

Agenda Item 12.1

Pre-Application Consultation: Craig Y Perthi Solar Farm

12.1.

10 August 2026

Dear Stakeholder,

Re: Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) for the resubmission of the *Craig Y Perthi Solar Farm*, south of the M4, north of the Llanwern Steelworks, and to the east and west of Bishton Village, Newport.

I hope this letter finds you well. You may have already spoken to us when we held an initial consultation for the proposed Craig Y Perthi Solar Farm plans (back in 2022), the follow up consultation (in 2023) or at our hearings (in 2025) held as part of the previous planning submission (application reference DNS/3279787). Whilst we were disappointed when the application was turned down, we have been working to improve the plans, and are now ready to present the updated scheme. To recap, the proposals would consist of a solar farm sited on mostly Grade 4, **poor quality farmland**. As part of the improved design a number of changes have been made; the proposed panelled area of the site has been reduced (from 333 acres to 274 acres), 106 acres of new wildflower meadow is proposed with another 40 acres of new enhanced bird nesting land (increased from 30 acres in the previous proposal), over 11km of semi mature tree/hedge planting around the site is proposed to screen views from Bishton and the surrounding area, the Battery Storage and central inverters have been removed from the plans following public/professional stakeholder feedback, **and all land located within the Gwent Levels SSSI has been removed from the scheme.**

The land will continue to be used for pastoral farming around the panels, including continued sheep grazing and operation of the free range chicken farm, allowing it to continue to produce food for the UK market on an already part-pastoral farm, and would create large publicly accessible green spaces for residents to use within the site and adjacent to Bishton.

Following the hottest years on record and an array of other record breaking weather (including devastating droughts in the summer and catastrophic flooding in the winter), the proposals would take an important step in addressing the climate crisis, generating the equivalent amount of clean, affordable, domestic renewable energy to power **over 42,077 Welsh homes**, saving in excess of **2,700,000 tonnes of CO2** in the process. That's the equivalent of **planting over 46 million trees**. As a trained ecologist, and coming from a wildlife conservation background, I place a special focus on ensuring the sites I develop have a significant, positive impact on local wildlife and biodiversity. The site would be converted from a monoculture with little value to biodiversity/local wildlife, into a diverse grassland in/around the panels, providing vital habitat for an array of pollinators/invertebrates, reptiles, farmland birds and mammals, free from pesticides/chemical inputs and regular cultivation of the soil. This assertion is supported by numerous studies, including a recent 2025 RSPB/Cambridge University study, which found ~3x as many birds on solar farms when compared with adjacent arable farms.

Solar power is also currently one of the **cheapest forms of energy generation**, so the more we deploy, the cheaper energy bills will become, **directly tackling the cost-of-living crisis and removing our reliance on expensive, imported fossil fuels, whose price is subject to geopolitical events.**

As a local stakeholder, we're keen to hear your views, to further improve the scheme, just as comments in the initial consultation did. You can find out more by visiting uk.rwe.com/craigyperthi or by coming to one of our **public consultation days**. The enclosed leaflet also expands on this letter.

I thank you for your attention and time in reading this letter and hope to speak soon.

Yours sincerely,



Robin Johnson, PIEMA, ACIEEM
Craig Y Perthi Solar Farm Project Manager
M: 07901270413

E: info@CraigYPerthiSolarFarm.co.uk

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

1. 'This will spoil the landscape'

We design buffers of ~4-5m of grassland between each row of panels, and a further 7-12m is left clear of panels up to each field margin which is instead planted with wildflower grassland. This allows most of the site to be retained as improved grassland or wildflower meadow. Of this area, just ~1% of the site will involve any ground penetration, with **concrete** typically not needed for panel installation. Additionally, there will be over 106 acres of new wildflower meadow planted around the site. The gaps between each row of panels allows for diverse grassland to thrive, meaning the farmer(s) can continue grazing sheep and chicken around the solar farm. Additionally, this preserved grassland/wildflower will create considerable opportunities for local wildlife as they create a permanent retained habitat, which is left undisturbed and are not subject to any pesticide use. We also use wood stock deer fencing, with mammal gates incorporated, which is used around the countryside, allotments, and farms alike. We opt to use this more aesthetic fencing instead of steel security fencing found on industrial estates. There will also be no permanent lighting anywhere around the site.

2. 'RWE won't do anything that was promised'

As an energy generator, RWE's business model revolves around developing and operating community supported solar farms that leave a positive legacy. As such, we put in place strict legal obligations to ensure promised benefits are delivered to the community. For example, we have invested over £21m to community funds in Wales alone to date. The proposed site enhancements would be enforced through planning conditions, which, if breached, would be subject to enforcement action from the council, potentially nullifying the planning permission for the site, and putting the entire site at risk.

3. 'The site will have a negative impact on Wildlife'

As an ecologist myself, and having a wildlife conservation background, I take this subject extremely seriously. With every site developed, I look to maximise opportunities for biodiversity and local wildlife to flourish and thrive. They offer a unique opportunity to create a fantastic ecological asset akin to a nature reserve when done right. Craig Y Perthi will enjoy a considerable 50%+ biodiversity net gain (over 5x the standard), in part due to the proposed planting and maintenance of high-quality grassland/wildflower mixes under the panels (which, once the site is constructed will represent an un-disturbed and highly effective habitat for pollinators, reptiles, birds and other wildlife as shown by multiple studies, including by the RSPB). Typically, on a farm of this nature, seasonal ploughing/drilling effectively removes / destroys nesting bird habitats, a key reason why Government agencies have in recent times encouraged (and incentivised) farmers to leave grassland margins at the edge of each field or to leave fields entirely fallow. Removing the use of harvesters and heavy machinery on the land, in addition to harmful herbicides / pesticides, for a 40 year period will allow wildlife to flourish in and around the site. Likewise, we are proposing to plant over 11km of new trees / hedgerows, install 80+ bird boxes and add bee / butterfly habitats and reptile / insect hibernacula around the site to further improve wildlife opportunities.

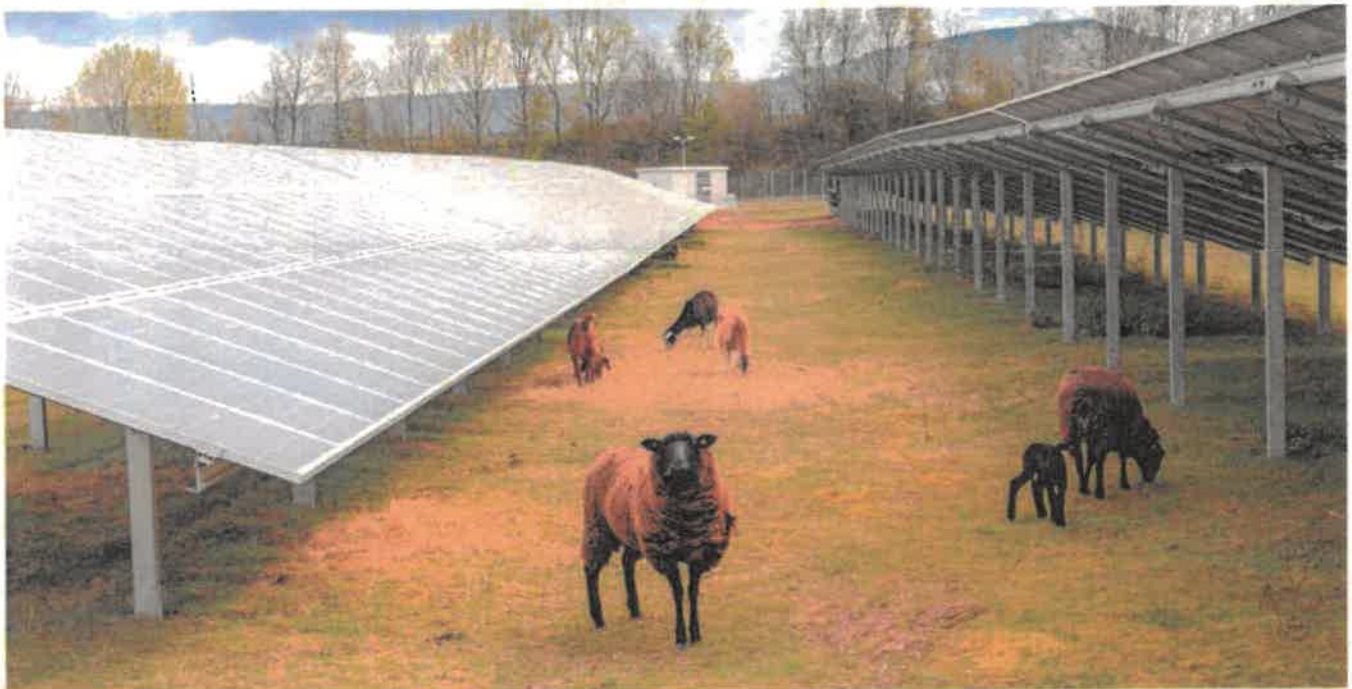


4. 'CCTV will film me walking through the site'

All CCTV cameras will be entirely inward facing, meaning that they will not intrude on any footpaths / into private property. Additionally, the CCTV cameras will be infrared cameras with no lighting associated with them, ensuring no light pollution will occur locally.

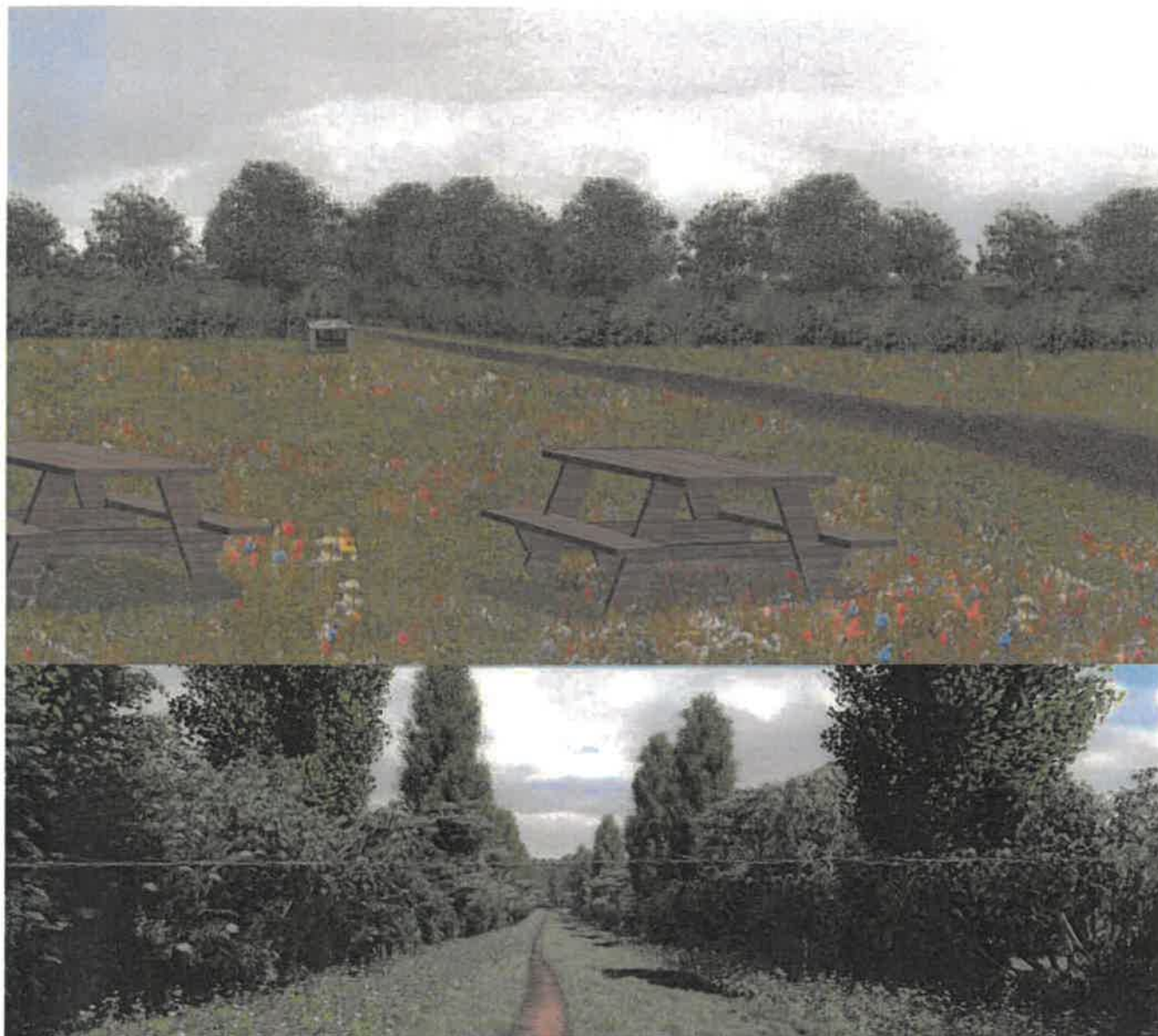
5. 'We need to focus on food security over energy security'

We agree that the farm has an important role to play in the UK food production market. The existing sheep and chicken farms will continue un-interrupted around the panelled areas, a method of farming embraced by the National Farmers Union (NFU). Additionally, following a full physical assessment of the soil quality by an independent consultant, it is evident that none of the land constitutes Best and Most Versatile (or excellent, very good, or even good quality) land, meaning that no high-quality crop land is being lost. In fact, the site is made up of mainly Grade 4 'poor' quality farmland. As the soil will have time to renew (with high quality grassland planted around the site) and retain more minerals / nutrients through the life of the solar farm, once the site is decommissioned back to its original state (a legally binding obligation within the lease with the landowner, and enforced via a planning condition with the council), the soil will be in a better state than previously, allowing it to be used effectively for future arable farming. Climate change is undoubtedly the biggest threat to food security, with the UK Government predicting a 73% loss in Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land by 2050 due to climate change. To hit our renewable energy targets, we would need to use just 0.3% of the UK's land for solar.



6. 'Walking through the site will be like walking through an industrial estate'

The fencing we are proposing to use around the site is a 'deer fence' used on allotments and around farms within the countryside. Other developers use iron grid, security style fencing, typically found on industrial estates, which gives an industrial look and aesthetic. We opt not to use this, and elect to use the softer deer style fence, which looks far more in place within the landscape. The footpaths would be increased to around 10m wide, with current Welsh policy requiring landowners to maintain an area of just 1-1.8m in width (additionally we will be creating a maintained path that can be walked on all year round, even when it would otherwise be less accessible due to mud / water runoff). The pathways would also be planted with wildflower and native hedgerow / trees, to create a 'green network' through the site. Indicative illustrations of this can be seen below.



7. 'Build it somewhere else (rooftops/brownfield land)'

Prior to selecting this land, we undertook a full review of the potential brownfield land in the area. Unfortunately, the land that existed was either already being used (for more lucrative, permanent development opportunities such as industrial use or housing estates) or was not suitable in size for such a scheme to be viable. In terms of rooftop solar, this has a vital role to play in achieving net zero, but unfortunately is currently unviable for many households due to the high upfront costs, or the shape/material of older/pitched rooftops. Likewise, many organisations who install rooftop solar use this to cover only a fraction of their own usage, and do not generate enough to export anything back to the grid (and likewise don't have an ability to export electricity to the grid). As such, whilst this is suitable for reducing industrial emissions, and should be encouraged, this would not be a viable solution to powering the UK's homes in a net-zero world. Finally, we can only develop schemes like this where a suitable grid connection exists, in order to allow us to export the energy. As such, we can only look for land that is nearby available grid (typically within a 10km radius).

8. 'The solar farm will be noisy'

The nature of solar farms mean they are generally very quiet, as the panels themselves are static and therefore do not move/produce any sound. Any element that has the potential to make a sound (such as the inverters or battery stations) has been strategically located away from any houses or sensitive receptors. A full noise assessment was undertaken as part of the planning application, which showed that potential noise impacts from these units will be minimal, and at or below existing background levels at all properties in Bishton.

Key																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																				
------------	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

