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1. Introduction

1.1 Overview of the Proposed Development

- 1.1.1 Pennant Walters Ltd ('the Applicant') is seeking planning permission for the construction and operation of a wind farm of up to eight turbines on land at Mynydd Llanhilleth ('the Site').
- 1.1.2 The Mynydd Llanhilleth Wind Farm ('the Proposed Development') consists of the following elements:
- Up to eight wind turbines;
 - Substation and transformer housing;
 - Temporary contractor's compound
 - Grid connection infrastructure ;
 - Crane pads and cabling; and
 - New access, track construction and improvements.
- 1.1.3 The Applicant has accepted a firm grid connection offer from Western Power Distribution (WPD), as the Distribution Network Operator (DNO) for a 66kV connection at Abersychan. The connection will comprise 2km of new underground cable together with a Tee off structure H pole which will connect the underground line to the existing overhead network.
- 1.1.4 The Site location is shown on **Figure 1.1** and an overall Site layout in **Figure 1.2**.

1.2 The applicant and the project team

- 1.2.1 This Draft Environmental Statement (ES) has been prepared on behalf of the Applicant by Wood Group UK Ltd ('Wood').
- 1.2.2 Pennant Walters Ltd is a Walters Group company with a focus on renewable energy having obtained consent for and/or developed a wide variety of schemes including onshore wind, solar, small scale hydro and battery storage.
- 1.2.3 Wood is registered with the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA)'s EIA Quality Mark scheme. The scheme allows organisations that lead the co-ordination of EIAs in the UK to make a commitment to excellence in its EIA activities and have this commitment independently reviewed.
- 1.2.4 Regulation 17(4)(a) of *The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Wales) Regulations 2017 (as amended)*¹ ('the EIA Regulations') requires that an ES must "*be prepared by persons who in the opinion of the relevant planning authority or the Welsh Ministers, as appropriate, have sufficient expertise to ensure the completeness and quality of the statement*".

¹ UK Government (2017). Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Wales) Regulations 2017 [online]. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/wsi/2017/567/contents> [Accessed 18 November 2021].

- 1.2.5 The relevant experience and qualifications of the competent experts who have prepared this Draft ES, as required by Regulation 4(b) of the EIA Regulations, are provided in **Table 1.1**.

Table 1.1 Environmental topics to be addressed in the Draft ES and details of the expertise of staff who have undertaken each assessment

Topic	Staff	Relevant expertise/qualifications
Chapter 6 Landscape and Visual Impact	Maria Duignan	CMLI, Associate Landscape Architect BSc (Hons) Landscape Architecture MSc Ecological Economics
	Clare Malpas	BA (Hons) and MLA Landscape Architecture
	Gethin Evans	CMLI, Senior Landscape Architect PGDipLA Landscape Architecture BSc (Hons) Ecology Conservation and Environment MSc Evolutionary and Behavioural Ecology PhD Evolutionary Ecology
Chapter 7 Historic Environment	Rob Skinner	Associate of the Institute for Archaeologists (ACIfA) BA Anthropology, Archaeology and Art History MA Cultural Landscape Management
Chapter 8 Biodiversity	Jenni Morgan	Full Member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (MCIEEM) BSc (Hons) Zoology
	Emily Williams	Full Member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (MCIEEM) BSc (Hons) Zoology MSc Managing the Environment
	Kate Henson	Full Member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (MCIEEM) BSc (Hons) Animal Biology PhD Ecology

Topic	Staff	Relevant expertise/qualifications
Chapter 9 Ornithology	Rob Forbes	Full Member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (MCIEEM) BSc (Hons) Ecology MSc Environmental Assessment and Management
	Claire Haynes	BSc (Hons) Wildlife Conservation
	Mike Caiden	BSc Environmental Management MSc Conservation Ecology
Chapter 10 Water Environment	Ana Braid	BEng Environmental Engineering, MSc Environmental Technology, PhD contaminant attenuation, MCIWM
	Jack Park	BSc Geography GradCIWEM
Chapter 11 Ground Conditions	Mike Sheard	BSc (Hons) Plant Sciences, MSc Environmental Rehabilitation, IEMA Practitioner
	Lynne Gemmell	MEnvS Environmental Studies, IEMA Practitioner, Member, Institution of Environmental Sciences.
Chapter 12 Traffic and Transport	Pranav Yadav	BSc (Hons), Computer Science MSc, Transport Planning and Engineering MCIHT
	Simon Ellis	BSc, Human Geography MCIHT
Chapter 13 Noise	Mark Evans	MSc in Environmental Management Diploma in Acoustics and Noise Control
Chapter 14 Aviation and Telecommunications	Steven Fitzpatrick	MEng, Product Design Engineering PgDip, Energy Systems and the Environment
Chapter 15 Shadow Flicker	Steven Fitzpatrick	MEng, Product Design Engineering PgDip, Energy Systems and the Environment
Chapter 16 Socio-economics	David Kenyon	
Chapter 17 Cumulative Effects	Chris Prydderch	BSc (Hons) Environmental Science, MSc (Dist) Environmental Monitoring and Assessment IEMA Practitioner

Topic	Staff	Relevant expertise/qualifications
	Jacob Hall	BSc (Hons) Ecology and Conservation MSc (Dist) Environmental Impact Assessment and Management Member of the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment.

1.3 Purpose of the Draft Environmental Statement

- 1.3.1 The Proposed Development requires EIA (i.e. it is ‘EIA development’) because it falls under paragraph 3(i) (“*Installations for the harnessing of wind power for energy production (wind farms)*”) of Schedule 2 of the EIA Regulations and exceeds its thresholds for both site area and hub height. On this basis, EIA has been undertaken for the Proposed Development.
- 1.3.2 As the installed generating capacity of the Proposed Development would exceed 10 megawatts (MW), it qualifies as a DNS according to the criteria set out in Regulation 4A of *The Developments of National Significance (Specified Criteria and Prescribed Secondary Consents) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2016*².
- 1.3.3 An EIA has been prepared to meet the requirements of the EIA Regulations and provides part of the information that will be used by the Welsh Ministers, and other key stakeholders, to inform the process of determining the application for consent of the Proposed Development.
- 1.3.4 In accordance with good practice, a Scoping Report³ (**Appendix 1A**) was prepared to identify the potential likely significant environmental effects of the Proposed Development. Those effects that were assessed as being likely to be significant or where likely significant effects could not be discounted at the scoping stage were proposed for further assessment in the ES. This reflects the requirement of the EIA Regulations for the ES to focus on those effects that are likely to be significant.
- 1.3.5 A request for a Scoping Direction was made to the Planning Inspectorate Wales (PINS Wales) in May 2021, under Regulation 33 of the EIA Regulations in respect of applications for planning permission to Welsh Ministers as a DNS project. A Scoping Direction⁴ was received on 06 August 2021 (**Appendix 1B**). The scoping report was undertaken by Savills, since this submission Wood PLC has taken over in leading the EIA Process for Pennant Walters.
- 1.3.6 On 01 October 2021 PINS Wales became the Planning and Environment Decisions Wales (PEDW) (or Penderfyniadau Cynllunio ac Amgylchedd Cymru) and will be referenced as so hereafter.
- 1.3.7 As the Proposed Development is a DNS, in accordance with paragraph 3.23 of *Developments of National Significance: Procedural Guidance* (The Planning Inspectorate, 2019⁵) this Draft ES has been prepared to allow consultees an opportunity to comment on its contents, and for the Applicant to consider and respond to any comments received. It

² Welsh Government (2016). Town and Country Planning, Wales: The Developments of National Significance (Specified Criteria and Prescribed Secondary Consents) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2016 [online]. Available at: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/wsi/2016/358/pdfs/wsi_20160358_mi.pdf [Accessed 06 August 2022].

³ Savills (2021). Mynydd Llanhilleth Wind Farm – Environmental Impact Assessment Scoping Report.

⁴ The Planning Inspectorate (2021). DNS: EIA Scoping Direction. 3273368: Mynydd Llanhilleth Wind Farm.

⁵ The Planning Inspectorate (2019). Developments of National Significance: Procedural Guidance. Version 2.2. [online]. Available at <https://gov.wales/developments-national-significance-dns-procedural-guide>. [Accessed 26 November 2021].

presents an assessment of effects based on current information with respect to project design and baseline environmental information. Following consultation and a review of responses received, a final assessment of likely significant effects associated with the Proposed Development during its construction, operation and decommissioning will be presented within the ES to be submitted with the DNS application.

- 1.3.8 This Draft ES has been based on the Scoping Direction (**Appendix 1B**), as well as subsequent consultation and assessment work. It includes an assessment of the likely significant environmental effects of the Proposed Development based on current proposals, leading to a conclusion about which effects were assessed as likely to be significant and identifying potential environmental mitigation measures⁶ in respect of likely significant adverse effects.
- 1.3.9 The overall approach that has been taken to defining significance, as well as further information about the approach to preparing the Draft ES, are outlined in **Chapter 2** of this document.
- 1.3.10 Regulation 4 and Schedule 4 of the EIA Regulations require that the environmental topics listed in column 1 of **Table 1.2** need to be considered when preparing an ES. Column 2 then lists where these topics are included in this Draft ES, with reference to the relevant chapter numbers.

Table 1.2 Environmental Topics to be Addressed in the Draft ES and Chapter References

Topics ⁷ that need to be assessed under the EIA Regulations	Chapter titles where addressed in this Draft ES
Population	Landscape and visual impact (Chapter 6); Traffic and transport (Chapter 12); Noise (Chapter 13); Aviation and Telecommunications (Chapter 14); and Socio-economics (Chapter 16).
Human health	Traffic and transport (Chapter 12); Noise (Chapter 13); Aviation and Telecommunications (Chapter 14); Shadow flicker (Chapter 15); and Socio-economics (Chapter 16).
Biodiversity	Biodiversity (Chapter 8); Ornithology (Chapter 9).
Land	Ground conditions (Chapter 11).
Soil	Ground conditions (Chapter 11).
Water	Water environment (Chapter 10).
Air	Scoped out (See Appendix 1A and 1B).
Climate	Carbon balance assessment (Appendix 2C), Description of the Proposed Development (Chapter 4), Biodiversity (Chapter 8), Water Environment (Chapter 10), Ground conditions (Chapter 11) and Socio-economics (Chapter 16).
Cultural heritage	Historic environment (Chapter 7).

⁶ Discussed further in Chapter 2

⁷ In this Draft ES, the word 'topic' is used when referring to the environment that could be affected by the proposed development. Other words with the same general meaning are used in the EIA Regulations, notably 'factor' and 'aspect', but these are not used in the same context within this Draft ES.

Topics ⁷ that need to be assessed under the EIA Regulations	Chapter titles where addressed in this Draft ES
Landscape	Landscape and visual impact (Chapter 6).
The inter-relationship between the above factors	Considered within each Chapter as relevant, and Cumulative Effects (Chapter 17).
Vulnerability to major accidents or disasters	Approach to Environmental Impact Assessment (Chapter 2), Description of the Proposed Development (Chapter 4), Ground conditions (Chapter 11), Traffic and transport (Chapter 12), Aviation and Telecommunications (Chapter 14).

1.4 Structure of this Draft Environmental Statement

1.4.1 This Draft ES is sub-divided into the following volumes:

- **Volume 1** presents the Non-Technical Summary (NTS) of this Draft ES;
- **Volume 2** contains the written report, including the following chapters:
 - ▶ **Chapter 1** – introduction to the Proposed Development (this chapter);
 - ▶ **Chapter 2** - details the approach that has been adopted in preparing the Draft ES;
 - ▶ **Chapter 3** - explains the need for the Mynydd Llanhilleth Wind Farm, outlines the main alternatives considered for meeting this need and describes the design process for the Proposed Development;
 - ▶ **Chapter 4** - provides the Description of the Proposed Development;
 - ▶ **Chapter 5** - provides an overview of the legislation and policies that are relevant to the Draft ES;
 - ▶ **Chapters 6 to 17** - these set out the technical assessments for the environmental topics considered in the Draft ES.
- **Volume 3** contains the figures referred to in the Draft ES; and
- **Volume 4** contains the appendices referred to in the Draft ES.