

RENEWABLE ENERGY: WIND FARM DEVELOPMENT



Ecology surveys for wind farms

In recent years BSG has built up a substantial portfolio of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) project experience for wind farm developments in England, Scotland and Wales. This experience amounts to over 50 projects of varying size, the largest involving 27 wind turbines. As such, BSG is well versed in planning and undertaking ecological surveys and assessments for wind farm developments.

These studies have invariably focused on birds as impacts on this group of animals have been widely reported. However, BSG also has a wealth of experience of undertaking surveys of the full range of biotic groups and habitats and assessing how they may be affected by wind farm proposals.

Recent changes and additions to domestic and European legislation have put greater emphasis on protecting certain species, habitats and wildlife sites, which in turn is a reason often given for objections to wind farm developments. In particular, recent studies on the potential impacts of wind farms on bats, has raised the profile of this group of protected species. Recent guidance prepared by Eurobats sets exacting standards for survey. BSG has a detailed understanding of the guidance and those recently published by Natural England. We use this understanding to develop appropriate survey protocols that best suit the particular circumstances for each new wind farm location.

In addition, BSG has gained considerable experience in representing clients at Public Inquiries across a wide range of development projects. This includes the preparation of evidence for submission and presentation and acting as an Expert Witness for wind farm developments, with particular reference to bats.

EIA and wind farms

Whether producing the ecological sections of an Environmental Statement or managing an entire EIA, BSG has a good understanding of the statutory EIA process and is able to contribute to all stages from initial screening and scoping to representation at public exhibitions. BSG has considerable experience of not only assessing the impact of development on protected species and bats in particular, but also in recommending mitigation measures that minimise or ameliorate the likely impacts of wind turbines, thereby averting potential objections and enabling development to proceed.

Appropriate assessment & wind farms

In some cases there may also be a requirement to complete an 'appropriate assessment' for developments that are likely to have a significant effect on the ecology of a Special Protection Area or a Special Area of Conservation. BSG has experience in carrying out appropriate assessments, which are a statutory requirement under the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994 (as amended 2009) for a number of sites throughout the UK.

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