

<b>PLANNING COMMITTEE</b>	<b>DATE: 16/10/2017</b>
<b>REPORT OF THE SENIOR PLANNING AND PUBLIC PROTECTION MANAGER</b>	<b>DOLGELLAU</b>

**Number: 6**

**Application Number: C17/0772/36/LL**

**Date Registered: 04/08/2017**

**Application Type: Full - Planning**

**Community: Dolbenmaen**

**Ward: Dolbenmaen**

**Proposal: Application for a new substation, associated infrastructure, landscaping and new access road.**

**Location: Land opposite Bryn Efail Uchaf,  
Garndolbenmaen, Porthmadog, Gwynedd,  
LL51 9LQ**

**Summary of the Recommendation: APPROVE WITH CONDITIONS**

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## 1. Description:

- 1.1 This application is for a new substation, associated infrastructure, landscaping and new access road.
- 1.2 The site is located to the south-east of Brynceir (1.4km), south of the A487 and to the east of the junction with the B4411 and 1.4km west of Garndolbenmaen. The red line boundary covers an area approximately 4.3 ha; however, the permanent substation compound will cover approximately 0.7ha. The remainder of the land within the red line boundary comprises the access road, vehicle turning area, landscaping and temporary construction / laydown areas.
- 1.3 The proposed development site lies on relatively flat ground and consists of pastoral fields with an area of marshy grassland located to the south-west. The site is surrounded by a mix of field boundary types, being predominantly dry stone wall and post and wire fences, but with overgrown hedgerows/hedgerow trees located along the southern boundary and along the north-eastern boundary. Managed hedgerows line the southern boundary of the A487 as it faces the proposed development site.
- 1.4 The existing Pentir – Trawsfynydd 400kv Overhead Line runs along the western edge of the proposed development site; and there are a number of isolated/grouped properties near the proposed development.
- 1.5 The site is accessed from the north via an existing farm access, and a Public Right of Way Footpath (18 Dolbenmaen) currently runs through the proposed development site and will need to be diverted to facilitate the proposed substation. The applicant is in discussions with the Council's Public Rights of Way Officers regarding the diversion, which have resulted in an agreement in principle.
- 1.6 The substation compound is required to accommodate the single electrical transformer that would 'step down' the 400kv voltage of Pentir-Trawsfynydd circuit to a voltage of 132kv in preparation for connection to SP Manweb Four Crosses circuit. The compound dimensions are approximately 88m by 63m and will be surfaced with stone chippings. The compound will contain the following:
- Ancillary buildings – amenity building and small single storey building housing the main control systems
  - Equipment including switch gear, switches, sealing ends, transformers etc.
  - Diesel generator and water tank
  - Access road and HGV turning area
  - 2.4m high palisade fencing with electric fence backing of 3.4m height from ground level.
- 1.7 A temporary construction compound will be established to the north west of the proposed substation works, which will be securely fenced off during the construction period and which will include a number of temporary facilities including:
- Site offices including offices and meeting rooms
  - Staff welfare facilities
  - Storage areas for construction vehicles, plant, equipment, materials, fuels and waste materials.

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- 1.8 The application also involves altering the existing access from the main Trunk Road (A487), which will enable construction traffic to enter and leave the site. Following construction, the access will be made into a permanent access with a bell mouth wide enough for two cars and a 6m wide roadway.
- 1.9 The works will also necessitate the replacement of an existing pylon on the line with a new pylon as it enters the substation. The proposal to replace the existing pylon with a tension pylon is exempt from Section 37(1) of the Electricity Act 1989 as set out within Part 3(e) of the Overhead Lines (Exemption) (England and Wales) Regulations 2009 because the height of the replacement pylon does not exceed the height of the existing pylon which is being replaced by more than 10% and because the replacement pylon will be sited within the line between two existing pylons, 25m north of the existing pylon. As the works are exempt from consent under the Electricity Act, they constitute permitted development under Part 17, Class G (a) of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order (England and Wales) 1995 (the GPDO). Accordingly, whilst the proposed replacement pylon is shown on the application plans, it does not form part of this planning application and falls outside of the red line boundary.
- 1.10 A screening opinion under Regulation 5 (1) of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Wales) Regulations 2016 was submitted to the Local Planning Authority under reference C17/0063/36/SC and it was confirmed that an Environmental Impact Assessment was not required.
- 1.11 A Pre-Application Consultation was carried out by the applicant, and the subsequent Pre-Application Consultation Report forms part of this application.

## **2. Relevant Policies:**

- 2.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and paragraph 2.1.2 of Planning Policy Wales emphasise that planning decisions should be made in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Planning considerations include National Planning Policy and the Unitary Development Plan.
- 2.2 Under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 the Council has a duty not only to carry out sustainable development, but also to take reasonable steps in exercising its functions to meet its sustainable development (or well-being) objectives. This report has been prepared in consideration of the Council's duty and the 'sustainable development principle', as set out in the 2015 Act; in making the recommendation the Council has sought to ensure that present needs are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It is considered that there would be no significant or unacceptable impact upon the achievement of well-being objectives as a result of the proposed recommendation.
- 2.3 **Gwynedd and Anglesey Joint Local Development Plan 2011 - 2026, July 2017**

STRATEGIC POLICY PS5: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

POLICY TRA4: MANAGING TRANSPORT IMPACTS

STRATEGIC POLICY PS19: CONSERVING AND WHERE APPROPRIATE ENHANCING THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

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POLICY PCYFF 2: DEVELOPMENT CRITERIA

POLICY PCYFF 3: DESIGN AND PLACE SHAPING

POLICY PCYFF 4: DESIGN AND LANDSCAPING

POLICY AMG 5: LOCAL BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION

POLICY PS 20: PRESERVING WHERE APPROPRIATE ENHANCING HERIAGE ASSETS

**2.4 National Policies:**

Planning Policy Wales (Edition 9) 2016  
 Technical Advice Note 5: Nature Conservation and Planning  
 Technical Advice Note 12: Design  
 Technical Advice Note 18: Transport

**3. Relevant Planning History:**

- 3.1 C17/0063/36/SC - Screening opinion for a proposed new 400kv substation - 08-Feb-2017 – EIA not required.

**4. Consultations:**

Community/Town Council:	No response
Transportation:	I refer to the above application and confirm that I have no objection to the proposal.  The proposal does not impair on any adjacent county highway, however, the plans include a proposal to divert the public footpath and create a new vehicular access to the A487.  I suggest that there is direct consultation with the Rights of Way Unit and the Welsh Government's Trunk Roads Unit for observations on these elements.
Welsh Water:	No observations to offer
Footpaths Unit:	An application to divert the public footpath has been received by the Footpaths Unit and this is the appropriate way to deal with a proposal to divert the path.
Natural Resources Wales:	We recommend that you should only grant planning permission if you attach conditions relating to a scheme to dispose foul and surface water and a detailed Construction Environmental Management Plan in relation to the installation of access tracks and crossings of watercourses, ditches, and flood embankments.  Subject to all the avoidance measures described in the bat

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report being implemented, we do not consider that the development is likely to be detrimental to the maintenance of population of the species concerned at a favourable conservation status in its natural range.

Due to the distance and sense of separation from the Snowdonia National Park, direct notable impacts on the National Park or its setting are not anticipated during the construction and operational phases. Effects are considered negligible and not significant.

Public Protection: No response

Biodiversity Unit:

### **Ecology**

An ecology report has been submitted with the application. The report indicates that the site on the whole is improved pasture of low quality in terms of biodiversity, including hedgerows, cloddiau and trees with a small area of marshy grassland.

There will be some loss of trees, hedges and 'clawdd' and marshy grassland. No protected species were found on the site apart from bats flying, and the potential for others to be present is low. As a result of the proposed mitigation measures I have no ecological concerns about the development on the development site itself.

There is potential for the development to have an impact on valuable habitats outside the site including marshy areas and afon Dwyfach. For this reason I agree with the comments of Natural Resources Wales that a Construction Environmental Management Plan should be submitted prior to the commencement of the work. To this end a condition should be attached.

### **Trees**

A trees report is included with the application. The conclusion of the report is that there will be some impact on trees with a few being lost and others being lopped. Measures to protect trees have been included in Appendix C (Tree Preservation Scheme). It is intended to plant a number of trees for landscaping to mitigate any loss. Because of the above measures, I have no concerns regarding tree issues in relation to the development. A condition should be imposed that the measures shown on the plan are followed exactly.

Snowdonia National Park:

No observations to offer

Welsh Government Trunk Roads Unit:

A departure from standard application has been submitted but not reviewed as yet. Holding direction until the application has been reviewed.

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Land Drainage Unit: No response

Public Consultation: A notice was posted on site and nearby residents were notified. The advertising period has expired and one correspondence was received giving observations on:

- Traffic/parking matters
- Damage to boundaries/walls or roads
- Noise impact

## 5. Assessment of the material planning considerations:

### The principle of the development

5.1 The application is submitted by National Grid Electricity Transmission (NGET); and proposes a new electricity substation and associated works on the proposed site. The proposed works are required as a result of a need to strengthen the applicants existing electricity network between Pentir substations and Trawsfynydd substations to ensure that all the proposed new power generation in North Wales (which include Wylfa Newydd, three off-shore wind farms and a biomass-fuelled combined heat and power station) can be accommodated, and also to maintain the Scottish Power Manweb distribution supply.

5.2 It has been established therefore that the following works are required:

- New 400Kv substation at Bryncir
- New connection between new Bryncir substation and the existing 132Kv overhead line and removal of a section of existing 132Kv overhead line between the existing overhead line and the new connection
- Replacement of one existing pylon at Bryncir to connect to the new substation
- Upgrading/replacement of cables at the Glaslyn Estuary
- Upgrades to the existing Cable Sealing End Compounds at Wern and Y Garth
- Extension within the existing substation boundary at Trawsfynydd substation; and
- Reconductoring of one circuit on the existing overhead line between Penisarwaun and Trawsfynydd Substation.

5.3 However, this application only relates to the proposed development of the new 400Kv substation at Bryncir but it is vital that it is understood that this forms part of a much wider project.

5.4 The existing overhead transmission line between Pentir and Trawsfynydd currently carries only one transmission circuit, but has the capacity to carry two without the need for substantive works to the line. The establishment of a second transmission circuit on the route would provide the additional transmission capacity required in North Wales. The applicant's policy is to utilise the capacity of existing transmission routes before seeking to establish new routes.

5.5 Currently one of the two circuits on the overhead line between Pentir and Trawsfynydd is operated at 132Kv By ScottishPower Manweb as part of their

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distribution network. This carries power from Trawsfynydd to a point south of Brynceir. From here it continues to Four Crosses substation on a 132Kv overhead line, supplying electricity consumers across the Llŷn Peninsula.

- 5.6 In order to establish a second transmission circuit between Pentir and Traynydd, ScottishPower Manweb's 132Kv circuit needs to be removed from the line. Rather than establish a replacement 132Kv route from Trawsfynydd; the applicant and ScottishPower Manweb have concluded that the establishment of a new substation in the Brynceir area would provide a more appropriate solution. The function of this new substation will be to take power from the existing Pentir – Trawsfynydd 400Kv overhead line, transform it to a voltage of 132kv, and connect this to the existing 132Kv overhead line circuit that runs to the ScottishPower Manweb 132Kv substation at Four Crosses. The power for the Four Crosses substation would therefore be provided from the new substation rather than from Trawsfynydd substation as at present, allowing the then redundant 132Kv circuit from Trawsfynydd to be replaced with the second 400Kv circuit.
- 5.7 In 2012, the applicant undertook a design and appraisal process for the proposed new substation and identifies a shortlist of siting options, the Northern, Southern and Central Options at Brynceir. Consultations with the public were undertaken on the three options which revealed that the Central and Southern Options were the better options from the public perspective.
- 5.8 Further review of the shortlisted siting options was undertaken in June 2016 by the applicant. The Southern Option was taken forward as the preferred location, based on public feedback, a review of the lands and technical aspects of the requirements for the site and the connection to the electricity transmission systems. As a result of supplementary feedback, further appraisal, and discussions with affected landowners therefore, the applicant identified the application site as being the preferred location for the new substation.
- 5.9 In terms of planning policy, Paragraph 1.4.4 of Planning Policy Wales (9) notes that the planning system will play an important role in tackling climate change and reducing greenhouse gas emissions in accordance with the Climate Change Act 2008. The Welsh Government's objectives are to promote the generation and use of energy from renewable and low carbon energy sources for all developments in order to meet national targets.
- 5.10 Chapter 12 of Planning Policy Wales provides guidance on infrastructure and services and confirms that adequate and efficient infrastructure is crucial for the economic, social and environmental sustainability of all parts of Wales, and underpins economic competitiveness and opportunities for households and businesses to achieve more socially and environmentally desirable ways of living and working.
- 5.11 Paragraph 12.1.4 confirms that new approaches to infrastructure will be needed in light of the consequences of climate change. The objectives of the Welsh Government include the to promote the generation and use of energy from renewable and low carbon energy sources at all scales and promote energy efficiency, especially as a means to secure zero or low carbon developments and to tackle the causes of climate change. Planning Authorities should take the capacity of existing infrastructure into account when considering planning applications and, in general, seek to maximise the use of existing infrastructure and consider how the provision of different types of infrastructure can be co-ordinated.

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- 5.12 Strategic Policy PS5 of the current Local Development Plan supports development where it is demonstrated that they are consistent with the principles of sustainable development. In relation to this development, a clear need for the proposed substation has been demonstrated and although located outside of any defined development boundary; the substation has undertaken a design appraisal process and the preferred option is sited adjacent to the existing Pentir-Trawsfynydd 400Kv overhead line.
- 5.13 The applicant has submitted an Environmental Report which concludes that there will be no significant effects due to the construction of the proposed Bryncir substation. The report has been assessed by Natural Resource Wales and the Council's Biodiversity Section who are satisfied with its content.
- 5.14 The Local Planning Authority considers therefore that the proposed development conforms with the requirements of PS5 and Planning Policy Wales as it alleviates the causes of climate change, preserves and enhances the quality of the built and historic environment, protects and improves the quality of the natural environment, reduces the effect on local resources, promotes a varied and responsive local economy and promotes a high standard of design.

#### **Visual, general and residential amenities**

- 5.15 The proposal involves the provision of a substation which includes various equipment and also 3 buildings with finishing materials to be agreed by planning condition following approval:
- Water tank – approx. 6.5m by 6.5m and 4m in height with a low pitched roof.
  - Amenities building – approx. 12m by 7m and 4.5m in height with a flat roof
  - Workshop/store building – approx. 11m by 9m and 4.5m in height with a flat roof.
- 5.16 The proposal also involves the creation of an access road and alterations to the existing farm entrance to the site.
- 5.17 The proposal also includes landscaping which include:
- Proposed sections of new cloddiau alongside the entrance to the proposed access road
  - Proposed new clawdd field boundary directly north of the proposed substation
  - Proposed restored field boundary/re-planted clawdd to the east and west of the substation
  - Proposed restored and replanted clawdd to the west of the substation
  - Proposed small block of native woodland, directly to the north east of the substation within the corner of the existing field.
- 5.18 Following a period of consultation on the planning application, a single response was received which directed questions in relation to highway safety and parking, damage to boundary walls/fences and any potential noise from the development. The queries referred primarily to construction work, and not to the long-term effect of the development. The applicant submitted a full response to these concerns and no further comments were received thereafter.
- 5.19 Policy PCYFF2 requires that proposals does not have an unacceptable adverse impact on the health, safety or amenities of occupiers of local residences, other land and



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property uses or characteristics of the locality. Policy PCYFF 3 of the LDP expects that all proposals demonstrate a high quality design which fully takes into account the natural, historic and built environment context and contributes to the creation of attractive, sustainable places. Policy PCYFF 4 expects that all proposals should integrate into their surroundings and should adequately show how landscaping has been considered from the outset. Based on the information and plans submitted, the Local Planning Authority considers that the development accords with the requirements of these policies.

### **Transportation Matters**

- 5.20 The proposal involves the alteration of an existing farm access from the A8487 which is a Trunk Road in order to gain suitable access to construction traffic. The access will then be maintained and used for maintenance purposes. The Welsh Government Transport Division have been consulted on the application; and they have confirmed that they have issued a holding direction and requested that a Departure from Standard Application is submitted to them for the alterations to the access. The Local Planning Authority have since been informed by the applicant and Welsh Government that the application has been submitted, however the Welsh Government refuse to alter their holding direction until the departure from standard application has been reviewed. As all of the relevant information has been submitted as part of the application, the Local Planning Authority considers that the application can be approved subject to a planning condition requiring the prior approval for the alterations of the access onto the Trunk Road, and the submission of a Construction Traffic Management Plan before the development can commence.
- 5.21 On the basis of the above; the Local Planning Authority considers that the development conforms with the requirements of policy TRA 4 of the LDP.

### **Biodiversity Matters**

- 5.22 The applicant has submitted an Environmental Report as part of this application which identifies and assesses the potential environmental effects of the proposed substation and proposes mitigation measures to deal with the effects. The Environmental Report concludes that there will be no significant effects due to the construction of the proposed substation.
- 5.23 The Council's Biodiversity section has assessed the submitted Environmental Report and does not have an objection to the proposal due to the mitigation measures proposed and subject to a planning condition requiring a Construction Environmental Management Plan to be submitted to and agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority before any development commences.
- 5.24 In relation to trees that will be effected by the proposal, due to the limited effect on trees, the proposed tree protection plan and proposed landscaping, the Biodiversity section considers the proposal to be acceptable.
- 5.25 It is therefore considered that the proposal conforms to the requirements of Policy PS19 of the LDP.

### **Heritage Matters**

- 5.26 The applicant has submitted an assessment of the Heritage Environment as part of the Environmental Report (chapter 6). There are no designated heritage assets within the

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vicinity of the site and it is not considered that the proposal will have any effect on the heritage assets listed in policy PS20. The Local Planning Authority considers therefore that the proposal conforms to the requirement of policy PS20.

**6. Conclusions:**

- 6.1 Having considered the contents of the above report, it is deemed that the proposal is not contrary to any relevant policy. Although it is likely that there will be some impact during the construction period it is considered that the proposal would not have any detrimental long-term impact. The proposal is unlikely to cause a detrimental impact on the amenities of the local area or on any nearby property. Consequently, it is considered that the proposal is acceptable for approval subject to material planning conditions as noted below.

**7. Recommendation:**

To approve - conditions

1. Five years
2. Ensure that the development is completed in accordance with the submitted plans.
3. Finish to be agreed (including the colour of the fence)
4. Agree on a scheme to dispose of foul and surface water
5. Agree on a construction environmental management plan
6. Agree on a construction traffic control plan and receive the approval of the Welsh Government's Trunk Roads Unit on access matters (and any relevant additional conditions).
7. Complete the landscaping within the first planting season following the completion of the proposal.

Welsh Water Note