



**STATEMENT OF COMMON GROUND
LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL EFFECTS**

**IN RELATION TO AN APPLICATION BY RES UK & IRELAND LIMITED
DATED
27 MARCH 2009
FOR CONSENT TO CONSTRUCT AND OPERATE A WIND TURBINE
GENERATING STATION
IN
POWYS, MID-WALES**

:

INTRODUCTION

1. This Statement of Common Ground is prepared jointly by Powys County Council, Natural Resources Wales and RES UK & Ireland Limited ('RES') in relation to an application for consent pursuant to section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989 to construct and operate the Llanbrynmair wind turbine generating station in Powys, Mid-Wales.
2. This Statement of Common Ground relates to landscape and visual effects.
3. The following Reason for Objection was issued by Powys County Council on 27 September 2012: on the basis of information submitted, the proposal would have an unacceptable landscape and visual impact.
4. In October 2012 CCW (now NRW) objected to the Development in its then current form on landscape and visual grounds because of: the impacts on landscape from the proposed new substation and the impacts on landscape from the off-site and on-site access roads. They also considered that the ES at that time was deficient in some areas and so did not fully consider all significant impacts of the proposal in accordance with the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations, particularly in relation to the following points that are relevant to the landscape and visual topic area:
 - the environmental impacts of works to upgrade proposed off site transport routes on the 12km of road between Llanerfyl and the four site entrances;
 - the environmental impacts of the 132kV grid connection;
 - the continuing agricultural intensification of the site as a future significant impact arising from the development (CCW's letter explains that the concern relates to remaining areas of mire and possible indirect effects to these areas due to the improved access for farm vehicles).

SITE LOCATION

5. The site lies to the northwest of Nant yr Eira Valley between Llanbrynmair and Llanerfyl in Montgomeryshire, Powys, approximately 8km northwest of Carno. The site is centred on grid ref: E294500, N306500. The site covers

approximately 1,700 hectares, or 4,200 acres. The site consists of agricultural land (principally for cattle and sheep) and woodland.

6. The application site is located within the Carno North Strategic Search Area B as defined by Technical Advice Note 8: Planning for Renewable Energy (July 2005).

DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT

7. The proposed development is for the construction and operation of a 30 wind turbine generation station at land between Nant yr Eira Valley and Llyn Gwyddior in Montgomeryshire, Powys, Mid Wales, and for a direction under section 90(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act that planning permission for the development be deemed to be granted ('the Development').
8. In addition to the wind turbines, the Development includes on site tracks, underground cabling and crane hardstandings, a communications mast, a permanent (80m high) free standing lattice wind monitoring mast, electrical transformers, electrical connection works and a substation control building.

APPLICATION HISTORY

9. In March 2009, a section 36 consent application under the Electricity Act 1989 was submitted by RES to the Department of Energy and Climate Change ('DECC') for a wind energy development of up to 43 turbines on land between the villages of Llanbrynmair and Llanerfyl in Powys. An Environmental Statement ('ES') accompanied the Section 36 consent application.
10. Between April 2010 and August 2012, five Supplementary Environmental Information ('SEI') documents were submitted in response to further requests for information made by PCC and Countryside Council for Wales, (now Natural Resources Wales).
11. In August 2013, in line with the Inspector's timetable, RES submitted a Consolidated Environmental Statement ('CES'). The CES provides an updated assessment of all of the potential environmental effects of the Development. A further SEI assessing the cumulative effects of the Development in combination with the four other wind farm applications and the proposed grid connection, will be submitted in advance of Inquiry Session 4 (Cumulative Session).

POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

12. The Statement of Common Ground identifies the relevant national, regional and local policy and legislation relating to landscape and visual effects as are applicable to the Development. They are:
 - i. UK Government - National Policy Statement EN-1
 - ii. UK Government - National Policy Statement EN-3
 - iii. Welsh Assembly Government - TAN8 2005
 - iv. Welsh Government - PPWales Version 5 2012
 - v. Powys Unitary Development Plan (UDP) 2001 – 2016 – primarily policy E3 but also policies SP3 and ENV2.
 - vi. Second Draft Interim Development Control Guidance: Windfarm Development in Powys (2008).
13. It is agreed that the examination of this Project is not the appropriate means for debating the merits of national policy as it relates to energy, renewable energy or climate change issues.

LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL EFFECTS

14. An assessment of the potential effects of the Development on landscape and visual resources is set out in Chapter 4 of the CES.

BASELINE AND ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

15. Details of the baseline and assessment methodologies for the assessment of the Development are set out in Chapter 4 of the CES. The parties to this Statement of Common Ground are in agreement that:
 - i. The methodology applied in the assessment of landscape and visual effects in the CES draws upon the appropriate guidelines and is fit for purpose.
 - ii. It is agreed that the residential visual amenity assessment, presented in Appendix 4,1 of the CES, is fit for purpose.

- iii. The ZTVs and photomontages provided in the CES have been prepared in accordance with current good practice guidance, they offer a fair and reasonable representation of the proposed development given the season, weather and lighting conditions prevalent at the time the photographs were taken.
- iv. It is acknowledged that these are tools in the landscape and visual assessment process and need to be considered in conjunction with site visits and professional judgement.
- v. The baseline draws on relevant information sources to describe landscape character.
- vi. The CES correctly describes LANDMAP and correctly defines relevant units within the five Aspect Areas. It is agreed that the approach to assessing effects on LANDMAP areas is fit for purpose.
- vii. The CES correctly defines relevant units within the Powys Landscape Character Assessment and it is agreed that the approach to assessing effects on Powys landscape character areas is fit for purpose.
- viii. Designated landscapes of relevance have been correctly identified. Table 4.7 of the CES provides a fair description of the relevant landscape designations.
- ix. The Zones of Theoretical Visibility (ZTVs) illustrate the maximum possible extent of visibility based upon OS topographical data and within ZTVs actual visibility will be reduced by landscape features on the ground and localised topographical variations.
- x. The viewpoint selection is appropriate and provides a fair and reasonable range of locations from which to assess the potential effects.
- xi. The settlements and routes assessed are reasonable.
- xii. Development of the 132kV grid connection for Llanbrynmair, including the application for consent is under the responsibility of SPEN. There are currently no details of the proposed grid connection and until these details

have been produced by SPEN it is not possible to include the grid connection in the visualisations.

POTENTIAL EFFECTS

16. An assessment of the potential effects of the Development on landscape and visual amenity are set out in Chapter 4 of the CES.
17. The parties to this Statement of Common Ground are in agreement that:
 - i. Construction will result in a significant (major) effect on the character of the site and along localised parts of the offsite access road between Llanerfyl and Talerddig as set out in the CES. However, the agreed mitigation measures will ensure that the works will be assimilated successfully into the landscape.
 - ii. The offsite access works will result in a significant (major) temporary effect on views from a few individual properties and motorists on the road between Llanerfyl and Talerddig as set out in the CES. These effects will be short-lived (ie during the 24 month construction period).
 - iii. Construction activities will result in a significant (major) temporary visual effect on people walking the Glyndwr's Way National Trail between Pen Coed and Brynaere. These effects will be short-lived (ie during the 24 month construction period).
 - iv. There will be significant (moderate) temporary visual effects on residents of Llan and travellers on the A470 (on localised sections between Carno and Talerddig and west of Llanbrynmair) as a result of seeing the turbines being constructed on the skyline at relatively close proximity.
 - v. The operational wind farm will result in a significant (major) long-term effect on the character of the Application Site, affecting a localised part of the Cambrian Mountains Regional Character Area, a localised part of the Dyfnant Forest/ Llanbrynmair Moors LCA, and localised parts of three of the LANDMAP visual & sensory aspect areas (Banwy Forest, Banwy Upland and Pen Coed Upland).

- vi. The operational wind farm will also have a characterising effect on the landscape around the site, affecting perceptual character (visual and sensory characteristics) up to approximately 3km from the turbines. This will affect a localised part of the Cambrian Mountains Regional Character Area, localised parts of six of the Powys Landscape Character Areas (the Dyfnant Forest/ Llanbrynmair Moors, Mynydd y Cemmaes, Tregynon/ Llanerfyl, Esgair Cwmowen, Trannon and Carno Valley) and parts of seven Visual and Sensory Aspect areas that cover this same area.
- vii. The operational wind farm will result in some significant (major) long term effects on viewers close to the site (e.g. from points along the Glyndwr's Way between Moel Ddolwen and Brynaere and points along the minor road between Llanerfyl and Talerddig).
- viii. The operational wind farm will result in some moderate (also significant) effects on viewers within 10km of the site (e.g. from points more distant locations on Glyndwr's Way and the minor road between Llanerfyl and Talerddig, on Llan Village, on the A470 at Talerddig and on elevated locations within 10km such as Bryn y Gadair).
- ix. Viewers at viewpoints beyond 10km will not experience significant effects.
- x. Routes affected by the operational development include: the Glyndwr's Way between Pen Coed and Brynaere (major), the minor road between Llanerfyl and Talerddig (major along about 6km) and the A470(T) (moderate on localised sections).
- xi. Any wind farm development in this TAN 8 area would result in a significant effect on the Glyndwr's Way National Trail.
- xii. There will be a significant (moderate) long term effect on views from the settlement of Llan and on views of residents in three properties around Gosen Bridge due to the extent of works required to widen Gosen Bridge and the length of time it will take for vegetation (particularly trees) to re-establish.
- xiii. There will be no other significant effects on views from any other settlement.

- xiv. Of the individual properties assessed, eight of the 63 assessed will experience a high magnitude of change to views as a result of a large proportion of the Proposed Development being visible from their primary outlook or curtilage.
- xv. When considering the changes in visual amenity from properties 'in the round', the turbines of the proposed Llanbrynmair Wind Farm, if present in isolation or alongside the proposed turbines of Carnedd Wen Wind Farm, would not appear dominant, oppressive or overwhelming such that any property would become an unattractive place to live.
- xvi. Although there will be views of turbines from the National Park (for example from VPs 16, 18, 19 and 21), they will not cause significant visual impact or intrusion and the special qualities of the Snowdonia National Park (as set out in the Snowdonia National Park Management Plan 2010-15) will not be significantly affected.
- xvii. The Proposal will not result in a significant effect on the perceptual character or the 'primary landscape qualities and features' set out in Ceredigion CC's 'Designation of Special Landscape Areas'.

CUMULATIVE EFFECTS

- 18. An assessment of the cumulative effects of the Development on landscape and visual amenity within SSA B are set out in Chapter 4 of the CES. It should be noted that a further Statement of Common Ground with respect to the cumulative effects of the Development in combination with the other proposed developments, in SSA B and SSA C, will be issued in advance of Inquiry Session 4.
- 19. It is agreed that the cumulative landscape and visual impact assessment (CLVIA) of SSA B has been undertaken in line with best practice and is fit for purpose.
- 20. It is agreed that the wind energy schemes considered to assess potentially significant cumulative effects arising from SSA B are appropriate.
- 21. It is agreed that the scenarios assessed are appropriate. These are:

- i. Scenario A: Llanbrynmair in the context of existing and consented windfarms (Carno I and II, Cemmaes 2, Mynydd Clogau and Tirgwynt)
- ii. Scenario B: Llanbrynmair in the context of existing, consented and proposed windfarms (Carno I, II and III, Cemmaes 2 and 3, Mynydd Clogau, Tirgwynt, Esgair Cwmowen, Mynydd Waun Fawr, Carnedd Wen and Dyfnant Forest)

22. The parties to this Statement of Common Ground are in agreement that:

- i. The addition of Llanbrynmair in the context of Scenario A would result in a significant (moderate) additional change to landscape character, but the addition of Llanbrynmair in the context of Scenario B would not result in a significant additional change.
- ii. In Scenario B Llanbrynmair would appear to form an extension to the Carnedd Wen Wind Farm.
- iii. In the context of Scenario A, there will be a significant additional effect on views at cumulative viewpoints 1, 2, 9, 10, 13, from the section of the Glyndwr's Way National Trail between Pen Coed and Brynaere and from the minor road between Llanerfyl and Talerddig due to the prominence of the Llanbrynmair turbines compared to other existing/ consented turbines in these views.
- iv. In the context of Scenario B there would be fewer significant cumulative (additional) visual effects resulting from Llanbrynmair because other proposed schemes would have a greater influence on views than Llanbrynmair in most cases. Nevertheless there would still be a significant additional effect on views from the Glyndwr's Way National Trail between Pen Coed and Brynaere and from the minor road between Llanerfyl and Talerddig.
- v. The addition of Llanbrynmair to either Scenario A or B would not result in a significant additional effect on the Snowdonia National Park or any other designated landscape.
- vi. The *combined* presence of all existing and proposed wind farms in Strategic Search Area B (Carno North) would inevitably result in a

significant change to landscape character in a localised area at the northern end of the Cambrian Mountains RCA. This will create a landscape with wind farms in an area which is recognised at a national level as being suitable area for wind farm development, and in which landscape change is expected.

ON-SITE/OFF-SITE MITIGATION MEASURES

23. Proposals for the design-in mitigation intended to minimize landscape and visual effects are set out in Chapter 4 of the CES. The parties to this Statement of Common Ground are in agreement that:

- i. Landform modelling and planting around the substation, and the use of local materials on the control building, is appropriate and will successfully integrate the substation into the landscape.
- ii. The use of grass reinforcement and local seed topsoil infill for road widening, laybys and new sections of track, will minimise the impact of the road widening works on the character of the road.
- iii. Making earthworks as subtle as possible, feathering them into the existing landform (on site using a technical banksman), and seeding with local grass seed will help to ensure the site entrances and changes to the road blend into the surrounding landscape.
- iv. Replacing tarmac surfaces with a sprayed tar and chip surface at site entrances in the post construction phase will help blend them into their rural surroundings.
- v. The use of open ditches over culverts, using wooden gates over metal where possible, avoiding urbanising features such as black and white posts along ditches and using ditches over culverts will help to ensure the road blends with its rural context.
- vi. Translocating particularly valuable or species rich historic hedges (e.g. the hawthorn/hazel hedges at Ch4120-4200, Ch5175-5315, Ch700=7780) and maintaining ground flora by re-using soil to ensure the same groundcover reinstates in its new position will minimise impact associated with road widening.

- vii. Ensuring that any replacement hedges are species rich to match, or enrich, existing hedges will help to maintain the character of the road in the long term.
- viii. Using root balled extra heavy standards for all replacement trees (to be 14-16cm girth and around 4m tall) will ensure they make an immediate contribution to landscape character post-construction.
- ix. Using local stone facing on new retaining structures and parapets will help blend them into their rural setting e.g. at Gosen Bridge.
- x. Strengthening lines of trees in the area between Glyndwr's Way and the Neinthirion bypass track will help filter views of this new route.

This Statement has been agreed by:

Signed.....

On behalf of [PARTY]

Date.....

This Statement has been agreed by:

Signed.....

On behalf of [PARTY]

Date.....

This Statement has been agreed by:

Signed.....

On behalf of [PARTY]

Date.....