

Meeting note

Project name	Maen Hir Solar and Energy Storage Project
File reference	EN010156
Status	Draft
Author	The Planning Inspectorate
Date	21 June 2024
Meeting with	Lightsource bp
Venue	Microsoft Teams
Meeting objectives	Project Update Meeting
Circulation	All attendees

Summary of key points discussed, and advice given

The Planning Inspectorate (the Inspectorate) advised that a note of the meeting would be taken and published on its website in accordance with section 51 of the Planning Act 2008 (the PA2008). Any advice given under section 51 would not constitute legal advice upon which applicants (or others) could rely.

Updated project programme

The Applicant shared a high-level overview of its programme, showing statutory consultation taking place in Quarter 3/4 2024 and anticipated DCO application submission in Quarter 3 2025. Further timeline details will be included in a full programme document to be submitted to the Inspectorate and published on the Applicant's website in due course.

The Applicant explained that informal engagement is due to begin shortly, as a warm-up for the statutory consultation, and the programme has scope for a second targeted consultation, if required. The Applicant intends to seek further input from statutory consultees, before further refining the project programme and confirming a submission date.

The Applicant agreed to update the submission date for the Inspectorate's website, and that it currently intended to utilise the draft documents service, but scope and timing were to be confirmed.

Pre-application service expression of interest

The Applicant explained it is currently targeting the standard tier of service, which it considers to be appropriate for the project.

The Applicant requested some advice about the new pre-application service:

[Project programme document](#)

The Inspectorate provided a link to guidance from the Department for Levelling Up, Communities and Housing (DLUHC) on the details required in the project programme. This should cover the whole pre-application stage, including anything that has already happened, up to the point of submission. It confirmed that communications with statutory bodies need to be included in the programme and while no formal consultation is required, the programme needs to be flexible to support their engagement. It is the Applicant's choice whether to share the programme with statutory bodies in advance or signpost to the published version when available. The Applicant queried whether it should produce a public-facing version of the document for publication. The Inspectorate confirmed it would provide further advice on this following the meeting.

Adequacy of Consultation Milestone (AoCM)

The Applicant noted that lead-in requirements for this new milestone could have an impact on the project's critical path. The Inspectorate advised that it was for the Applicant to propose the date as part of their programme, provided it is no later than three months before submission date and shared a link to relevant DLUHC guidance. It noted that the AoCM is a more formalised version of what has usually been done and is intended to reduce risk by seeking responses from local authorities at an earlier stage. This allows concerns to be addressed prior to the formal response during the Acceptance stage.

The Inspectorate also confirmed that as the project has already sought a Scoping Opinion, charging will begin from April 2025, while the new service tiers would be in place from September 2024. It expects to be able to confirm projects in their respective tiers by the end of August 2024. It advised the Applicant to monitor the Q&A website page associated with the prospectus, which is regularly updated as questions are received.

Statutory Consultation

The Applicant explained that following the General Election, it intends to contact elected representatives at all levels to offer briefings about the project, its programme and the upcoming consultation. A dual-language community newsletter is to follow for approximately 4,000 residential and business addresses in the consultation zone, in addition to the project website and an email list for updates. The Applicant noted that as tourism is a key part of the local economy, the timing of the informal engagement aims to capture some of the peak tourism season and it will be present at local community events, including the Anglesey Show.

The Applicant also noted it has already had informal consultation with Isle of Anglesey County Council (IoACC) on the Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC). It has updated this to address their comments and will be formally consulting in July so it can be published well in advance of the statutory consultation.

Statutory consultation is programmed to run for six weeks, covering the October half term to try and capture tourist populations and increase accessibility, e.g., for working families who may take leave at this time. The Applicant outlined its intended process, covering in-person and online events and availability of consultation documents. It is seeking to cover a wide local area with its deposit venues and notices and adverts in several local publications, including a Welsh language publication. The following consultation documents will be published in both Welsh and English:

- Project Information Booklet
- Feedback form
- Non-Technical Summary of the Preliminary Environmental Information Report

- Consultation event boards

The project website is available in Welsh and English and there will be Welsh speakers present at all consultation events.

The Applicant asked for any feedback on the breadth and depth of information to allow consultees to have an informed opinion. The Inspectorate advised that IoACC would be better placed to advise on this as it has been more involved to date and will have knowledge of the local community. The Inspectorate advised that the Applicant to ensure the informal engagement process is thoroughly documented, as well as the statutory stage, and that the s46 notice is submitted in advance of statutory consultation commencing.

The Inspectorate also recommended the Applicant to give early thought to venue options for future hearings, given the lack of suitable venues for previous projects. The Applicant confirmed that it was already undergoing venue shortlisting. The Inspectorate agreed to send its venue requirement checklist following the meeting.

Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR)

The Applicant explained how the design has evolved since previously shared:

- Some of the land previously proposed for solar panel siting within Maen Hir Central has been removed following further landowner engagement, but retained in part for construction access etc. An additional area for solar panel siting to the north of Llanerch-y-medd is now included within Maen Hir Central (above the Maen Hir South site).
- The cable route corridor connecting the parcels is currently broad and will be refined as the scheme progresses.
- Height parameters have been defined for PEIR to inform an assessment of Landscape and Visual Amenity.
- Potential locations of substations have been refined from previous versions, with flexibility built in. Co-location options for Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) and project substation are currently all shown at the greater (substation) height. Details will be refined for submission. Smaller substations may not be needed but spaces are reserved to allow for that option.
- Specific mitigation areas are shown but note there will be embedded mitigation within the other areas as well, such as offsets from sensitive receptors.

The Inspectorate requested clarification on the relationship of the new solar panel siting area to the EIA Scoping Boundary at the time of adoption of the Inspectorate's Scoping Opinion in December 2023. The Applicant confirmed this area was added after Scoping. But given the land was included in the wider EIA Scoping Study Area and no new impacts or receptors, which were scoped out in the Scoping Opinion, would require assessment. The Applicant's position is that the change does not result in a need to re-scope. The Applicant has undertaken a technical note setting out their position which has been provided to the Inspectorate.

Post meeting note: The adopted Scoping Opinion is based on the information available in the Scoping Report (dated November 2023) at that point in time and it is a matter for the Applicant to determine whether any new scoping request is required. The Applicant's

position and reasoning that this is not necessary in this case is noted. The Applicant's technical note explains that IoACC is being consulted regarding any implications for the assessments, for example, to determine whether any additional viewpoints are required for the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment. In order to demonstrate that aspects/matters have been appropriately addressed, the Applicant is advised that the Environmental Statement (ES) (and PEIR, where possible) should include a robust justification of the extent of the baseline data collection and scope of the impact assessments in this regard, to give confidence that the likely significant effects have been fully assessed.

National Grid substation

The Applicant confirmed it has discussed the connection to the proposed Wylfa South substation with the National Grid Electricity Transmission (NGET) team. Engagement remains ongoing with NGET relating to this matter.

Ongoing Engagement with Statutory Consultees

The Applicant confirmed it has been engaging with IoACC (both planning and technical areas such as noise, air quality and highways) and other statutory consultees on a regular basis to agree methodologies etc. and provide updates on the proposals. A design report has been received from the Design Commission for Wales (DCfW) and the Applicant will be holding a site visit and workshop with DCfW in July as part of its continuing engagement. The Inspectorate recommended the Applicant include a record of DCfW engagement in its Consultation Report as well as the design documents, particularly in terms of how the scheme has evolved in response to feedback. It also noted that DCfW might welcome a further briefing before submission.

Specific decisions/ follow-up required?

The following actions were agreed:

- Applicant to confirm what (broad) date should be used to update the project's page on the Inspectorate's website [POST-MEETING NOTE: NOW COMPLETE].
- The Inspectorate to respond to outstanding questions emailed regarding new pre-application service. [POST-MEETING NOTE: NOW COMPLETE]
- The Inspectorate to send venue requirement checklist and advice notes to the Applicant. [POST-MEETING NOTE: NOW COMPLETE]
- Applicant to re-forward technical note on Scoping changes and the Inspectorate to provide any comments if required [POST-MEETING NOTE: NOW COMPLETE].
- Applicant to confirm when next update meeting is required; possibly in September after statutory consultation.