

Nantycaws Solar Farm, Carmarthenshire Green Infrastructure Statement

R01 July 2024

This **Green Infrastructure Statement** has been prepared by:



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Ecology



Arboriculture



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01 Introduction

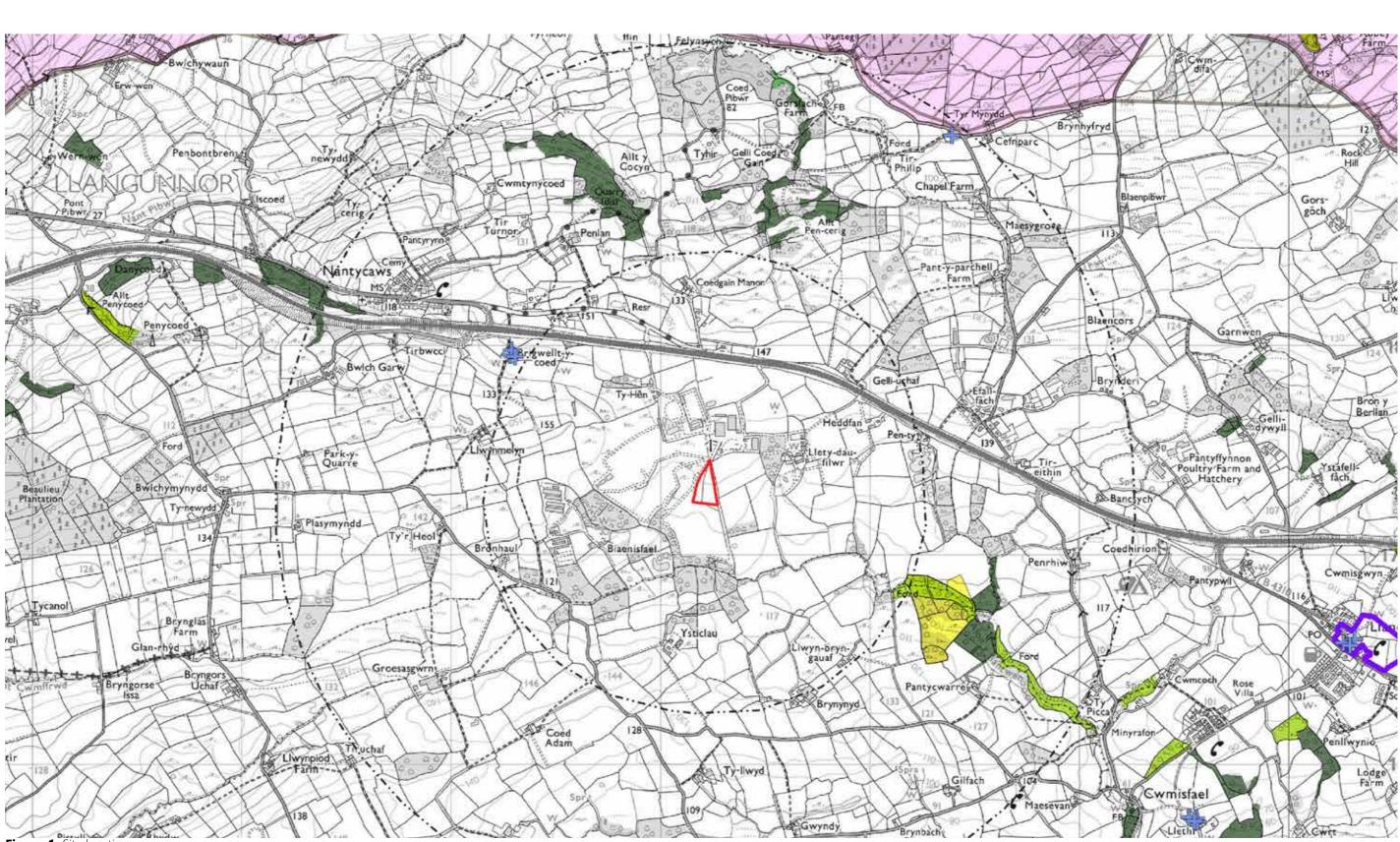
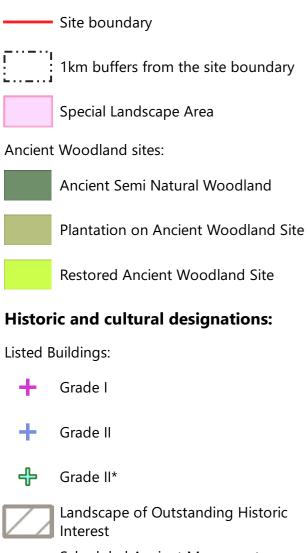
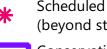


Figure 1: Site location

Key





Scheduled Ancient Monuments (beyond study area)

Conservation Areas (beyond study area)

Ecology designations:



Scope

Tir Collective is instructed by Cwm Environmental to prepare this Green Infrastructure Statement, which relates to the proposed solar farm on land at Nantycaws Waste Management Centre, Nantycaws, Carmarthen, grid reference SN472173.

Proposals on site would include ground mounded solar PV panels and associated mounting system; on-site grid connection; associated infrastructure including fencing, CCTV, and internal service tracks; and all associated ancillary works. The proposed development also incorporates some mitigation measures such as native hedgerow planting.

The site covers circa 4ha is approximately 6km southeast of Carmarthen. The site comprises a single, triangular field enclosure of rough pasture. The site is associated with Nantycaws Waste Management Centre and is part of a former landfill site which has been restored.

The field boundaries of the site are defined on the east and west side by access tracks to the waste management centre to the north. The southern boundary of the site is unmarked by any features on the ground. The site and land to the south is rough grassland and shrubby vegetation. A wind turbine lies at close distance to the site to the north, associated with the waste management centre, which includes a number of large buildings, parking and other infrastructure.

Landform in the site and surrounding landscape is shaped by rolling hills between the Tywi River to the north and Gwendraeth Fach to the south. Afon y bantwen lies approximately 300m south of the site and shapes the rolling landscape, along with other small tributaries within the study area. Topography within the vicinity of the site is also influenced by the restored landfill site, which includes a prominent mound to the west of the site.

The site is not located within a designated landscape. There are several areas of Ancient Woodland within 2km of the site comprising mostly Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, the closest 935m southeast of the site. There is a grouping of three listed buildings at Birdwallt y Coed Farm approximately 1km northwest. A SSSI also lies approximately 970m southeast of the site.

There are no public rights of way within the site however, the wider study area contains a number of public footpaths, generally concentrated beyond 800m of the site, connecting farmsteads.

The baseline conditions of the site are described in further detail within the package of information submitted with the planning application. Tir Collective produced the Landscape and Visual Statement, which describes the landscape of the site and provides a review of the effects on landscape character and visual amenity as a result of the proposed development.

02 Policy Context

Wales Legislation

Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

The Act requires public bodies to carry out sustainable **development**. Sustainable development principle is "the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and *cultural well-being of Wales.*" The principle is made up of five ways of working, including **looking to the long-term**; taking an **integrated approach**; involving a **diversity** of the population; working collaboratively; and preventing issues.

It sets out seven well-being goals including resilience and being globally responsible.

Environment (Wales) Act 2016

The Act is intended to work alongside the Well-being of Future Generations Act. It included a new biodiversity duty to reverse the decline of biodiversity and to secure long-term resilience.

Section 6 states "A public authority **must seek to maintain** and enhance biodiversity... and in so doing promote the resilience of ecosystems". In relation to resilience of ecosystems, the following "must be taken into account:

(a) diversity between and within ecosystems;

- (b) the connections between and within ecosystems;
- (c) the scale of ecosystems;

(d) the condition of ecosystems (including their structure and functioning);

(e) the adaptability of ecosystems."



The seven well-being goals from Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act, 2015

National Planning Policy

Future Wales: The National Plan

The plan provides a strategy for addressing key national priorities through the planning system, including achieving climate-resilience, developing strong ecosystems and improving the health and well-being of our communities. It also embeds the principles of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

The key policy in relation biodiversity and green infrastructure is Policy 9 – Resilient Ecological Networks and Green **Infrastructure**. It states, "action towards securing the maintenance and enhancement of biodiversity (to provide a net benefit), the resilience of ecosystems and green infrastructure assets must be demonstrated as part of development proposals through innovative, nature-based approaches to site planning and the design of the built environment."

Planning Policy Wales (PPW) Edition 12, February 2024

PPW aims to contribute towards the delivery of sustainable development, embedding the principles of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. PPW ingrains Placemaking Wales Charter and how sustainable development can be achieved through implementing placemaking.

Section 6.2 sets out green infrastructure should be given early consideration in development proposals and how it should be integrated into developments.

- approach has been applied."

Section 6.4 describes biodiversity and ecological networks and provides a summary of the Step-Wise Approach and how it should be used to "maintain and enhance biodiversity, build resilient ecological networks and deliver net benefits **for biodiversity** by ensuring that any adverse environmental effects are firstly avoided, then minimised, mitigated, and as a last resort compensated for."1 Paragraph 6.4.12 states "providing evidence in the Green Infrastructure Statement that the step-wise approach has been followed, a scheme of enhancements must be provided to ensure a **net benefit for** biodiversity."

In relation to trees, woodland and hedgerows, paragraph 6.4.37 sets out their importance for biodiversity and "connecting habitats for resilient ecological networks and

Paragraph 6.2.12 states " A green infrastructure statement should be submitted with all planning applications. This will be proportionate to the scale and nature of the development proposed and will describe how green infrastructure has been incorporated into the proposal... The green infrastructure statement will be an effective way of demonstrating positive multi-functional outcomes which are appropriate to the site in question and must be used for demonstrating how the step-wise

Paragraph 6.2.14 states "Development proposals should be informed by the priorities identified in green infrastructure assessments and locally based planning guidance. The **Building with Nature standards** represent good practice and are an effective prompt for developers to improve the quality of their schemes and demonstrate the sustainable management of natural resources."

¹ Paragraph 6.4.11, Planning Policy Wales Edition 12, February 2024

make an essential wider contribution to landscape character, culture, heritage and sense of place..."

The planting of new trees, hedgerows, groups of trees and areas of woodland should be promoted as part of new development. Existing trees/ groups of trees, hedgerows and areas of woodland must be protected "where they have ecological value, contribute to the character or amenity of a particular locality, or perform a beneficial green infrastructure function."²

In relation to the permanent removal of trees, woodland and hedgerows, it "will only be permitted where it would achieve significant and clearly defined public benefits."³ The step-wise approach must also be followed. Where loss is unavoidable, PPW sets out the requirements of replacement planting, which "shall be at a ratio equivalent to the quality, environmental and ecological importance of the tree(s) lost and this must be preferably onsite, or immediately adjacent to the site, and at a minimum ratio of at least 3 trees of a similar type and compensatory size planted for every 1 lost."4

Finally, in relation to **SuDS**, paragraph 6.6.18 states "The provision of SuDS must be considered as an **integral part** of the design of new development and considered at the earliest possible stage when formulating proposals for new development." Paragraph 6.6.19 goes on to state "Design for multiple benefits and green infrastructure should be secured wherever possible..."5

5 Paragraph 6.6.19 Planning Policy Wales Edition 12, February 2024

Local Planning Policy

Carmarthenshire Local Development Plan (LDP) 2006-2021, February 2014

The site lies within Carmarthenshire County Council. Relevant LDP policies in relation to the site and green infrastructure include:

Policy SP1 Sustainable Places and Spaces, which states "Proposals for development will be supported where they reflect sustainable development and design principles by...

2 Paragraph 6.4.39 Planning Policy Wales Edition 12, February 2024 3 Paragraph 6.4.42 Planning Policy Wales Edition 12, February 2024 4 Paragraph 6.4.42 Planning Policy Wales Edition 12, February 2024

Assessing impacts on habitats and species Using DECCA Enhance + Avoid \equiv Enhance Minimis Long Term Net Benefit Ξ Enhance Mitigate/Restor for Biodiversity = Enhance Enhance + = The Step-Wise Approach from PPW Edition 12, Chapter 6

new development"

Policy SP14 Protection and Enhancement of the Natural Environment states "Development should reflect the need to protect, and wherever possible enhance the County's *natural environment*" and Policy **EQ5 Corridors, Networks** and Features of Distinctiveness states that "Proposals for development which would not adversely affect those features which contribute local distinctiveness/qualities of the County, and to the **management and/or development of ecological** networks (wildlife corridor networks), accessible green **corridors and their continuity and integrity** will be permitted".

Carmarthenshire Local Development Plan Nature Conservation and Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) (Draft)

Design Process states, in relation to **avoidance**, that "all development proposals must seek to avoid harm to habitats and species. This can be achieved through locating on an alternative site where the impacts of the development would be of a less harmful, or by positioning the development within the site boundary in such a way that habitats can be retained and managed." In relation to **mitigation**, the section states "where avoidance is not possible then the design must aim to *mitigate any negative impacts... take account of all the potential* effects of the proposed development". In instances where harmful damage is unavoidable and will still occur in spite of mitigation, "consideration may be given to **compensating** for any loss by creating a new habitat at an alternative on site locations, or off-site." In relation to enhancement, the document states that applicants must "consider the design opportunities to enhance habitats for biodiversity conservation, provide features for protected and priority species and positively embrace opportunities to enhance, restore or potentially make additional provision...achieved through creating or enhancing habitats, providing habitats for specific species, managing existing features". "habitats...will likely require ongoing management and maintenance to ensure their longevity"¹

2024)

protect and enhance the area's biodiversity value and where appropriate, seek to integrate nature and conservation into

Section 8 Conserving and Enhancing Biodiversity in the

Guidance

Placemaking Wales Charter

The **Placemaking Wales Charter** has been developed by Welsh Government and the Design Commission for Wales in collaboration with the Placemaking Wales Partnership. The charter outlines six placemaking principles that cover the range of considerations that contribute to establishing and maintaining good places.

Well designed, maintained and connected green infrastructure is an essential component of good placemaking. The design of the proposed development should focus on well connected GI with multi-functionality to maximise the benefits to residents and the environment.

Landscape Institute Green Infrastructure: An integrated Approach, 2013

The document defines **Green Infrastructure** (GI) as "the network of natural and semi-natural features, green spaces, rivers and lakes... It is a natural, service-providing infrastructure that is often more cost-effective, more resilient and more capable of meeting social, environmental and economic objectives..."

The Landscape Institute recommends "local authorities ensure that GI is a core requirement in their policy documents" and "developers be aware of an area's strategic GI goals and appreciate how those goals contribute to mitigating the environmental impacts of new development and creating beautiful places."

Building with Nature Standards

The **Building with Nature Standards** Framework 2.0 involves twelve Standards, arranged across four groups. There are six Core Standards and three themes, Wellbeing, Water and Wildlife, containing two Standards in each.

The six Core Standards underpin the delivery of highquality green infrastructure through design, planning and development. The Standards in the Wellbeing, Water and Wildlife themes build on this to target specific aspects:

CORE Standards

Standard 1 Optimises Multi functionality and Connectivity
Standard 2 Positively Responds to the Climate Emergency
Standard 3 Maximises Environmental Net Gains
Standard 4 Champions a Context Driven Approach
Standard 5 Creates Distinctive Places
Standard 6 Secures Effective Place-keeping

WELLBEING Standards

Standard 7 Brings Nature Closer to PeopleStandard 8 Supports Equitable and Inclusive Places

WATER Standards

Standard 9 Delivers Climate Resilient Water Management Standard 10 Brings Water Closer to People

WILDLIFE Standards

Standard 11 Delivers Wildlife Enhancement Standard 12 Underpins Nature's Recovery



03 Existing Green Infrastructure

Surveys have been carried out to confirm the green infrastructure features at the site and its surrounding context.

The elements that are considered to form the existing Green Infrastructure (GI) of the site and surrounding context are as follows:

- Trees, Hedgerows and Woodland
- Ecology and Habitat
- Drainage

Trees, Hedgerows and Woodland

The tree survey was undertaken by Arb TS on 10th April 2024.

The survey identified 17 individual trees, 6 groups of trees, 1 woodland area and 2 hedgerows, some of which are located to the east of the site.

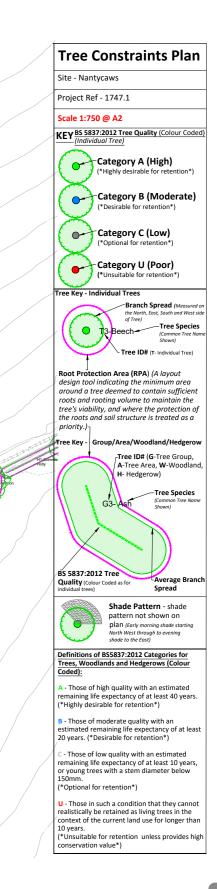
Along the east boundary of the site, there are two individual trees, one Category A Oak *Quercus robur* and one Category C Goat Willow *Salix caprea*. A Category B group of trees lines the majority of the eastern boundary and contains Oak *Quercus robur*, Ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, Hazel *Corylus avellana*, Goat Willow *Salix caprea*, and Alder *Alnus glutinosa* species.

At the northeast corner of the site is the western extent of a Category A tree group that follows the adjacent field boundary. The tree group contains Oak *Quercus robur*, Silver Birch *Betula pendula*, Hazel *Corylus avellana*, Goat Willow *Salix caprea*, and Beech *Fagus sylvatica* species.

The remaining trees, hedgerows and woodland area that were surveyed are located beyond the site boundary to the east. All the individual trees are Oak *Quercus robur*. The two hedgerows and woodland area contain similar species to those located along the site boundary and include the addition of Holly *llex aquifolium*.



Figure 2: Tree Constraints Plan produced by Arb TS



Ecology and Habitat

A Preliminary Ecological Assessment (PEA) was completed by **Wyndrush Wild** on 2nd July 2024. The limited desk study identified Pen-ty Meadow and Woods Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is located just under 1km from the site boundary to the southwest. No other records were found for the site.

An Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey identified four grassland types, refer to **Figure 3**: Improved grassland (B4), Poor semiimproved grassland (B6), Semi-improved neutral grassland (B2.2), and Marshy grassland (B5). The Marshy grassland is identified as a Priority Habitat.

Patches of scrub were also identified (A2). Further detail in relation to grass species surveyed on the site can be found in the PEA.

In relation to protected species, no badger setts, latrines or signs of foraging were found on the site. The site has no potential to support otters or hazel dormice. The site generally has a low potential to support reptiles and amphibians. The grassland is of little value to birds and no skylarks were surveyed. The site potentially holds a breeding pair of linnet and whitethroat.

A bat survey was not carried out, but it was concluded that there is no potential for roosting bats on the site, bit it could be used for foraging.

A single patch of Japanese Knotweed was identified within the site.

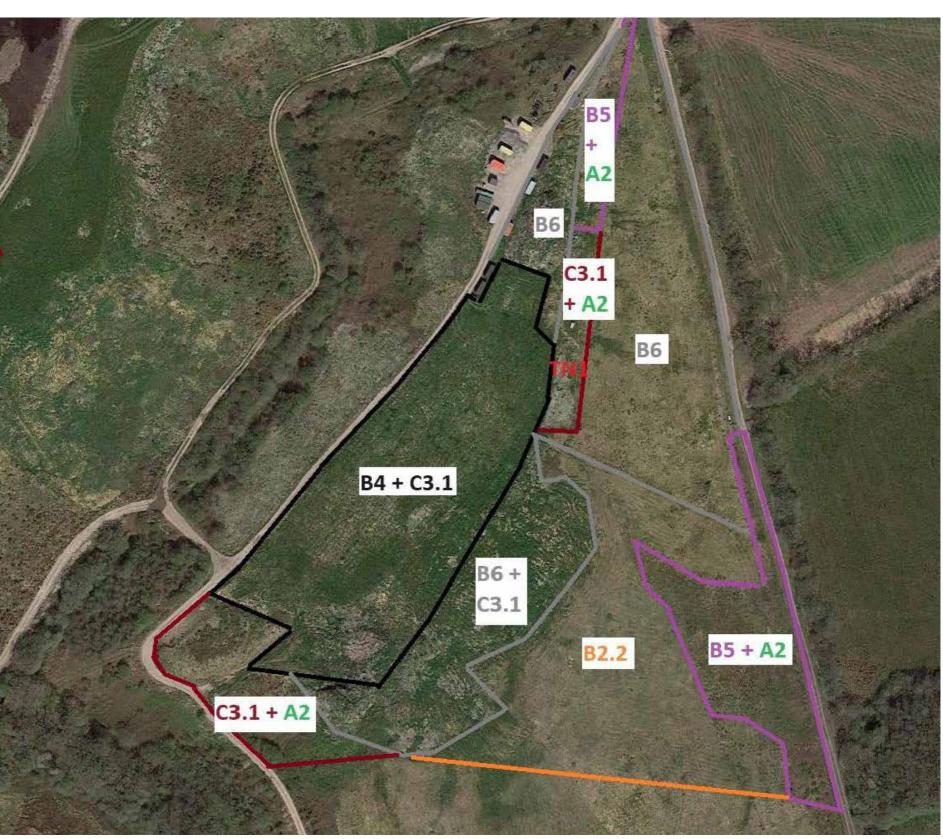


Figure 3: Phase 1 Habitat Survey results, produced by Wyndrush Wild

Drainage

A Drainage Technical Note has been prepared for the site by **CB3 Consult** in July 2024.

It confirmed that the site falls in a southerly direction towards ordinary watercourses along the eastern and southern boundaries, which are tributaries of the Afon Bantwen. Also, based on a desktop study, the ground conditions suggest an impeded drainage site, with surface water runoff discharging into local stream networks.

In relation to flood risk, the site lies within an area described as "Considered to be at little or no risk of fluvial or tidal/coastal flooding". Surface water flood maps were also reviewed, which identified there is some risk of flooding outside the redline boundary, but the site itself is at very low risk/ unaffected by surface water flooding.



1			
2	 	 	

Site Photographs (refer to LVS by Tir Collective for more detail):

1- View from the centre of the site looking southwest

2- View from the centre of the site looking southeast

04 Landscape Strategy



Key

Existing	g trees
shown	in oran

Proposed native hedgerow planting along western boundary of the site to comprise holly (llex aquifolium), hazel (Corylus avellana), hawthorn (Cratageus monogyna), dogwood (Cornus sanguinea), field maple (Acer campestre), guelder rose (Viburnum opulus), honeysuckle (Lonicera periclymenum) and dog rose (Rosa canina).

arisings.

Proposed swale and detention basin to manege site run-off - to be sown with species-rich damp grassland using seed from a local supplier or Emorsgate Seeds EM8: Meadow Mixture for Wetlands.

Scale 1:650@A1 / 1:1300@A3 TC24248_LA.100v1.dwg

Figure 4: Landscape Strategy

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and hedgerow to be retained. RPA nge.

Proposed solar arrays.

Proposed access track.

Proposed species-rich grassland beneath the solar arrays to be managed towards a more species-rich grassland through late summer mowing with associated removal of



29 July 2024

The following paragraphs define the key landscape design concepts, which have guided the preparation of the landscape proposals.

The Landscape Strategy incorporates the protection and retention of existing hedgerows, trees, and species rich grasslands. Priority grassland habitats adjacent to the site (B5 and A2 on **Figure 3**) which are of ecological and nature conservation interest have been avoided. The adjoining semi-improved neutral grassland where the arrays are proposed would be managed towards a more species-rich grassland through late summer mowing with associated removal of arisings.

New hedgerow planting is proposed along the west boundary of the site to help restore field pattern whilst providing a new wildlife corridor.

Design objectives aim to establish planting to:

- Protect, enhance and maintain the retained habitats and the wildlife they support;
- Reintroduce a field pattern through hedgerow planting which will make an important contribution to landscape character; and
- Reduce the visual impact of the proposed development when viewed from publicly accessible locations.

Native Hedgerow Planting



The planting strategy includes native hedgerow and the native species chosen provide fruiting and flowering and also offer interest due to foliage colour.

Where plant material is used of native species, there is a preference for local provenance plants, which in this case would be seed source zone 303 or 304, as defined Forest Practice Note No. 8, titled Using Local Seed Sources for Planting Native Trees and Shrubs, Forestry Commission (1999).



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05 Green Infrastructure Statement

This statement provides a description of the effects of mitigation of the individual green infrastructure components, which forms the Stepwise **Step 3: Mitigate/Restore**, with a view to minimising any negative impacts on biodiversity as far as possible. The proposed result in enhancements over and above mitigation for loss.

Trees, Hedgerows and Woodland

Existing trees at the site contribute to the landscape character and setting of the area. The landscape approach to the design of the proposed solar farm identified this importance as he retention of GI was a priority wherever possible, in accordance with **Step 1: Avoid** and **Step 2: Minimise**. The green infrastructure proposals include **Stepwise Step 3: Mitigate / Restore, Step 4: Compensate** and by considering **Enhancement at each stage in accordance with the DECCA Framework**.

During the design development of the project, consideration and **avoid** measures were given to the existing trees and hedgerows on the east site boundary. In addition to the landscape character contribution, they would also help to reduce potential visual impacts of the proposed solar farm. It was therefore critical to the design layout of the site that these features should be retained.

All trees and hedgerows within or adjacent to the site are incorporated into the development proposal of the site, none are to be removed. The Root Protection Areas (RPAs) of existing trees and hedgerows will also be protected during the construction and decommissioning phases. Proposed access routes within the site utilise existing field gateways to avoid removing sections of existing hedgerow.

New hedgerow planting is proposed along the west boundary. The hedgerow would comprise 6 native species of local provenance consistent with hedgerows in the area.

Ecology and Habitat

Habitats would be enhanced or created on site as a result of the proposals, see Figure 4 Landscape Strategy.

The proposed development **avoids** the Marshy grassland Priority Habitat and the adjoining Semi-improved neutral grassland area. The PEA recommends that this area is managed towards a more species-rich grassland through late summer mowing with the removal of associated arisings.

The PEA recommends that any scrub clearance should be undertaken outside of the bird nesting season (March-August).

Protected species are also unlikely to be affected by the proposed development.

Drainage

A watercourse is located downslope of the site in a southerly direction. It is anticipated that greenfield runoff currently discharges in this direction. As part of the development proposals, an attenuated connection at greenfield rate is proposed.

Surface water runoff from site to be collected within various SuDS features such as swales and a detention basin.

In relation to water quality, the aim of the surface water management strategy is to use natural processes that promote biodiversity and long-term sustainability.

The proposed drainage features would be planted with species appropriate for the conditions of the features and landscape character of the area, which would provide an opportunity to enhance biodiversity and create new habitats.

Multi-functionality of Green Infrastructure

This section identifies the multi-functionality of each green infrastructure element: woodland trees and hedgerows; ecology and habitat; and drainage and watercourses. These elements reflect the over arching principle of **Stepwise Step 3**: Mitigate / Restore, Step 4: Compensate and by considering Enhancement at each stage in accordance with the DECCA Framework.

The multi-functionality of green infrastructure is described as "GI functions are the roles that assets can play if planned, designed and managed in a way that is sensitive to, and includes provision for, natural features and ecosystem services. They may have obvious primary functions, but each asset can perform different functions simultaneously". Figure 4 establishes the Strategy aims, and the Green Infrastructure functions and benefits of the proposals are listed against the functions below:

- Reduce flood risk ٠
- Retaining key natural characteristics
- Connected habitats for wildlife
- Reduce impact of climate change ٠
- Nutrient cycling ٠
- Wildlife habitat ٠
- Improve water quality ٠
- Improve soil organic matter ٠
- Increase species and biodiversity ٠

Figure 6 lists the key retained and proposed landscape assets, its green infrastructure element, and the functions of each landscape asset while signposting against the Building with Nature Standards.

Landscape asset	Green infrastructure element	Functions	Building
Retained trees and hedgerows	Trees and hedgerows	 Retaining key natural characteristics Wildlife habitat Connected habitats for wildlife Nutrient cycling 	1 - Optim 2 - Positiv 4 - Cham 5 - Create 6 - Secure
New native hedgerow planting	Trees and hedgerows	 Retaining key natural characteristics Wildlife habitat Connected habitats for wildlife Nutrient cycling Improve soil organic matter Increase species and biodiversity 	1 - Optim 2 - Positiv 3 - Maxin 5 - Create 7 - Brings 11 - Deliv 12 - Unde
Proposed planted SuDS features	Sustainable Drainage	 Cleaning Water and Air Flood Mitigation Contribution to Placemaking Calming and Inspiring Nutrient Cycling Wildlife Habitat Cleaning Water and Air 	1 - Optim 2 - Positiv 3 - Maxim 5 - Create 7 - Brings 9 - Delive
Enhanced management of grassland to create a more species-rich grassland	Ecology and Habitat	 Wildlife habitat Connected habitats for wildlife Nutrient cycling Improve soil organic matter Increase species and biodiversity 	1 - Optim 2 - Positiv 3 - Maxin 7 - Brings

Figure 6 retained and proposed landscape assets, functions and Building with Nature Standards.

g with Nature Standards

mises Multifunctionality and Connectivity ively Responds to the Climate Emergency mpions a Context Driven Approach tes Distinctive Places res Effective Place-keeping

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vers Climate Resilient Water Management

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06 Conclusions

Resilience of Ecosystems

The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 provides a duty upon public bodies such as Carmarthenshire Council to promote the resilience of ecosystems.

The landscape proposals for the proposed solar farm shows that green infrastructure elements will be retained and created to re-enforce connectivity with existing hedgerows within the wider landscape and enhanced/ created species-rich grassland within the Site boundary.

The proposals would result in habitat enhancement and creation that will increase diversity across a range of species groups. Wildlife connectivity would be enhanced by the hedgerow planting, improved management of species richgrassland and the swales. Overall, the proposed development would make a positive contribution to achieving ecosystem resilience locally through the increase of habitat and species diversity at the site. The landscape proposals for the proposed Nantycaws solar farm, Carmarthenshire are based on a Stepwise Approach. The existing green infrastructure on the site and immediate vicinity contribute to the landscape character of the area. Features such as trees and hedgerows also contribute to the potential screening and filtering of views of the proposed development, and was essential to the design of the site layout that these features are retained.

The proposed solar farm would result in the change of rough pasture on a former landfill site land, which forms a small part of the wider rolling agricultural landscape. During the design development of the proposal, important green infrastructure elements were identified and measures to **avoid** any impacts were undertaken. As a result, all existing trees, hedgerows, and grassland that is a priority habitat will be retained and protected.

Mitigation has also been included in the proposals to enhance green infrastructure elements, such as the planting of native a hedgerow. Grassland species-rich grassland. Habitat creation has also been included. The adjoining semi-improved neutral grassland where the arrays are proposed would be managed towards a more species-rich grassland through late summer mowing with associated removal of arisings.

The proposals contribute well to the **12 Standards of Building** with Nature, creating well connected, multi-functional green infrastructure.

Overall, it is considered that the proposed development would be in accordance with PPW Edition 12 and the Carmarthenshire Local Development Plan policies relating to Green Infrastructure.





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