



DESIGN  
COMMISSION  
FOR WALES  
COMISIWN  
DYLUNIO  
CYMRU

# Design Review Report

Hirwaun Power Project

30<sup>th</sup> January 2014



## Declarations of Interest

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Panel members, observers and other relevant parties are required to declare **in advance** any interests they may have in relation to the Design Review Agenda items. Any such declarations are recorded here and in DCFW's central records.

### Review Status

Meeting date

Issue date

Scheme location

Scheme description

Scheme reference number

Planning status

### PUBLIC

21<sup>st</sup> January 2014

12<sup>th</sup> February 2014

Hirwaun

Gas power station

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Pre-application

## Declarations of Interest

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None Declared.

## Consultations to Date

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Non-statutory public consultation was held in June 2013; and statutory public consultation took place between October and November 2013. Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC, Natural Resources Wales and Brecon Beacons National Park Authority have also been consulted.

## The Proposals

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The proposal is for a gas-fired electricity generating power station on the Hirwaun Industrial Estate between Rhigos and Hirwaun. The facility will generate power at peak demand and will be manned by 2-3 people at a time. The site is several kilometres south of the Brecon Beacons National Park. The project is classified as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP), so an application will be examined by the Planning Inspectorate who will make a recommendation to the UK Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change. A Development Consent Order (DCO) is required, and Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC would approve any conditions, including a detailed landscape plan.

## Summary

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- This scheme demonstrates best practice in minimising the impact of an infrastructure on the environment
- Appointing architects at an early stage in the project has potential to add value through design

- The coloured cladding scheme needs further refinement to create the desired effect of blending with the landscape
- The Design Commission would welcome further engagement with the team on this project and any future projects of this nature in Wales.

## Main Points in Detail

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### **Environmental Impact**

Environmental aspects have been important drivers in the planning and design of this scheme. The siting and arrangement of the different elements of the power station have been well planned, and demonstrate that the site has been carefully analysed. The arrangement minimises impact on views into and through the site by removing the existing white shed and creating visual permeability between structures. It improves the current condition.

The power station function is consistent with the allocation of the site for industry in the Local Development Plan, and the development aims to optimise the impact on the surrounding environment. The site is located for good connection to the electrical and gas networks.

The designers have proposed a 'worst case scenario' which considers the greatest impact the project will have; and they are also taking into account cumulative visual and noise impact of other developments in the vicinity. It is good that they have been open about the need for flexibility, and it gives confidence that there will not be any unexpected results if/when the scheme is realised.

A combined heat and power facility to supply a district heating system was considered and evaluated. However, as the plant operation will be intermittent, it does not lend itself to CHP.

The team could consider designing an educational facility as part of the scheme, which would help school children and members of the public to understand power generation and its impact on the environment.

The attention given to the landscape strategy at this stage is encouraging. The layout already takes advantage of existing trees to screen views from the road, and the planting structure will work to improve screening. It will be worth investing in the landscape, as the facility will be there for many years, and the landscape will leave a lasting benefit to the valley.

If there are opportunities for advanced planting prior to construction of the plant, these should be taken advantage of.

It is currently proposed that the existing concrete slab from the storage shed is retained. Whilst reuse of old structures is good, breaking up the slab where it is not necessary would reduce its visual impact when viewed from the surrounding hills. It would also improve water permeability and increase opportunities for planting and habitat creation. Likewise, the existing car park to the south of the site could be improved.

Any opportunities for environmental enhancements to the rest of the business park should be considered.

### **Design Value**

It is encouraging that architects have been engaged at this early stage in the design and planning of an NSIP. This has great potential to influence and add value to the scheme.

The architects are proposing a coloured cladding system based on a pixelated image of the landscape. Whilst it is acknowledged that this idea needs further development, the gradation and choice of colours will need to be refined and ensure a subtle response in order to have the desired effect. The reflectivity of the cladding material should also be carefully considered as it will influence the impact of the structures when viewed from a distance.

### **Future Engagement**

It is good that this review has taken place at a relatively early stage in the project when there is scope for the review to influence the design and add value. We would encourage future reviews of this scheme as designs progress to a more detailed level.

We would also welcome early engagement on any future projects in Wales that the developer has planned.

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***A Welsh language copy of this report is available upon request.***

## **Attendees**

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Agent/Client/Developer:	Norman Campbell, Stag Energy
Architectural/Urban Designer:	James Dick, Sheppard Robson Architects Colin Turnbull, Peter Brett Associates
Planning Authority:	Christopher Jones, Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC
Design Review Panel:	
Chair	Wendy Richards
Lead Panellist	Ashley Bateson Toby Adam Simon Power

Observing:

Elfed Roberts  
Amanda Spence, Design Advisor, DCFW  
Carole-Anne Davies, DCFW