

**Wrexham Power Limited ♦ Proposed Wrexham Energy Centre**

# Ecology

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1. Wrexham Power Limited's application to the Planning Inspectorate for a Development Consent Order for the proposed power station will be supported by detailed ecology studies undertaken as a part of the formal environmental impact assessment (EIA) of the proposals.
- 1.2. These studies will take into account the direct effects on ecology on the site of the power station and within the route corridors of the gas and electricity grid connections. It will also consider ecology that might be affected further afield, for example through air emissions or water discharges.
- 1.3. This technical note is to support preliminary consultation on the power station proposals. It provides an overview of the ecological aspects of the proposed development and its gas and electricity grid connections. It sets out how these will be considered further and in more detail as the proposals are developed.

## **2. LEGAL REQUIREMENTS**

- 2.1. Certain sites, habitats and species are legally protected. These include sites with international, national and local designations such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Ramsar Sites, Local Nature Reserves etc. It also includes the 56 habitat-types and 943 species that are listed under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. The potential effects of a development on these must be assessed and where appropriate mitigated.
- 2.2. As noted, the EIA will consider the effects of the project on ecology and, where any adverse effects are identified, will propose how these will be mitigated. In carrying out the EIA, Wrexham Power Limited will consult with the statutory authorities including Countryside Council for Wales and Wrexham Council's ecology officer, and will seek the views of the community and other interested parties such as the local wildlife trust, badger groups and ornithological societies.

## **3. ECOLOGY OF THE POTENTIAL POWER STATION SITE**

- 3.1. The site at the Wrexham Industrial Estate is partly greenfield and used for farming, and partly previously developed brownfield land. As with many derelict brownfield sites, this part of the site has become increasingly re-naturalised over recent years.

- 3.2. Initial ecology surveys of the site have been undertaken and have confirmed the presence of great crested newts, commonly found within this locality, within a number of small ponds on the site. The surveys have also identified the presence of habitats that could be suitable for other protected species such as the lesser silver water beetle and the dingy skipper and grizzled skipper butterflies.
- 3.3. The site also includes a number of habitats that are important for wildlife including hedgerows, small blocks of woodland, a number of mature trees and water courses.
- 3.4. These on-site ecology issues have informed the development of the current options for the layout of the power station site.

#### **4. ECOLOGY OF THE CONNECTION CORRIDORS AND SURROUNDS**

- 4.1. Studies of ecology within the route corridors for the gas and electricity grid connections will be undertaken as the proposals are developed. Both the gas and electricity routes will pass through countryside comprising arable land and pasture with well-defined boundaries of hedgerows and trees, and with numerous ponds and small wooded areas. These routes could include a wide variety of sensitive flora and fauna including bats, badgers, birds and other protected species. The selection of the preferred routes will take account of these.
- 4.2. Within the wider area of the power station, there are a number of designated habitats sites such as the River Dee Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) just over 2km to the east. Also Vicarage Moss, a peatland habitat that is a SSSI and an internationally designated Ramsar site at 3km to the north west.
- 4.3. The grid connection route corridors present options that would potentially traverse part of the River Dee SSSI where the option follows the route of existing overhead power lines, and passes within 100m of other designated sites such as the Johnstone Newts Special Areas of Conservation.
- 4.4. A thorough data review shall be undertaken to ensure that all such designated and non-designated sites are identified, to inform decisions to be made on the location of infrastructure within the route corridor.

#### **5. ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY**

- 5.1. A detailed ecological impact assessment of the development will be undertaken as a part of the EIA process. The methodology for the assessment will be agreed with the relevant authorities beforehand and will include gathering all relevant existing records, undertaking field surveys, determining the effects of the development proposals both during construction and operation of the power

station and predicting the impacts on ecology. A programme of mitigation will be developed to address any significant issues.

- 5.2. Detailed walkover surveys will be undertaken to gather information on a wide range of potential ecology issues. Specific surveys for the presence or absence of protected species will be undertaken where necessary, for example for amphibians, reptiles, bats, badgers, birds, otters, water voles, white-clawed crayfish and invertebrates including the lesser silver water beetle, dingy skipper and grizzled skipper butterflies.
- 5.3. A nature conservation value will be assigned to ecological features that may potentially be affected by the development using criteria that will be agreed with the Countryside Council for Wales and Wrexham CBC's ecologist. Consideration of the potential effects of the development will take into account the following:
  - direct loss of wildlife habitats.
  - fragmentation and isolation of habitats.
  - disturbance to species from noise, light or other visual stimuli.
  - changes to key habitat features.
  - changes to the local hydrology, water quality and/or to air quality.

## **6. ADDRESSING ECOLOGICAL EFFECTS**

- 6.1. Options for the layout of the power station and the grid connection route corridors have sought to focus development away from areas that could contain important ecological habitats. The options will be further developed as survey data is collated.
- 6.2. Beyond this, Wrexham Power Limited proposes to adopt the following approach:
  - The design and operation of the power station will seek to minimise any adverse effects on ecology through limiting noise and light pollution, and through the control of air and water emissions to standards agreed with the environmental regulators and which take account of the impacts on ecology.
  - Landscape works and planting will be designed to provide an enhancement to the local ecology by providing suitable habitats to support wildlife. This could include the provision of additional water features
  - Where identified adverse effects on ecology cannot be addressed through design, appropriate mitigation measures will be identified and, where necessary, compensatory ecological measures will be incorporated into the development proposals.

6.3. These measures will be drawn up in consultation with the corresponding stakeholders and statutory bodies.