Chapter 1: Introduction & Approach to EIA

Glyn Taff Solar Farm – Environmental Statement

05/03/2025

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1. INTRODUCTION

Background

1.1. Neo Environmental Ltd has been appointed by Renantis UK Limited (the "Applicant") to undertake an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for a proposed solar farm (the "Proposed Development") on lands at Bryntail Farm, Bryn Tail Lane, Pontypridd (the "Application Site"). Please see Figure 1 for the layout of the Proposed Development.

The Applicant

1.2. Renantis Limited UK, recently rebranded as Nadara following the combination with Ventient Energy, brings together 30 years of combined industry experience to become one of Europe's largest renewable energy IPPs. Nadara has an operational 4GW portfolio of around 200 onshore wind, solar, biomass, and energy storage plants, including nine wind farms with an installed capacity of 163MW in Wales. The company operates in Europe – notably in the UK, Italy, France, Spain and Portugal – and the US, and has more than 1,000 employees. The company's name was inspired by the Scottish Gaelic word 'Nàdarra', which means 'natural' – it embodies the natural energy harnessed in the renewable energy plants that Nadara develop, own and operate.

Statement of Authority

1.3. This EIA has been prepared and submitted by Neo Environmental Ltd. Established in 2012, Neo Environmental is multidisciplinary planning and environmental consultancy with have a team of highly skilled and accredited town planners, environmental consultants, ecologists, landscape architects, environmental engineers, archaeologists, acousticians, technicians and project managers, who have each provided input into this statement and have significant experience in delivering renewable energy projects throughout the UK and Ireland over the past twelve years. Preparation of the EIA was overseen by a Technical Director with a MEnvSci in Environmental Science, who is a member of the institute for environmental science and is a Chartered Environmentalist.

1.4. Neo Environmental have been assisted by the following consultants in the production of this EIAR.

- Asbri Transport - Chapter 6: Traffic and Transport
- KRS enviro – Chapter 5: Hydrology
- Bowland Tree Consultancy - Chapter 9: Ecology
- Steven Paget Ecological Services – Chapter 9: Ecology

- **Avian Ecology** - Chapter 9: Ecology
- **Woolgar Hunter** – Chapter 12: Mining

1.5. All work has been carried out in line with the relevant professional guidance.

THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

Development Description

1.6. Installation, operation and subsequent decommissioning of a renewable energy scheme comprising ground mounted photovoltaic solar arrays together with substation compound, transformer stations, internal access track, landscaping, biodiversity measures, boundary fencing, security measures, CCTV posts, monitoring house, storage containers access improvement and ancillary infrastructure. The solar arrays will have a combined capacity of up to 39.9MWp.

Site Description

1.7. The area of the Proposed Development (the "Application Site") lies at an elevation of approximately 140m – 330m AOD and covers a total area of c. 70.9 hectares. It is centred around Bryntail Farm at approximate National Grid Reference (NGR) E 309333, N 189800. It is south of Eglwysilan Road. The site extends west of Bryntail Farm and east of the Bryn Tail Lane. The site is within the administrative area of Rhondda Cynon Taf Council.

1.8. The site comprises 38 agricultural fields that are currently in use for livestock farming. It is on the east side of the Taff Valley c. 1.6 km east of Ynysangharad War Memorial Park. Access will be gained from the Bryn Tail Lane.

1.9. The site is adjacent to the Twyn Hywel Energy Park a consented wind farm including 14 turbines (DNS/3272053).

DEVELOPMENTS OF NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

1.10. In Wales, all solar farms ranging from 10 to 350MW in capacity fall within the Developments of National Significance consenting regime introduced by the Planning (Wales) Act 2015 and further updated by the Wales Act 2017 and applications are made to the Welsh Government through an application submitted to Planning and Environmental Decisions Wales (PEDW), rather than the local planning authority (LPA). DNS applications can be determined by an Inspector appointed by PEDW or by the Welsh Ministers dependent upon the circumstances.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT CONTEXT

1.11. Solar PV arrays are not explicitly listed in Schedule 2 of the EIA Regulations however they are considered by PEDW to the description at paragraph 3(a) in column 1 of the table in Schedule 2 to the Regulations "Industrial installations for the production of electricity, steam and hot water". Developments of this nature fall within Schedule 2 where the area of the development is over 0.5 ha. Consequently, the Proposed Development falls within Schedule 2 and was subject to EIA Screening.

1.12. A request for Screening Opinion was submitted to PEDW on the 4 January 2024 and a Screening Opinion received on the 13 February 2024, confirming that an EIA would be required and an ES is required to be submitted alongside the application for consent to PEDW, for determination by the Welsh Ministers.

1.13. The EIA for the Proposed Development has been carried out in accordance with the latest regulations, guidance and advice on good practice, comprising:

- Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Wales) Regulations 2017 (as amended by the Environmental Assessments and Miscellaneous Planning (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2018).
- Welsh Government (2019) Developments of National Significance Guidance: Environmental Impact Assessment.
- Welsh Office Circular 11/99: Environmental Impact Assessment (1999).
- The Planning Series: 10 – Environmental Impacts Assessment (2017).
- Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) (2004) Guidelines for Environmental Impact Assessment.
- IEMA (2017) Delivering Proportionate EIA.

Community Engagement

1.14. Early engagement took place between Wednesday 21 February and Friday 17 May 2024. The four week non-statutory consultation took place between Monday 10 June and Monday 8 July 2024.

1.15. Feedback from these events has been analysed and, alongside the results of environmental studies and surveys set out in this ES, has informed the evolution of the Proposed Development. Two in-person consultation events were held on Monday 24 and Tuesday 25 June 2024, with invites sent to local residents by post and to key stakeholders by email.

1.16. Information about the Proposed Development was made available during the consultation period via a project website, adverts placed in a local news publication, a postcard sent to local residents, and two public exhibitions held in accessible venues in settlements located immediately surrounding the site (Treforest and Hawthorne). Consultees were encouraged to submit their feedback via email, feedback form (online and hard copies) or telephone.

1.17. A bilingual postcard introducing the emerging proposals and inviting residents to the consultation events for Glyn Taff Solar Farm was posted to a total of 10,835 properties (10,516 residential and 319 business addresses) in the defined consultation zone (approximately 6.76 square mile radius of the site) and emailed to 105 identified stakeholders.

1.18. Statutory consultees engaged through the process of particular relevance to this ES included:

- Natural Resources Wales
- Highways Authority
- Network Rail
- Fire & Rescue Authorities
- Coal Authority
- Health and Safety Executive
- Control of Major Accident Hazards
- Office for Nuclear Regulation
- The Canal and Rivers Trust
- Sports Council for Wales
- CADW
- Theatres Trust
- Water and Sewerage Undertaker
- Local Grid Provider
- National Grid

1.19. Key concerns raised by the local community included the following;

- Will the project reduce local residents' electricity bills?
- The incorrect venue had been advertised in the email sent to key stakeholders.

- Contamination of private water supply.
- Concern around impact of transport and access to the site.
- Size of site is advertised differently on the postcard compared to the website.
- Noise pollution.
- Community benefit.
- Site location choice.
- Impact on biodiversity and biodiversity gain.
- What other projects Renantis UK Limited has in Wales.
- Current use of the land.
- Size of the site.
- Consultation plans.

1.20. The full list of consultees and addition detail on the responses received to the consultation can be found in the Consultation Report on the project website https://glyntaffsolar.co.uk/.

Structure of the Environmental Statement

1.21. In light of the legislative requirements, best practice guidance and information detailed above, the following topic areas have been included within the Environmental Statement (ES):

- Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment
- Hydrology
- Traffic and Transport
- Glint and Glare
- Noise
- Ecology
- Cultural Heritage
- Climate Change
- Mining

1.22. The layout of the ES is arranged in four volumes, 1-4. Volume 1 includes the opening Non-Technical Summary (NTS). It is a condensed and easily comprehensible version of the ES. The NTS is presented in a similar format to the main ES document and comprises descriptions of the Development, the receiving environment, impacts, mitigation measures and interactions. It is a standalone document.

1.23. Volume 2 contains the main text of the ES. Each chapter within the ES describes the existing environment, the potential impacts of the Development thereon and the proposed mitigation measures. Background information relating to the Development Description, Alternatives, Scoping and Consultation, Planning Policy, the Interaction of the Foregoing and the Schedule of Environmental Commitments are presented in separate chapters.

1.24. Neo environmental have coordinated the EIAR with input from other independent specialist consultants where necessary. Table 1.1 below provides details of the contributors of each aspect of the EIAR.

Table 1-1: Authors of each chapter of the ES

Environmental Statement	Contributor
Volume 1	
Non-Technical Summary	Neo Environmental
Volume 2	
Chapter 1 - Introduction and Approach to EIA	Neo Environmental
Chapter 2 - Development Description and Reasonable Alternatives	Neo Environmental
Chapter 3 - Planning Policy Chapter	Neo Environmental
Chapter 4 - LVIA Chapter	Neo Environmental
Chapter 5 - Hydrology Chapter	KRS Enviro
Chapter 6 - Transport Chapter	ASBRI Transport
Chapter 7 - Glint and Glare Chapter	Neo Environmental
Chapter 8 - Noise	Neo Environmental
Chapter 9 – Ecology	Avian Ecology Bowland Tree Consultancy Steven Pagett Ecological Services
Chapter 10 – Cultural Heritage	Neo Environmental
Chapter 11 – Climate Change	Neo Environmental

Chapter 12 - Mining	Woolgar Hunter
Chapter 13 - Summary of Effects and Mitigation Chapter	Neo Environmental
Volume 3	
Annex 1 - Flood Consequence Assessment and Drainage Strategy	Neo Environmental
Annex 2 - OCEMP	Neo Environmental
Annex 3 - CTMP	ASBRI Transport
Volume 4	
Figure pack	Neo Environmental

Structure of each Chapter

1.25. Each technical assessment included in the ES has followed the same general format:

- Introduction
    - Background
    - Project Description
    - Site and Receiving Environment Description
    - Scope of Assessment
    - Statement of competence
    - Consultation
- Legislation, Planning Policy and guidance – Summary of relevant legislation, policy and guidance
- Assessment Methodology - A description of the methods used in baseline surveys and in the assessment of the significance of effects
- Description of the baseline environment - A description of the Site's existing baseline, based on the results of surveys and desk information and consultations

- Impact Assessment - A description of how the baseline environment could potentially be affected for the Proposed Development including a summary of the measures taken during the design of the Proposed Development to minimise effects
- Mitigation and monitoring measures and Residual effects- A description of measures recommended that will be implemented to reduce and/or off-set potential negative effects and a summary of the assessed level of significance of the effects of the Proposed Development and/or the Proposed Development after mitigation measures have been implemented
- Cumulative effects - A description identifying the potential for effects of the Proposed Development to combine with those from other existing, pending and/or permitted developments.
- Conclusions
- References

Assessment of Effects and Impacts

Assessing Effects

1.26. The main purpose of an ES is to identify, describe and present an assessment of the likely impacts of a project on the environment. The statutory criteria for the presentation of the characteristics of potential impacts requires that potential significant impacts are described with reference to the extent, magnitude, complexity, probability, duration, frequency, reversibility and trans frontier nature (if applicable) of the impact. This informs the relevant authorities assessment process, its decision on whether to grant consent for a project and, if granting consent, what conditions to attach.

1.27. Sensitivity of classification of the receiving environment can vary between the different technical areas of assessment e.g., ecology, hydrology, glint and glare and visual.

1.28. Each technical chapter contains a section that identifies the likely effects on the environment that may arise as a result of the construction, operation and/or decommissioning (where necessary) of the Proposed Development. The significance of environmental effects is typically assessed by considering both the character of the change (i.e. the size and duration of the effect) and the value/sensitivity of the environmental resource that experiences this effect (i.e. the receptor).

1.29. Effects and receptors have been described using quantitative criteria wherever possible using those listed below. Where different terminology has been used, this is stated clearly in the relevant chapter.

- The nature of the effect, described as adverse, neutral or beneficial.
- The magnitude of the effect, based on a scale of major, moderate, minor or none.
- The likelihood of the effect occurring, based on a scale of certain, likely or unlikely.
- The duration of the effect, based on a scale of long, medium and short term.
- The reversibility of the effect, being either reversible or irreversible.
- The value of the receptor, based on a scale of international, national, regional, local and negligible.
- The sensitivity of the receptor to the effect, based on a scale of high, medium and low and in some instances negligible.
- The occurrence of the effect during the phased implementation of the project.

1.30. Each of the technical chapters provides the specific criteria, including sources and justifications, for quantifying the significance of effects, and this is predominantly done by combining sensitivity of receptor and magnitude of effect. Where possible, this has been based upon quantitative and accepted criteria together with the use of value judgements and expert interpretations. This combination of sensitivity of receptor and magnitude of effect may take the form of a matrix table, if so, these are detailed in the technical chapters. The threshold at which effects are likely to be 'significant' is also defined in each of the technical chapters where relevant.

1.31. Unless stated otherwise in methodologies set out in the individual assessment chapters, effects of 'major' or 'moderate' significance are considered to be 'significant' in the context of the EIA Regulations.

Interrelationships

1.32. Interrelationships may occur where two or more effects arise that have the potential to impact on the same receptor during construction or operation. An impact taken in isolation may not have a significant impact on a receptor, but where several effects are considered in an interrelated manner, the resultant impact could then be considered significant. There is no single agreed standard on how the assessment of impact interrelationships should be undertaken, and so the assessment will be undertaken on a qualitative basis using the results of the individual assessments, informed by professional judgement.

1.33. In general terms impacts assessed individually as being of negligible magnitude are not considered to make a meaningful contribution to combined effects from impact interrelationships. For the avoidance of doubt, all impacts not explicitly assessed in the ES will be considered to be of negligible magnitude and will therefore not be assessed. Impacts will

be considered where they have been identified and assessed in other chapters of the ES. The interrelationships between effects are set out in Chapter 13 where applicable.

Cumulative effects

1.34. As required by Regulation 5 of the EIA Regulations, the ES considers the possible effects that a proposal may have in combination with existing or consented developments. In accordance with the Planning Inspectorate's guidance for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects, a staged process for assessing schemes has been adopted. Likely cumulative effects have been defined as the likely effects that the Proposed Development may have in combination with other renewable energy (wind / solar) and residential schemes which are at application stage, consented, under construction or operational. Developments that were constructed over 5 years ago are considered a part of the baseline unless stated otherwise. The cumulative schemes were identified on the 14 February 2025.

Mitigation

1.35. The Proposed Development has actively sought to embed mitigation into the design of the scheme where possible. This has included, for example, locating the solar panels so as to minimise the effects on local views from local footpaths. Additional mitigation measures have also been identified in the technical chapters to prevent, reduce or offset those effects that couldn't be mitigated through the design.

1.36. Relevant mitigation measures are discussed within each technical chapter of this ES. Chapter 13 provides a summary of mitigation measures for all technical assessments associated with the Proposed Development.

Limitations of the Assessment

1.37. Each chapter identifies any limitations identified in the available baseline data and whether there were any difficulties encountered in compiling the information required.

Key Terms

1.38. To ensure clarity and consistency throughout the ES, the following key terms have been used:

- The Applicant is: "Renantis UK Limited" and is referred to as "the Applicant";
- The project name is "Glyn Taff Solar Farm" and is referred to as the "Proposed Development";
- The project development area within the red line application boundary is referred to as the "Application Site";

- The project is located within Rhondda Cynon Taf which is abbreviated to “RCT”;
- The Environmental Statement is abbreviated to "ES”;
- The Non-Technical Summary is abbreviated to "NTS”; and
- The Environmental Impact Assessment is abbreviated to "EIA”.

COPIES OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT

1.39. An electronic version of the ES and supporting documents are available online free of charge from the PEDW planning portal and https://glyntaffsolar.co.uk/. Hard copies of the ES can also be available to purchase at a cost reflecting printing and distribution costs. To request copies in any format, please email info@neo-environmental.co.uk or write directly to Neo Environmental at Spaces 8th Floor, The Programme Building The Pithay, Bristol, BS1 2NB.