**EIA Quality Mark Case Study**

**Bryn Henllys Solar Farm**

<table>
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<th>Key Issues –</th>
<th>Purpose of the project</th>
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<td>- An important aspect to this project was engaging with the statutory consultees following the receipt of the EIA Scoping Opinion to seek further clarify and to agree the scope of the Environmental Impact Assessment.</td>
<td>The purpose of the solar farm is to generate electricity from daylight. The proposed solar farm had the capacity of generating up to 20MW, making an important contribution to binding UK climate change and renewable energy generation targets and the ambitious renewable aspirations of the Welsh Government.</td>
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<td>- Given the proximity of the Brecon Beacons National Park, landscape was an identified as a key sensitive receptor, which was considered carefully throughout the design evolution of the project.</td>
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**Description of the project**
The Site, comprising of approximately 42.5ha, is located on land previously used as an opencast mine that has since been restored. The Site is currently in agricultural use and managed for sheep and cattle grazing. It consists of a large open expanse of heath/grassland established as part of the restoration scheme. There are no internal hedgerows, however there are a number of tracks and drainage ditches that cross the Site. The Brecon Beacons National Park is located approximately 0.5km to the north of the site.
Lessons learnt
EIA Scoping
A key lesson learnt during this project was that continual engagement with statutory consultees, following the receipt of an EIA Scoping Opinion, is crucial if EIA consultants are to achieve proportionality within the EIA process. EIA consultants will often scope a project at an early stage to 'flush out' potential concerns that stakeholders may have regarding the scheme. This enables the EIA Co-ordinator to manage risk appropriately and prevent programme delay as a result of requests for additional baseline information or assessment of effects. However, scoping at an early stage when there is limited information about the design does have its drawbacks. A scoping opinion will often throw up a number of queries and requests for information/assessments from stakeholders because of uncertainties and lack of project definition.

In these situations, it is important to build relationships with the stakeholders and continue to liaise with them as the project definition is refined. This was the approach that was followed for the solar farm and although a heritage setting assessment had been requested within the scoping opinion, through further dialogue and Zone of Theoretical Visibility studies, the EIA Team were able to agree that a heritage assessment could be scoped out of the EIA. Such an approach allows for greater levels of proportionality, ensuring that the EIA and the ES is focussed solely on those topics where significant effects are likely to occur.

In addition, proportionality was achieved through the evolution of the design. Following site visits by the EIA Team and a review of the environmental baseline environment, a large area of solar PV arrays were removed from the proposed scheme in order to reduce potential amenity impacts on a By Way Open to All Traffic that crossed through the centre of the site. The removal of the panels to the north of the BOAT also reduced the visual impacts from the Brecon Beacons National Park. By removing development from this section of the Site, the visibility of Proposed Development from within the Brecon Beacons was been reduced along with the extent of the visual impact assessment and required viewpoints.

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