



# Awel y Môr Offshore Wind Farm

## Review of Table 8 of the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA)

### Deadline 4

**Date: 30 January 2023**

**Revision: A**

Document Reference: 4.19

Application Reference: N/A



REVISION	DATE	STATUS/ REASON FOR ISSUE	AUTHOR	CHECKED BY	APPROVED BY
A	January 2023	Deadline 4	OPEN	RWE	RWE

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# 1 Landscape and visual response to Actions from Issue Specific Hearing 3

## 1.1 Introduction

- 1 This document presents the response to a question raised by the Examining Authority (ExA) at the Issue Specific Hearing (ISH) 3 held on 8 December 2022 as part of the Examination of the DCO Application for Awel y Môr (AyM) Offshore Windfarm which related to the assessment of the effects on the agricultural land as a result of the AyM Onshore Substation (OnSS).
- 2 This question was captured within the actions from ISH3 as follows:

“Substation and Agricultural land - Table 8 of the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) is to be reviewed in respect of agricultural land.”
- 3 It was acknowledged by the Applicant at ISH 3 that the assessment of the physical effect on agricultural land as a result of the AyM OnSS had been omitted in error. The following sections of this document therefore sets out the assessment of this effect.

## 1.2 Approach

- 4 This response has been informed by the description of onshore elements of AyM within Volume 3, Chapter 1: Onshore Project Description (APP-062). The methodology used in this response is set out in Volume 3, Chapter 2: Landscape and Visual Assessment (LVIA) (AS-029), Section 2.5 - Assessment criteria and assignment of significance . This response should be read in conjunction with the following Figure:
  - ▲ 6.6.2.2.24 Volume 6 - Annex 2.2: Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) Figures - Figure 2.16 (Outline Landscape Mitigation Principles) (APP-179).

## 1.3 Baseline

- 5 Agricultural farmland is the predominant land use within the LVIA study area, along the onshore Export Cable Corridor (ECC) and within the OnSS site. The fields within the OnSS site area are a combination of arable and pastoral use for sheep and cattle. The changing appearance of the agricultural landscape and the activities associated with maintaining crops and livestock is therefore a common and integral characteristic of the agricultural landscape. The presence and activity of farm machinery is also a feature of agricultural land and on the adjoining rural roads.

## 1.4 Sensitivity

- 6 The OnSS is not within a designated landscape. Agricultural land occurs extensively across the landscape around the OnSS site and therefore has little scarcity value and has no special value in relation to its characteristics as a landscape element. The value of the agricultural land, in landscape terms, is considered to be medium - low.
- 7 The susceptibility of agricultural land to the change as a result of the OnSS is relatively limited as there is no naturally occurring vegetation, the grass vegetation within pastoral fields is easily replaced due to the level of existing disruption as a result of crop cultivation and agricultural land management practices. However, the openness of the agricultural land parcels as well as the perceived naturalness of its land cover increase its susceptibility to the development proposed. The combination of these factors along with the widespread occurrence of agricultural land within the area as a landscape element, means the susceptibility is considered to be medium-low. Taking all of this into account the sensitivity of agricultural land on the OnSS site is considered to be medium-low. This does not take into account the value that may be attributed to agricultural land as a resource for growing crops which is considered elsewhere in the Environmental Statement through assessment of impacts from the OnSS on Agricultural Land Classification areas within ES Volume 3, Chapter 6: Ground Conditions and Land Use (APP-067).

## 1.5 Magnitude of Change

- 8 The construction processes within the wider OnSS area would involve large areas of agricultural land being lost over a short or long term as a result of the OnSS Footprint, OnSS Indicative Temporary Construction Compound Area, OnSS Construction Access Zone and OnSS Temporary Construction Access Zone. Further areas of agricultural land would be temporarily lost as a result of the onshore ECC as it enters and exits the OnSS site area, involving open-cut trenching to the north and south of the OnSS platform. See Volume 6, Annex 2.2: Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) Figures - Figure 2.6 Aerial Mapping with Proposed Development (AS-033).
- 9 These processes would result in localised and short-term changes to parts of the landscape accustomed to agricultural use and activity. In some cases within the OnSS site area the land would not be returned to agricultural use following construction but would instead be used for required landscape mitigation and biodiversity compensation/enhancement purposes in the creation of new habitats.
- 10 Long term losses of agricultural land would occur where the operational footprint of the OnSS would be located, the OnSS access road and areas identified for proposed mitigation woodland planting/habitat creation. See Volume 6, Annex 2.2: Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) Figures - Figure 2.16 Outline Landscape Mitigation Principles (APP-179).
- 11 Following installation of the onshore ECC and construction of the OnSS, much of the agricultural land would be reinstated with trenches backfilled and land reinstated to its current profile.
- 12 The agricultural land lost in the long term within the OnSS site area constitutes only a small proportion of the wider agricultural area and the abundance of this landscape element moderates the overall magnitude of change as a component of the wider character. However, the part of the site that will be replaced with hard standings, electrical infrastructure and built form does constitute a relatively large area that would no longer have the openness or perceived naturalness of agricultural land.

- 13 Areas of the OnSS site where species rich neutral grassland or lowland meadow habitats are to be established in place of agricultural land would exhibit similar characteristics to agricultural land as a component of landscape character i.e. openness and perceived naturalness. This, along with the extensive woodland, tree and hedgerow planting would mitigate some of the effects of the loss of agricultural land. In addition, these habitats would not be changed seasonally by ploughing or seeding for new crops but would remain in place over the operational period of the OnSS, thus increasing their comparative naturalness.
- 14 Taking all of this into account, the magnitude of change of the OnSS site area is predicted to be medium. This is largely due to the level of long term loss of agricultural land within the site area with the temporary losses considered easily restored and as such of a lower magnitude of change.

## 1.6 Significance of Effect

- 15 The effect is considered to be Moderate-Minor and Not Significant in Environmental Impact Assessment terms. The effect is adverse, combination of short / long term and reversible. Agricultural land lost in the short term would largely be restored post construction, agricultural land lost in the long term would be unable to be restored within the project lifespan and only reversible following decommissioning.



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