer zones to ancient woodland and SINC features which means that the impacts would be limited. An Ecological Assessment and Species Surveys have been undertaken. The landscape and ecology of the site can be enhanced through a Landscape and Ecological Management Plan

		<p>moor and rush pastures and is the food plant of the marsh fritillary <i>Euphydryas aurinia</i>, consequently, the protected butterfly is deemed unlikely to be present.</p> <p>All the watercourses that run through the Site are designated as a Neath Port Talbot SINC, for works near the streams, an Ordinary Watercourse Consent (OWC) is to be sought, which is in compliance with section 23 of the Land Drainage Act 1991 to ensure the work does not cause flooding, pollution, or harm to wildlife.</p> <p>Ancient woodland was identified to the south of the Site adjacent to the farm access track, however, this is not to be directly impacted by the development.</p>		<p>which can be overseen by an ecologist throughout the lifetime of the development.</p> <p>Furthermore, the land has historically been used for agricultural purposes – particularly horse grazing - and so habitats within the land have been influenced by this agricultural use. Without this development they are likely to be further degraded by continued horse grazing.</p> <p>Therefore, there are no likely significant impacts in this regard from the proposed development.</p>
<p>6.2 Could any protected, important or sensitive species of flora or fauna which use areas on or around the site e.g. for breeding, nesting, foraging, resting, overwintering, or migration, be affected by the project?</p>	Yes	<p>Surveys undertaken by qualified ecologists have suggested that a number of species of fauna and potentially flora are present on the site, some of which are protected.</p>	No	<p>The proposed development would ensure that the any protected, important or sensitive species of flora or fauna would be retained and sensitively managed alongside the solar farm. Management would include buffer zones and the enhancement of habitat where recommended by the project ecologists.</p> <p>Therefore, there is no likely significant ecological impacts from the proposed development and some enhancement of these features could be managed through a Landscape and Ecological Management Plan which would be guided by the Ecological Assessment</p>

				and specific species surveys.
7. Landscape and Visual				
7.1 Are there any areas or features on or around the location which are protected for their landscape and scenic value, and/or any non-designated/non-classified areas or features of high landscape or scenic value on or around the location which could be affected by the project. Where designated indicate level of designation (international, national, regional or local).	Yes	<p>The site is within a locally designated Special Landscape Area.</p> <p>The designation primarily relates to Margam Park, and the site is to the east and screened from the park.</p>	No	<p>A Landscape and Visual Appraisal has been prepared, and a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment will be submitted as part of the planning application.</p> <p>It states: <i>“Visual change would be limited to only a few hundred metres of the site and the overall perception of the landscape as being predominantly rural would continue to prevail.</i></p> <p><i>With a medium sensitivity and a low magnitude of change, the scale of effect on the wider landscape outside the site during the operational phase is assessed as minor adverse”</i></p> <p>Effects within the site during the operational phase would be <i>“moderate adverse”</i>.</p>
7.2 Is the project in a location where it is likely to be highly visible to many people? (if so, from where, what direction and what distance).	No	<p>The site is well screened by existing vegetation. No PROWs are located within the site, one is located 60m to the south. Initial landscape work has assessed that <i>“With a medium sensitivity and a low magnitude of change, the scale of effect on the wider landscape outside the site during the operational phase is assessed as minor adverse”</i>.</p>	No	<p>Impacts will be limited due to the nature of the site and will be only “minor adverse” beyond the site during the operation phase, per the Landscape and Visual Appraisal.</p> <p>A full Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment will be submitted as part of the planning application.</p>

8. Cultural Heritage and Archaeology

8.1 Are there any areas or features which are protected for their cultural heritage or archaeological value, or any non-designated/classified areas and/or features of cultural heritage or archaeological importance on or around the location which could be affected by the project (including potential impacts on setting, and views to, from and within)? Where designated indicate level of designation (international, national, regional or local).	Yes	The site falls with the Margam Mountain Landscape of Special Historic Interest, and is fairly close to Margam Scarp (NPTCLS090), Grade I listed Margam Castle, Mynydd Margam (NPTCLS113) and Margam Country Park (Registered Park and Garden - NPTCLS038).	No	<p>A WSI and ASIDOHL report will be submitted as part of the planning application, supplemented by an LVIA.</p> <p>The proposed use is temporary in nature and would be removed from the land once beyond their operative use. Existing and proposed screening, and the topography of the site, will provide screening of the site from the Registered Park and Garden.</p> <p>Therefore, given the temporal nature and distance separation, the proposals would not result in likely significant impacts to the nearest heritage assets.</p>
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9. Transport and Access

9.1 Are there any routes on or around the location which are used by the public for access to recreation or other facilities, which could be affected by the project?	Yes	The Graig Goch road to the west of the site is used as part of the Dragon Ride cycling event. This only occurs on one day per year.	No	<p>This would only be a potential significant effect during the construction period. As the event only occurs on one day per year, it is envisaged that any effects could be avoided by co-ordination of timings of movements if necessary. Significant effects are therefore unlikely.</p> <p>A Construction Management Plan and Transport Statement will be provided during the planning process.</p>
9.2 Are there any transport routes on or around the location which are	No	Highways in the vicinity of the site are lightly trafficked and	No	

susceptible to congestion or which cause environmental problems, which could be affected by the project?		the highways movements associated with the development will mainly be those associated with the construction of the solar farm and so would be temporary in nature.		
10. Land Use				
10.1 Are there existing land uses or community facilities on or around the location which could be affected by the project? E.g. housing, densely populated areas, industry/commerce, farm/agricultural holdings, forestry, tourism, mining, quarrying, facilities relating to health, education, places of worship, leisure/sports/recreation.	No	The site comprises agricultural fields and is surrounded by other agricultural fields. The proposed development would not undermine the use of the surrounding land for agricultural operations. Nearby houses would not be affected by the proposals beyond some potential construction noise. There is no history of mining at the site according to Coal Authority mapping.	No	Any impacts will be localised and not significant.
10.2 Are there any plans for future land uses on or around the location which could be affected by the project?	No	The immediately surrounding land is intended to remain in existing / agricultural uses.	No	
11. Land Stability and Climate				
11.1 Is the location susceptible to earthquakes, subsidence, landslides, erosion, or extreme/adverse climatic conditions, e.g. temperature inversions, fogs, severe winds, which could cause the project to present environmental problems?	No	The site has no historic issues with land stability. Part of the site is within a Coal Development High Risk Area according to the Coal Authority Mapping.	No	A Coal Mining Risk Assessment will be submitted as part of the planning application. The site does not contain any mine entries according to Coal Authority mapping. The same mapping suggests that there have been no previous shallow coal workings at the site. Significant effects from the ground mounted solar panels are therefore unlikely.
12. Cumulative Effects				

12.1 Could this project together with existing and/or approved development result in cumulation of impacts together during the construction/operation phase?	No	There is no existing or approved development near the site that is relevant.	N/A	
13. Transboundary Effects				
13.1 Is the project likely to lead to transboundary effects?	No		N/A	

5. Characteristics of Potential Impacts

Section 3 of Schedule 3 of the EIA Regulations requires that potential significant effects of the development must be considered in relation to the characteristics and location of the development, taking into account:

- The magnitude and spatial extent of the impact (for example geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected) –

It is understood that the potential for any impacts would be limited and localised to the immediate environs of the Site.

- The transboundary nature of the impact –

No adverse trans-frontier impacts would arise from the proposals. However, the proposals would provide a positive impact on the global atmosphere reducing net greenhouse gas emissions once the development is in operation.

- The intensity and complexity of the impact –

Effects would be relatively limited in nature and complexity as the proposal is temporary with well-established technologies for the construction and operation of the Proposed Development.

- The probability of the impact –

The likelihood of any impacts is well understood due to assessment work undertaken.

- The expected onset, duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact –

Any effects that would arise would occur primarily during the construction phase, but with some effects continuing during the operational period, primarily limited to localised visual effects. The proposal is temporary (40 years) and would then be fully reversible.

- The cumulation of the impact with the impact of other existing and/or approved development –

This Screening Request has considered the potential environmental impacts, including cumulation with other existing / approved development and any mitigation measures. They are demonstrated as unlikely to be significant.

- The possibility of effectively reducing the impact –

The construction of the Proposed Development will involve the temporary use of agricultural and grazing land during the operational life of the development (up to 40 years). The land areas required for the Proposed Development will be returned to its existing use once decommissioned and use of land is therefore 'reversible'. To reduce visibility of the operation of the Proposed Development mitigation planting that will merge and strengthen existing boundary vegetation which will help to reduce views into the Site. A Landscape Masterplan will be prepared as part of the iterative mitigation process, reflecting the findings of the landscape and visual assessment.

6. Conclusion

The need for an EIA is judged against 'significant environmental effects' occurring as a result of development. The screening assessment has identified that it would be possible to avoid or mitigate negative impacts through good practice and methods and reporting to be provided during the planning application stage.

The assessment has shown that the main environmental impacts of the development would be limited to the construction phase and any impacts would also be temporal in nature, given that the land will be managed and restored back to agricultural use once the operation of the solar farm has ceased.

Therefore, we consider that the proposed ground-mounted solar farm would not result in likely significant environmental effects and so any future planning application would not require an Environmental Statement.

The formal screening opinion of the authority is sought, and we look forward to hearing from you within the statutory period. Should you require any further clarification or information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully,



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