

Glyn Rhonwy Pumped Storage Development Consent Order

Planning Statement Summary



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1 Introduction

1.1 Project Overview

- 1.1.1 This document has been prepared as a summary to the Planning Statement (Document Ref: 8.01) which supports an application for a Development Consent Order (DCO) ('the Application') for a scheme that proposes the construction and operation of a pumped storage facility with an output capacity of 99.9 megawatt (MW) (hereafter known as the 'Development') at the Glyn Rhonwy and Chwarel Fawr quarries, near Llanberis in North Wales.
- 1.1.2 Given that the proposed development comprises an electricity generating station with a capacity of more than 50MW, it constitutes a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) under section 15 of the Planning Act 2008 ('the Act'). Accordingly, Development consent may only be granted by order (a DCO) following an application to the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change (SoS) pursuant to section 37 of the Act.
- 1.1.3 In accordance with the Act, this Application is submitted to the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) (the Examining Authority) for consideration and, ultimately, for its recommendation to the Secretary of State, who will determine the Application. The description of development, as detailed on the DCO application form, is as follows:

"Development of a pumped storage facility with an output capacity of 99.9MW, including a headpond at Chwarel Fawr together with associated dam and spillway infrastructure; an underground penstock; a tailpond at Glyn Rhonwy together with associated dam and spillway infrastructure to Llyn Padarn; powerhouse and ancillary buildings including underground turbine hall and access shaft, and underground tailrace to the tailpond; an underground pumping station together with surface level control box; and associated engineering, remediation and

landscaping works, together with the diversion of public roads and rights of way and ancillary works".

1.1.4 The site benefits from an extant planning permission (GC Ref: C12/1451/LL) for the construction and operation of a 600 megawatt hours (MWh) pumped storage facility, with a capacity of 49.9MW. Since permission was granted, it has come to light that certain plans were listed incorrectly under Condition 2 on the decision notice. This was corrected via a non-material amendment application (GC Ref: C15/0308/15/DA) to amend the approved list of plans. The application was approved on 6th May 2015 and Condition 1 of the NMA approval lists the approved plans correctly. Copies of both decision notices are included in Appendix D to the Planning Statement.

1.2 The Applicant

1.2.1 Quarry Battery Company ("QBC") established Snowdonia Pumped Hydro ("SPH") to develop the Glyn Rhonwy pumped storage scheme and acts as SPH's parent company. QBC find disused quarry systems which are suitable for conversion into pumped storage batteries. The applicant listed on the extant planning permission at the site (which is discussed below as part of the background to the Development) is QBC, however SPH will remain the developer for the Glyn Rhonwy site for the foreseeable future and is the Applicant for the DCO application.

1.3 Purpose of the Planning Statement

1.3.1 The Planning Statement (Document Reference 8.01) acts as the primary reference document for an explanation of the policy support for the proposed development in addition to the pertinent planning issues and a description of how the DCO application addresses these.

1.3.2 The Planning Statement forms part of the suite of documents accompanying the application submitted in accordance with Sections 37 and 55 of the Act and

Regulation 5 of the Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedures) (IP) Regulations (2009) (as amended).

1.3.3 The planning policy context applicable to the proposed development is detailed in the Planning Statement. The principle policy documents comprise the relevant National Policy Statements, in addition to other national and local policies that form material planning considerations.

1.3.4 The Planning Statement assesses the proposed development in accordance with the policy criteria and concludes as to the overall acceptability of this DCO application in accordance with the decision making framework established in Section 104 of the Act.

1.4 Location

1.4.1 The Development site is located on the slopes of Cefn Du Mountain above Llyn Padarn, centred at National Grid reference SH 56268 60660. The area subject to the DCO application is located wholly within the administrative area of Gwynedd Council (GC) and extends to a total of 91.24 hectares, which comprises of several disused quarries and slate tips, as well as land in between and surrounding the quarries which includes woodland, grazing land and the industrial estate platform.

1.4.2 The site is located approximately 1.5km to the north west of Llanberis and 11km south east of the town of Caernarfon. A glacially formed lake (Llyn Padarn) lies adjacent to the north east of the site and part of the Order Limits extend to within the lake.

1.4.3 The location of the proposed development is shown on the Site Location Plan submitted with the DCO (Document Reference 2.01) and included at Appendix A of the Planning Statement.

1.4.4 The site is located within and also in close proximity to a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) at Llyn Padarn to the east. The site itself is within a Landscape

Character Area designated for its historical interest as an important former slate quarrying location and is also within the Dinorwig Landscape of Outstanding Historical Interest. Furthermore, it is located 1km from the boundary of the Snowdonia National Park. There are several archaeological and cultural heritage sites within proximity to the Development site. There are no World Heritage Sites, Registered Parks and Gardens, Registered Battlefields, or Conservation Areas within 1km of the Order Limits.

1.5 Project Detail

1.5.1 The proposed Development comprises the following major components and ancillary buildings:

- one headpond (Quarry 1 (Q1) – Chwarel Fawr), its dam, access shaft and spillway infrastructure to the Nant Y Betws;
- one tailpond (Quarry 6 (Q6) – Glyn Rhonwy), its dam, access shaft and spillway infrastructure to Llyn Padarn;
- a pumping station at Llyn Padarn - which extracts water when necessary to ‘top up’ levels within the pumped storage system (and contributes to its original filling);
- a power house at Glyn Rhonwy Industrial Estate Platform 5 (south of Q6) which includes turbines and pumps approximately 70m below ground level;
- a penstock (connecting Q1 to the power house); and
- a tailrace (connecting the power house to Q6).

1.5.2 The Development will be connected to the electricity distribution system network via a new electrical connection. This will be exported from an onsite substation adjacent to the power house to an offsite connection terminating at Pentir. The consenting of the electrical connection is the responsibility of the District Network Operator (SP Manweb) and, as associated development within Wales, it is outside

the consenting regime of the Planning Act 2008. SPH has committed to this connection being provided underground and the current grid connection offer being discussed with SP Manweb seeks an underground connection. Further details are provided in the Grid Connection Statement (Document Ref: 7.01) submitted with the DCO application.

1.5.3 Access to Q1 for construction purposes will be secured via Green Road in Waunfawr. Improvement works to this road, as requested by Gwynedd Council, are classed as associated development in Wales and, as such, will be subject to a planning application under the Town & Country Planning Act 1990.

1.6 Composition of the DCO Application

1.6.1 The legislative requirements for DCO applications are contained within the PA 2008, the IP Regulations (2009) and the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Regulations.

1.6.2 This DCO application submission complies with the requirements of the PA 2008, the IP Regulations (2009), the EIA Regulations and the applicable Secretary of State (SoS) and Planning Inspectorate guidance, including in particular Planning Inspectorate Advice Note 6 (Preparation and submission of application documents, October 2014).

1.6.3 A number of commitments are made in the DCO application which take the form of DCO Requirements (contained within Schedule 2 to the Draft DCO, Document Reference 3.01), and a suite of documents which are 'for approval' alongside the plans. These requirements assist to mitigate any adverse environmental impacts that may be caused by the scheme, and where these requirements work to make the Application more acceptable in planning terms, this is set out in the Planning Statement.

2 Planning Policy Context

2.1 National Policy Statements (NPS)

2.1.1 The PA 2008 requires that any DCO application is decided in accordance with any relevant NPS, with certain exceptions. For this Development, the NPS of principal relevance is the overarching NPS for Energy (NPS EN-1), published by The Department for Energy and Climate Change (DECC) in July 2011. Consideration is also given to the provisions of the NPS for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (NPS EN-3) and the NPS for Electricity Networks Infrastructure (NPS EN-5). These NPSs are of some relevance in the context of the Development, but do not form key material considerations for decision making purposes.

2.2 Planning Policy Wales (PPW)

2.2.1 The Welsh Government (WG) issued the seventh edition of Planning Policy Wales (PPW) in July 2014. PPW sets out the land use planning policies of the WG and translates the WG's commitment to sustainable development into the planning system. The following Chapters are of relevance to this DCO application:

- Chapter 4: Planning for Sustainability
- Chapter 5: Conserving & Improving Natural Heritage & The Coast
- Chapter 6: Conserving the Historic Environment
- Chapter 7: Economic Development
- Chapter 8: Transport
- Chapter 11: Tourism, Sports and Recreation
- Chapter 12: Infrastructure & Services
- Chapter 13: Minimising & Managing Environmental Risks & Pollution

2.3 Technical Advice Notes (TANs)

2.3.1 PPW is supplemented by a series of TANs. A range of these apply to the proposed development, and their specific provisions are addressed through the technical chapters of the Environmental Statement (ES) submitted in support of the planning application. Relevant TANs include:

- Technical Advice Note 5: Nature Conservation and Planning
- Technical Advice Note 8: Renewable Energy
- Technical Advice Note 11: Noise
- Technical Advice Note 12: Design
- Technical Advice Note 14: Coastal Planning
- Technical Advice Note 15: Development and Flood Risk
- Technical Advice Note 18: Transport
- Technical Advice Note 23: Economic Development

2.4 Other Relevant National Planning Policy

2.4.1 The Planning statement also considers the following national policy and guidance documents:

- The Wales Spatial Plan (2008)
- Energy Wales: A Low Carbon Transition (2012)
- Renewable Energy Route Map for Wales (2008)
- Environment Strategy for Wales (2006)

2.5 Local Planning Policy

2.5.1 The statutory development plan applicable to the proposed development is the Gwynedd Unitary Development Plan (GUDP) (adopted 2009).

2.5.2 The strategic policies within Part 1 of the UDP reflect the key objectives of the Council. The plan seeks to protect the natural, built and historic environments, promote good design and the use of renewable energy sources, and direct development to previously development land in locations that will minimise the need to travel. Those policies listed in Part 2 relate to technical and detailed matters.

2.5.3 The Development site lies outside the defined GUDP settlement limits with the eastern end (Quarry 6 and Quarry 7, together with their surrounding areas) falling within a defined redevelopment site and a dependency catchment area (where development proposals that will strengthen or diversify local economies will be approved provided they do not significantly harm the environment, the area's cultural characteristics or the amenities of nearby residents).

2.6 Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG)

2.6.1 The following supplementary documents are considered to be relevant to the determination of this DCO application:

- Gwynedd Local Planning Authority Supplementary Planning Guidance: Development Brief Caernarfon Dependency Catchment Area (2009)
- Glyn Rhonwy Development Plan and Implementation Strategy (2008) (July 2008)

2.7 Emerging Planning Policy: Local Development Plan (LDP)

2.7.1 In terms of emerging planning policy, GC and the Isle of Anglesey County Council have decided to prepare a Joint Local Development Plan (JLDP). Once adopted, the JLDP will replace the GUDP. The current timescales place adoption of the Plan at January/February 2017.

3 Planning Assessment

3.1 Decision Making

3.1.1 DCO applications are submitted to the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) who examine the applications and then make a recommendation to the SoS as to whether consent should be granted.

3.1.2 Section 104 of the PA 2008 provides that, in making decisions on DCO applications, the SoS must have regard to any relevant NPSs and must decide applications in accordance with it unless the adverse impacts of the proposed development would outweigh its benefits (or in certain other limited circumstances).

3.2 Assessment

3.2.1 The assessment of the proposed development has been undertaken in accordance with the assessment criteria contained within the overarching NPS NPS for Energy (EN – 1)

3.2.2 In addition to the NPSs, the relevant national and local planning policy is also applicable to the assessment of this DCO. The applicable policies have been listed below for ease of reference:

National Policy

- PPW (Edition 7)
- TANs 5, 8, 11, 12, 14, 15, 18, & 23

Local Policy

3.2.3 The Planning Statement sets out the local planning policy set out in the GUDP and considered to be of relevance to the DCO.

4 Conclusion

- 4.1.1 The Development of a pumped storage facility at Glyn Rhonwy has been devised in direct response to the need for electricity storage facilities in forming part of the future electricity system in the UK.
- 4.1.2 Planning permission already exists for the development of a pumped storage facility with a 49.9MW capacity. Following the Electricity Market Reform, the scheme is considered to be more commercially and economically viable with an increase in capacity. The Development subject to the DCO application therefore comprises a 99.9MW facility. The principle of constructing and operating this facility is clearly acceptable from a planning policy perspective – at national and local levels.
- 4.1.3 The aspirations of the Development meet the Government’s objectives for reducing carbon emissions and contributing to the European Union’s Energy Directive, introduced in 2009, together with the WG’s Energy Policy Statement – Energy Wales: A Low Carbon Transition (2012), which outlines the commitment to the delivery of the energy programme in order to contribute to reducing carbon emissions.
- 4.1.4 The proposed development would have a number of net benefits including:
- the Development would result in a total on-site output capacity of up to 99.9 MW of electricity for export to the national grid very quickly at times of peak demand;
 - the Development would directly create approximately 250 full time jobs at the peak of the construction phase, with a further 200 being created indirectly, and provide approximately 20-35 full time jobs during its 125 year operational lifespan;

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- the construction and operational phases of the Development would provide other significant socio-economic benefits to the local area, such as increased expenditure;
 - the Development would utilise the existing infrastructure at Glyn Rhonwy industrial estate, which has been heavily invested in by GC, contributing to its long-term viability.

4.1.5 There is an evidenced need for electricity storage facilities in NPS EN-1 and they are recognised in National Grid's Future Energy Scenarios as an important part of the toolkit for balancing the intermittency of renewable energy generation. The Development proposed at Glyn Rhonwy complies with all aspects of planning policy, and will not result in any significant detrimental environmental impacts. In this light, it is considered that clear justification exists for Development Consent to be granted.