



Foel Fach Wind Farm Limited.

Foel Fach Wind Farm – Environmental Statement Volume III

Appendix 9.6: National Landscapes Assessment

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Energy for
generations





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APPENDIX 9.6 – NATIONAL LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT

1.1 Introduction

Purpose and Scope

1.1.1 This appendix provides a detailed assessment of the effects of the Proposed Development on the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape (formerly Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) that falls within the Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV). The assessment focuses on:

- The special qualities and features of the National Landscape as identified in the Management Plan 2020 - 2025
- The specific characteristics of areas that have theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development, and
- The potential effects on the landscape character and special qualities.

1.1.2 The Proposed Development is located approximately 11 km to the west of the National Landscape boundary at its closest point. The assessment considers effects on the National Landscape up to the extent of theoretical visibility shown in the ZTV analysis.

Methodology

1.1.3 The assessment methodology follows that set out in the main LVIA chapter (**ES Volume II, Chapter 9: Landscape and Visual**) and is consistent with GLVIA3 guidance. The assessment considers:

- The sensitivity of the National Landscape (combining value and susceptibility to change)
- The magnitude of change arising from the Proposed Development, and
- The significance of landscape effects,

1.1.4 Reference has been made to:

- Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape Management Plan Review 2020 – 2025
- Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB Management Plan 2014 – 2019;
- LANDMAP data
- National Landscape Character Area profiles, and
- Field survey observations from representative viewpoints.

Special Qualities and Features

1.1.5 The Management Plan identifies special qualities and features organised into five themes:

Landscape Character and Quality

- Tranquillity, Remoteness and Wildness, Space and Freedom.

Habitats and Wildlife

- Heather Moorland and Rolling Ridges
- Broadleaved Woodlands and Veteran Trees
- River Valleys and the River Dee, and
- Limestone Grasslands, Cliffs and Scree.

Historic Environment

- Historic Settlement and Archaeology
- Industrial Features and World Heritage Site
- Historic Defence Features
- Small Historic Features, and
- Traditional Boundaries.

Access, Recreation and Tourism

- Iconic Visitor and Cultural Attractions, and
- The Offa's Dyke National Trail and Promoted Routes.

Culture and People

- The Built Environment, and
- People and Communities.

1.1.6 Of particular relevance to this assessment are the qualities of Tranquillity, Remoteness, Wildness, Space and Freedom under Landscape Character and Quality.

1.2 Assessment of Effects

Areas Within the ZTV

1.2.1 With reference to **ES Volume IV, Figure 9.4: Blade Tip ZTV to 20 km with Viewpoints** and **ES Volume IV, Figure 9.29 National and Local Landscape Character Areas with Blade Tip ZTV to 20 km**, the ZTV analysis and viewpoint locations, the following areas of the National Landscape have theoretical visibility:

- Western edges of the Clwydian Range, particularly elevated areas between 11 km and 20 km as represented by (VP15 East of Cynwyd), along with lower lying areas, as represented by VP14 (Green Lane Corwen)
- Areas around VP16 (Castell Dinas Brân) at 27.2 km
- Areas around VP20 (Moel Morfydd) at around 21 km, and
- Areas around VP21 (Moel y Plas) at around 26 km.

1.2.2 The ZTV indicates that visibility is concentrated on west-facing slopes and elevated ridgelines, with more limited visibility from valleys and eastern slopes.

Landscape Character Assessment

LANDMAP Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas Analysis

1.2.3 The following LANDMAP Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas are considered relevant to a consideration of the potential effects on landscape character in the National Landscape.

1.2.4 **DNBGHVS025** - Horseshoe Pass (19 km east): A landscape including a popular scenic route with potential distant views. Theoretical visibility data shows limited theoretical visibility (83% no visibility), with the majority of the area having no views. Noting the distance (19 km), where visibility occurs, effects would be minor and not significant despite high sensitivity. The distance ensures turbines would appear as very minor distant elements barely perceptible from elevated viewpoints, not impacting upon the character of the area.

1.2.5 **DNBGHVS072** - Clwydian Range Hills (12-18 km east): The western-facing slopes of the Clwydian Range show some theoretical visibility at distances of 12-18 km. Due to National Landscape designation, these areas have high sensitivity. While some slopes show some theoretical visibility (e.g., Clwydian Slopes Main Ridge with 57% theoretical visibility), the distance (12-18 km) means effects would be minor and not significant. Turbines would appear as distant elements on the horizon barely perceptible from elevated viewpoints, not impacting upon the character of the area.

1.2.6 **DNBGHVS094** - Dee Valley figures (14-16 km east): Various sections of the Dee Valley within the National Landscape show limited theoretical visibility. Valley containment combined with substantial distance (14-16 km) means that where any visibility occurs, effects would be minor and not significant. The valley character provides substantial screening with most areas having no views.

The Clwydian Range Character Assessment

1.2.7 The Clwydian Range forms the dramatic heather-clad ridge that characterises the National Landscape. Key characteristics include:

- Chain of heather-clad summits topped by Iron Age hillforts
- Dramatic topography with steep escarpments
- Extensive views across North Wales
- Strong sense of tranquillity and remoteness on higher ground, and
- Popular walking destination including Offa's Dyke Path.

Sensitivity Assessment

1.2.8 **Value:** The area forms part of the nationally designated National Landscape with multiple historic and ecological designations. The hillforts are Scheduled Monuments and the heather moorland forms part of wider SAC/SPA designations. Value is assessed as **Very High**.

1.2.9 **Susceptibility:** The open, elevated character and importance of views make the area highly susceptible to wind turbine development. The special qualities of tranquillity and remoteness would be particularly vulnerable. However, the considerable distance from the Proposed Development (11+ km) reduces susceptibility. Susceptibility is assessed as **Medium-High**.

1.2.10 **Sensitivity:** Combining very high value with medium-high susceptibility results in an overall sensitivity of **High**.

Magnitude of Change

1.2.11 The assessment of magnitude considers:

- Distance: The nearest parts of the National Landscape are over 11 km from the nearest turbine, with VPs 14 and 15 at 13 km and 14 km respectively
- VP16 (Castell Dinas Brân) is 27.2 km from the nearest turbine
- VP20 (Moel Morfydd) and VP21 (Moel y Plas) provide representative views from elevated locations and are both located over 20 km away
- The turbines would appear as distant features on the western horizon
- Views would be in the context of existing wind development visible to the west, and
- The geographic extent affected would be limited to west-facing elevated areas, with the majority of the National Landscape having no visibility of the Proposed Development.

1.2.12 The magnitude of change is assessed as **Low** - the turbines would be perceptible where seen but would appear as distant features that would not alter the fundamental characteristics of the landscape, particularly from the majority of the National Landscape which lies over 20 km from the Proposed Development.

Significance of Effect

1.2.13 The combination of high sensitivity and low magnitude of change results in a **Minor-Moderate** effect, which is **Not Significant**.

1.2.14 While the turbines would be visible from some elevated west-facing locations, they would:

- Appear as distant features at a minimum of over 11 km away, but in most cases at far greater distances, generally over 20 km
- Be seen in the context of the wider landscape to the west
- Not affect the ability to appreciate the special qualities of the National Landscape

Effects from Specific Additional Viewpoints Requested by Consultees

VP16: Castell Dinas Brân (27.2 km)

1.2.15 This hillfort location provides panoramic views across the Dee Valley and beyond. At 27.2 km distance, the turbines would appear as very distant features on the western horizon. They would occupy a very small portion of the panoramic view and would not affect:

- The ability to appreciate the historic setting
- Views of the immediate Dee Valley landscape, and
- The sense of elevation and commanding position.

1.2.16 The effect is assessed as **Minor** and **Not Significant**.

VP20: Moel Morfydd

1.2.17 From this elevated location within the Clwydian Range, westward views would include the proposed turbines as distant features. At a distance of 21 km, the turbines would be seen beyond intervening ridges and valleys, appearing as part of the wider landscape context rather than dominating features.

1.2.18 The effect assessed as **Moderate-Minor** and **Not Significant**.

VP21: Moel y Plas

1.2.19 Similar to VP20, this location would have theoretical visibility of the turbines as distant westward features. The effect would be limited by distance and at over 26 km away the turbines would not compromise the special qualities experienced from this location.

1.2.20 The effect assessed as **Moderate-Minor** and **Not Significant**.

1.3 Effects On Special Qualities

1.3.1 The assessment indicates limited effects on the special qualities:

Tranquillity, Remoteness and Wildness, Space and Freedom

- Minor effect from elevated western viewpoints only
- The considerable distance ensures these qualities remain largely unaffected, and
- Eastern areas and valleys would have no visibility.

Heather Moorland and Rolling Ridges

- No direct physical effects, and
- Visual effects limited to distant views that do not significantly affect landscape character.

Historic Features

- No effect on the setting of hillforts or other historic features, and
- Distant turbines would not impact the ability to understand or appreciate heritage.

Access and Recreation

- No greater than a minor effect on views from western sections of Offa's Dyke Path, and
- Recreational experience would remain almost entirely unaffected.

1.4 Cumulative Effects on Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape

1.4.1 The cumulative assessment has been undertaken considering two scenarios as detailed in Section 9.11 of **ES Volume II, Chapter 9: Landscape and Visual**. This section provides a summary of the cumulative effects specifically relating to the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape. The detailed cumulative analysis is provided in Section 9 of **ES Volume II, Chapter 9: Landscape and Visual** with supporting cumulative ZTV analysis presented in **ES Volume IV, Figures 9.36 to 9.43**.

Cumulative Development Context

1.4.2 Within the 35 km cumulative study area, the following schemes have been identified as relevant to the cumulative assessment:

Scenario 1 - Operational and Consented Schemes:

- The only consented scheme in addition to the operational schemes already considered in the baseline is Pant Y Maen comprising 7 turbines (102 m blade tip) located approximately 17 km to the north of the Proposed Development.

Scenario 2 - Operational, Consented and In Scoping Schemes:

- Additional scoping schemes include multiple developments further south including Mynydd Mawr Energy Park (22 turbines, 230 m) at 20 km south-east, and various schemes at distances of 25 - 34 km to the south. In addition, the Gaerwen wind farm would lie closer to the National Landscape, as illustrated in VP15 and would be located around 7 km to the east of the Proposed Development. The Bodtegir and Alwen Forest schemes are also located to the north and north-east of the Proposed Development.

Cumulative Effects Assessment

Scenario 1: Operational and Consented Schemes

1.4.3 The addition of Pant Y Maen would have no effect to the assessment of the Proposed Development on the National Landscape already set out due to:

- Distance (Pant Y Maen is separated from the Proposed Development in the landscape y around 17 km)
- Limited theoretical visibility from the National Landscape towards the Pant Y Maen, and
- Topographical screening from intervening uplands.

1.4.4 The effects already identified from elevated western areas of the National Landscape would remain unchanged under this scenario.

Scenario 2: Operational, Consented and In Scoping Schemes

1.4.5 Under this worst-case scenario, it is identified that that:

- The Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape would have some views of the Scoping stage schemes, in particular Gaerwen wind farm, as illustrated by VP15
- Where Gaerwen were visible it would lie closer to the National Landscape than the Proposed Development and would be the scheme which brought about the greater proportion of the impact.
- The Scoping schemes furthest south would be at great distances (20+ km) and would not materially affect views from the National Landscape, and
- The assessment at VP16 (Castell Dinas Brân), VP20 (Moel Morfydd), and VP21 (Moel y Plas) demonstrates that for the majority of the National Landscape effects remain **minor** and **not significant** even within the worst-case position of the scoping schemes all coming forwards .

Special Qualities Assessment

1.4.6 The cumulative assessment confirms that even allowing for the cumulative schemes the effects on the National Landscape's special qualities would remain minimal:

- Tranquillity, Remoteness and Wildness: Minor effect limited to elevated western viewpoints only, not materially increased by cumulative schemes other than Gaerwen
- Heather Moorland and Rolling Ridges: No additional cumulative effects on landscape character, and
- Historic Features: No cumulative effect on the setting of hillforts or other heritage assets.

1.5 Dark Sky Considerations

1.5.1 The Clwydian Range and Dee Valley has Dark Sky Discovery status. The Management Plan identifies the importance of dark skies as a special quality.

1.5.2 Any visible aviation lighting on the proposed turbines could potentially affect the dark sky quality. However, at distances exceeding 11 km, any lighting effects would be minimal and would be seen in the context of existing light sources in the wider landscape. Such effects are further reduced by the mitigation built into the Proposed Development, including the requirement for only four of the turbines to be lit and for technology which reduces the intensity of the lighting with distance and at different elevations to the turbines. As such, no significant night-time effects on the National Landscape would occur.

1.6 Conclusions

1.6.1 The assessment finds no significant effects on the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape. There would also be no impact on the special qualities and features that underpin the designation.

1.6.2 Effects are limited to:

- Theoretical visibility from elevated west-facing locations only, and
- Distances exceeding 11 km, and in many cases over 20 km, ensuring turbines appear as minor distant features.

1.6.3 The Proposed Development would not compromise:

- The integrity of the National Landscape designation
- The ability to appreciate its special qualities, or
- The visitor experience or recreational value.

1.6.4 The siting of the Proposed Development over 11 km from the National Landscape boundary a minimum, but with many areas over 20 km, combined with the intervening topography and existing landscape context, ensures that effects remain limited and not significant.