

CMCC 240807 P/MONA
Local Impact Report (LIR)

Planning Inspectorate Examination EN010137: Mona Offshore Wind

Cefn Meiriadog Community Council
MNOW-SP036

Voluntary Local Impact Report submitted by CMCC for Deadline 1 (7 August 2024)

1. This Voluntary Local Impact Report is submitted by Cefn Meiriadog Community Council (CMCC) in accordance with the guidance in the Planning Inspectorate's (PI) document Developments of National Significance, Appendix 5: Local Impact Reports.

2. It is written without the benefit of being able to refer to any LIR submitted by the LPA (Denbighshire County Council), although it is understood that DCC has commissioned a LIR, to be submitted by the relevant deadline.

3. In accordance with paragraph 5.4 of the PI's document referred to above, the Report is based on comprehensive local knowledge and strong awareness of local issues by the seven councillors making up Cefn Meiriadog Community Council. The provision of "robust evidence" as referred to in the document obviously cannot meet the levels of which a well-resourced LPA should be capable. However it is based on extensive discussions and interactions over a long period of time between councillors and local residents, and between councillors themselves and others at both regular council meetings and meetings called specifically to discuss infrastructure developments and proposals affecting the community, including the current proposal.

4. CMCC is unaware of the likely impact of the application in relation to a secondary consent being granted.

5. CMCC has referred to the following documents in drawing up this LIR: Denbighshire County Council (DCC) LDP 2006 – 2021; Welsh Government, Developments of National Significance: guide to engaging with the process; Welsh Government TAN 6.

6. In discussing local impacts of the Mona project, the importance of cumulative effects with other projects cannot be overstated, and all comments about the Mona project necessarily have this as a background. These are both short-term and long-term cumulative effects, the former basically covering the period of construction work and the effects of noise, traffic, etc, on residents, and the latter the longer-term effects on the community of siting the infrastructure in the location proposed. The concern of CMCC and the residents of Cefn Meiriadog is both the immediate effect of Mona but also the cumulative and overall effects on the community of all the infrastructure projects being sited in it, existing, ongoing, proposed and future. It is acknowledged in the Mona application that the construction periods for it and for Mona, if consented, will overlap. With Mona's becoming operational contingent on the NG extension being completed, of necessity the construction period of the NG extension must also coincide with the construction period of the Mona substation.

7. A key short-term impact therefore will be the significant noise, traffic and light pollution associated with the proposed three-year construction period. With this taking place in a rural landscape of open farmland the noise impact of construction working and of haulage vehicles will be substantial and the impact of light pollution during the hours of darkness, especially in winter, even more so, both amplified by the cumulative effects of the other projects. CMCC considers it necessary therefore that the construction hours be set so as to limit these impacts on residents to the minimum necessary. It notes that an informal poll carried out among residents on social media showed that 8am to 6pm working hours (8pm to 1pm Saturday) were unanimously preferred to the 7am to 7pm working hours sought by the Applicant.

8. The proposed substation, at 65,000 square metres, and 15 metres high, will clearly have a very major visual impact on the local rural landscape, situated as stated on open farmland on rising ground. Visual Impact Assessments (VIAs) make their assessments based on static viewpoints and visual receptors, but from the point of view of residents in a community like Cefn Meiriadog this is a serious drawback. For those many who walk, run, cycle and ride along the byways and lanes of Cefn Meiriadog, as well as those driving its roads, it is the visual experience of seeing a changing landscape that is important and is a source of pleasure and of a sense of belonging. Assessing a single viewpoint, therefore, cannot capture the impact of the sheer scale of the proposed substation on passers-by in relation to its surroundings, and this impact will be all the greater with the revelation that a grid of twelve 30-metre high lightning masts is proposed. The minor surfaced road which passes nearest to the site is popular with residents and visitors, especially cyclists, alike, and the development will clearly impact on their activities. On this road, the extremely close proximity of the proposed substation to the Grade II listed building known as Pentre Meredydd will clearly have a substantial impact on the ability to appreciate the building in its historic landscape context. The moving around which is a characteristic of leisure activity in Cefn Meiriadog, and of simply living there given the way that settlements, individual dwellings and farms are spread out, means that the cumulative effects of the multiple projects come into play in the impact they have on people travelling around the community. If the project is to go ahead, the CMCC asks for the maximum mitigation possible in terms of planting, painting, etc, to minimise the visual impact of the substation on the landscape.

9. Cefn Meiriadog's sense of identity is bound up with its rural and agricultural character. The community of 359 people in 180 households, and just over 5 square miles, consists largely of farms and smallholdings, together with three small settlements too small to be described even as hamlets. A relatively high proportion of those 180 households are farming families, who form a vital stronghold of the Welsh language and Welsh-language culture. The impact of the the continuing loss of agricultural land to this and the other projects and the threat to the viability of farms can be expected to drive some of those already farming on small margins to find other ways of making a living, resulting in changes to Cefn Meiriadog's essential character and identity.

10. The impact of these changes will inevitably be to make Cefn Meiriadog a progressively less attractive place to live in and to send children to school in. Cefn Meiriadog CP School is central to the community's cultural identity. It already has a small pupil roll and in the past has been threatened with closure. Each marginal impact on it carries a threat of reduced numbers, and parents bringing their children to and from school will be impacted for several years by the traffic situation on Glascoed Road, as well as the permanent cumulative effects the developments have on the character and identity of the community of which the school is at the heart.

11. It is a characteristic of Cefn Meiriadog's demography that a relatively high proportion of those living here are from families who have lived here for several generations, another reflection of the importance of the farming community, although this characteristic is by no means limited to farming families. Others who have made the choice to live here have done so precisely because of the area's rural landscape and character. The cumulative impact of the various projects, and in particular the very large size of the Awel y Môr and Mona projects, and the location of the Mona substation in Cefn Meiriadog's agricultural heart has been to bring a sense of social malaise to the community as its attractiveness as a place to live and bring up children is irreversibly diminished. As an indication of the impact the project is having on mental health, two (unrelated) Cefn Meiriadog residents whose properties are in close proximity to the Mona substation site have, separately and without reference to each other, spoken of how the development makes them "feel physically sick".

12. In the context of the above, therefore, CMCC believes that, in the event of consent being granted, those mitigations, conditions and obligations are put in place which minimise the impacts of the project in all areas discussed above, but in particular in respect of working hours and of the visual impact of the proposed substation on the local landscape.