

# Green Gen Vyrnwy Frankton Programme Document

July 2024

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. This Programme Document has been prepared for the Vyrnwy Frankton project as a requirement under the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects: 2024 Pre-application prospectus.

### Green GEN Cymru

- 1.2. Green Generation Energy Networks Cymru Limited (Green GEN Cymru) is part of the Bute Energy group of companies, based in and developing green energy projects in Wales. Green GEN Cymru will design, build and operate a new 132kV distribution network needed to connect new Welsh renewable energy projects to the electricity transmission network.
- 1.3. In July 2024 Green GEN Cymru was granted an Independent Distribution Network Operator (IDNO) licence from Ofgem. Ofgem now licences IDNOs to develop, operate and maintain local electricity distribution networks anywhere in Great Britain.

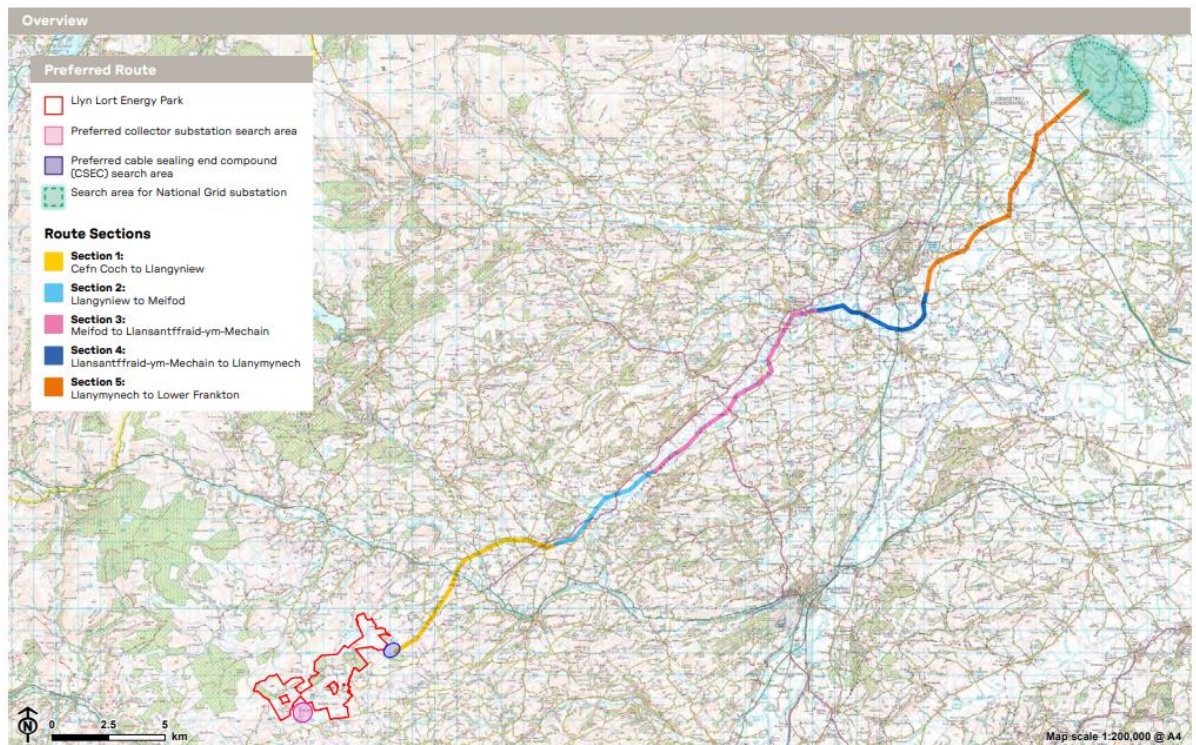
### Purpose and Structure

- 1.4. This document sets out the timetable and describes the activities necessary for an effective pre-application process. The document also sets out the level of pre-application service requested from the Planning Inspectorate (PINS), and consultation with various parties required under the Planning Act 2008 as per the requirements for a Programme Document set out in Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects: 2024 Pre-application prospectus.
- 1.5. This document is a draft which reflects the current position of the Vyrnwy Frankton project. It will be updated as necessary with any changes communicated to PINS by Green GEN Cymru.
- 1.6. This Programme Document is structured as follows:
  - Section 2: Project Description
  - Section 3: Level of Pre-application Service Requested
  - Section 4: Programme of Pre-application Activities
  - Section 5: Engagement
  - Section 6: Main Issues for Resolution
  - Section 7: Pre-application risks and how these are tracked and managed.

## 2. Project Description

- 2.1. Green GEN Cymru is proposing a new collector substation site in the Powys uplands, near Cefn Coch, and an overhead line through the Vyrnwy Valley to connect new renewable energy to the existing 400kV electricity network in Shropshire, helping to address the climate emergency (referred to as “the Project”).
- 2.2. The Project is approximately 50km in length, commencing approximately 17km to the west of Welshpool, north of Cefn Coch. From here the Project heads in a broadly north-east direction through the Vyrnwy Valley, and passing to the south of Llansantffraid-ym-Mechain and Llanymynech. It crosses into England and after crossing the A5 and will terminate at a switching station which will connect to a new substation, along the existing 400kV overhead line, which will be consented separately by National Grid, and which will likely be situated within the National Grid substation search area (see Figure 1).

Figure 1



Source: Vyrnwy Frankton Connection; Stage one consultation brochure (September 2023)

- 2.3. The Project will comprise of the following:
  - Collector Substation (this will collect the generation from renewable energy projects in the uplands of Mid Wales);
  - Approximately 5km of underground cable (to be routed through the proposed Llyn Lort Energy Park) to connect the Collector Substation to a Cable Sealing End Compound;
  - Cable Sealing End Compound (which will connect the underground cable to an overhead line)

- Approximately 50km of 132kV overhead electricity transmission line supported on L7 steel pylons;
  - Switching station (from where the connection will be made to a new National Grid substation)
  - Temporary works associated with the construction of the Project; and
  - Potential diversion of third party utilities (where required).
- 2.4. The overhead line will be supported on L7 steel lattice pylons (approximately 27m in height).
- 2.5. The Project is located within the jurisdiction of Powys County Council and Shropshire Council and crosses the border between Wales and England.
- 2.6. The Project falls within the definition of a 'Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project' (NSIP) under Section 14(1)(b) of the Planning Act 2008 as the project comprises "*the installation of an electric line above ground*". Section 16(1)(c) of the Act clarifies that "*The installation of an electric line above ground is within section 14(1)(b) only if (when installed) the electric line will be – partly in England and partly in Wales.*" All NSIPs in England and Wales require a Development Consent Order (DCO). Sections 16(3) and 16(3B) provide criteria which (if satisfied) exclude overhead lines from the scope of section 14(1)(b), none of which apply to the Project.

### 3. Level of Pre-application Service Requested

- 3.1. Green GEN Cymru are requesting the Tier 3 Enhanced pre-application service tier for the Vyrnwy Frankton Project. Green GEN Cymru does not currently envisage applying for a “fast track” examination for the Project, but in the event complexities can be resolved through the Pre-application Services approach, would welcome the opportunity to consider whether to do so in the future.
- 3.2. The Project is linear and complex, and it is considered that the Enhanced Service would be appropriate for the following reasons:
  - The Project will fall within both Wales and England. As the Project is an NSIP, the decision will be made by the Secretary of State. However, engagement with the Welsh Government on the Project is required as it is a cross border project. There are therefore additional complexities in this regard;
  - Although the relevant National Policy Statements have primacy for NSIPs, the broader planning policy framework differs between England and Wales, for example with respect to new connections on overhead lines and the approach to Net Benefit for Biodiversity / Biodiversity Net Gain:
  - As this is a cross border project, there are a higher number of statutory environmental bodies for Green GEN Cymru to engage with (in most cases the list of bodies is duplicated). There are also differences, for example, in levels of data, approaches to impact assessment and the approach to calculating Net Benefit for Biodiversity / Biodiversity Net Gain. This will add significant complexity to both the Project’s interaction with each of those statutory bodies, but also how that is communicated effectively to other interested parties who may engage with different elements of the Project in both England and Wales;
  - The Project includes several interconnected elements (a collector substation (in Powys)), underground cable (in Powys), a cable sealing end compound (in Powys), overhead line (through Powys into Shropshire), and a switching station (in Shropshire), and is inherently therefore a complex infrastructure project affecting a wide range of interested parties across a number of different landscape areas and environmental receptors;
  - The Project is likely to involve the compulsory acquisition of land, rights over land, and temporary possession of land which will impact affected parties;
  - Finally, the Project follows a similar route to a previous 400kV connection project promoted by National Grid around 10 years ago. At the time there was significant local interest in that scheme and indications are that this level of local interest will continue, based on the non-statutory consultation carried out to date.

3.3. Due to the complexities mentioned above, the involvement of PINS, through for example topic-based meetings (as offered under Tier 3 Enhanced service), would be of value to the Project over and above the Tier 2 service. In particular, Green GEN Cymru would welcome the following:

- Pre-emptive advice;
- PINS' assistance with facilitating cross border topic-based meetings and multi-party forums;
- PINS' review of additional draft documents; and
- Involvement of an Examining Authority during the pre-application stage.

3.4. Green GEN Cymru may also welcome support under the following 'components' identified in the Guidance:

- Component 2: Use of pre-application Principal Areas of Disagreement Summary Statements
- Component 3: Production of Policy Compliance Document
- Component 6: Use of multiparty meetings
- Component 7: Preparation of Compulsory Acquisition and Temporary Possession evidence

3.5. This will be reviewed with PINS as the Project progresses.

## 4. Programme for Pre-application Activities

- 4.1. The Stage One non-statutory consultation took place between September and October 2023.
- 4.2. The consultation sought feedback on a preferred draft corridor and siting area for the collector substation and cable sealing end compound. At the time a 'search area' for a new National Grid substation was shown. National Grid are yet to determine the location of a new 400kV substation.
- 4.3. Following the consultation all feedback was analysed and GGC published a Phase One Consultation Feedback Summary (Winter 2023/24) on the project website.
- 4.4. The EIA Scoping Report was submitted in January 2024 and the Scoping Opinion was received from PINS in March 2024. The Scoping Report included a Scoping Corridor which was based on the consultation corridor for the 2023 non-statutory consultation.
- 4.5. It is planned to hold a statutory consultation in Quarter 4 2024, currently planned for November 2024. Work on preparing the initial draft Statement of Community Consultation is currently underway.
- 4.6. After the statutory consultation it is intended to submit draft documents to PINS for review in Quarter 3 2025. PINS will be given at least 6 weeks to review and provide feedback on the documents. There will also be sufficient time for PINS' comments to be reflected in the final form of the submitted application.
- 4.7. PINS review of the 'adequacy of consultation' will be sought in Quarter 3 2025. It is considered that this is sufficiently towards the end of the pre-application stage to assess the adequacy of consultation but early enough to allow additional engagement if required.
- 4.8. The application for a DCO is currently expected to be submitted in Quarter 4 2025.
- 4.9. The statutory consultation and submission timeframes will be refined as the period for the statutory consultation and the submission dates draw closer.

4.10. An indicative Project timeline is provided below.



4.11. A summary of the key dates / activities is provided in the table below.

Activity	Indicative Timeframe
Non-statutory consultation	September – October 2023 (Complete)
EIA scoping	January 2024 (Complete)
Scoping Opinion	March 2024 (Complete)
Inception Meeting	Q3 2024
Consultation with local authorities on Statement of Community Consultation	Q3 2024
Statutory consultation	Q4 2024
PINS review of draft documents	Q3 2025
DCO submission	Q4 2025

4.12. GGC will provide PINS with regular updates regarding the submission date as the project progresses.



## 5. Engagement

### Local Authorities and Statutory Environmental Bodies

- 5.1. The Project falls within the administrative boundaries of Powys County Council and Shropshire Council.
- 5.2. Draft Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs) are at an early stage of discussion with Powys County Council and Shropshire Council. Initial meetings have been held.
- 5.3. Discussions are also at an early stage, following receipt of the Scoping Opinion, with a number of statutory environmental bodies including:
  - Natural Resources Wales
  - Natural England
  - Cadw
  - Historic England
  - Environment Agency
- 5.4. These early discussions are also covering service level agreements and arrangements under discretionary advice services as relevant to the particular organisation.
- 5.5. As part of the Tier 3 Enhanced Service it is envisaged that PINS' would assist with facilitating regular cross border host local authority meetings, topic based meetings (principally landscape, ecology, cultural heritage and water) and wider multi-party forums (should these be appropriate. It is envisaged that these meetings would take place quarterly with a standing agenda. This would enable issues to be discussed and would feed into pre-application 'Principal Areas of Disagreement Summary Statements' and evidence planning.
- 5.6. Alongside engagement with the host authorities regarding planning and EIA matters, briefings continue with MPs, Senedd Members, local councillors and other stakeholders including, Parish and Community Councils, as requested. These will continue in the run up to statutory consultation and as the Project develops further.
- 5.7. Statutory consultation is currently planned for Q4 2024. A Statement of Community Consultation will be prepared. It is intended to share an initial draft with the host local authorities. The host local authorities will then be formally consulted for a minimum of 28 days in accordance with s47 of the Planning Act 2008. The SoCC will also be made available on the project website along with a s47 notice.

## 6. Main issues for resolution

6.1. The main issues for resolution are identified below:

Potential Main Issue		Green Gen Cymru's Proposed Resoution
Landscape and Visual Amenity	Potential effects on landscape and visual amenity of local receptors.	Potential landscape and visual effects will be assessed as part of the EIA and where possible mitigated through the routeing, siting and design of the proposed route. Green GEN Cymru will use relevant guidance such as the Holford Rules to inform the siting and design process to minimise potential landscape and visual effects. In addition, the assessment will inform modifications and refinements to the detailed design of the Project including consideration of individual pylon locations and alternative technology. Where practicable, enhancement measures will be developed to offset the landscape and visual effects.
Ecology	Potential effects on ecology including local designated sites and habitats.	Potential effects on ecology will be assessed as part of the EIA and embedded measures such as avoiding or minimising adverse impacts will form part of the iterative design process.  In addition, the Project will aim to deliver Biodiversity Net Gain (even though it is not yet a requirement for NSIPs) and Net Benefits for Biodiversity (which applies in Wales).
Historic Environment	Potential effects on nearby heritage features and onsite archaeology.	Potential effects on nearby heritage features (including impacts to the setting of heritage assets) and onsite archaeology will be assessed as part of the EIA. The Project will seek to avoid and minimise effects by design and additional mitigation will be secured through the DCO if

Potential Main Issue		Green Gen Cymru's Proposed Resoution
		necessary (e.g. a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP)).
Flood risk	Potential effects on flood risk on the site and surrounding area.	Potential effects on flood risk during construction and operation will be assessed as part of the EIA. Where possible, infrastructure will be positioned to avoid or minimise flood risk impacts. A Flood Risk Assessment will also be carried out to assess risks to the Project from flooding sources and this will contain appropriate mitigation measures. The construction of the Project will also be managed through a CEMP.
Compulsory acquisition	The DCO for the Project will include powers for the compulsory acquisition of land and rights.	Green GEN Cymru will seek to secure the necessary interests over the land required for the Project by agreement. However, in the event that agreement cannot be reached, powers for the compulsory acquisition of land and rights will be included in the DCO for the Project. A Statement of Reasons and other documents will be submitted with the application to demonstrate that the public benefit of the Project will outweigh the infringement of private rights which would occur should powers of compulsory acquisition be granted and exercised.
Grid connection	The Project will connect to the national grid at a substation which has not yet been consented.	A new substation is being developed by National Grid Electricity Transmission which the Project will connect into. This does not form part of the Project and the exact location and timescales for this development is currently unknown. Green GEN Cymru will continue to liaise with National Grid with regards to the location and timings of the substation development. The National Grid substation will also be included in the cumulative assessment for the Project's EIA.

## 7. Pre-application risks and how these are tracked and managed

7.1. A summary of the pre-applications risks at the current stage of the Project's development and how these are tracked and managed is provided below:

Risk	Description of Risk	Tracking and managing risk
Lack of sufficient resource/capacity within host Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) to engage with proposals in detail	Limited resource and capacity of LPAs results in limited engagement on the proposals and inability for the LPAs to provide feedback throughout the pre-application stage of the project, including statutory consultations.	Early engagement with LPAs has commenced and GGC are seeking to agree PPAs with Powys County Council and Shropshire Council. Regular updates will be provided regarding project progress and programme. Joint meetings / topic groups meetings will be arranged with both LPAs to discuss cross border issues and consistent approach to assessments
Lack of sufficient resource/capacity within stakeholder organisations to engage with proposals in detail	Limited resource and capacity of some statutory consultees could result in limited engagement on the proposals and inability for statutory consultees to provide feedback throughout the pre-application stage of the project, including statutory consultations.	Early stakeholder engagement will be undertaken. GGC will be seeking to set up arrangements under the discretionary advice services for the respective organisations. Regular updates regarding project progress and programme will be provided. Joint topic groups meetings will be arranged with both Welsh and English stakeholders to discuss cross border issues and consistent approach to assessments