

Environmental Considerations

An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Report will be submitted as part of the project's Section 36 application. This will report the findings of a comprehensive EIA which Scottish Ministers will take into account when deciding whether or not to grant consent.

Over the last two years, RES has undertaken a wide range of technical and environmental surveys on the site, including:

- Acoustics
- Archaeology and Cultural Heritage
- Hydrology and Peat
- Landscape and Visual
- Ornithology and Ecology
- Traffic and Transport
- Landscape and Visual

Our landscape architects have undertaken extensive assessment work to inform the design development and turbine layout. Key changes (since the scoping design) include the reduction in turbine numbers from 22 to 15, reduction in height of two turbines, and the movement of each wind turbine location to varying degrees to refine the design and minimise impacts wherever possible.

The photomontages presented at this exhibition have been prepared to NatureScot guidance and help to give an impression of what the proposal could look like from different viewpoints surrounding the site.

We are looking to achieve a design that strikes an acceptable balance between the visibility of the proposal and its ability to generate significant amounts of renewable energy. Ultimately, the acceptability of this design will be assessed by the Scottish Ministers in relation to current energy policy and planning requirements, having considered feedback from consultees as well as representations by members of the community and wider public.

Cultural Heritage

Our cultural heritage consultants have completed extensive site surveys, including an archaeological walkover, a setting assessment on designated assets and an accompanied site visit with Historic Environment Scotland (HES).

There are several designated assets within the site

boundary that are prehistoric in date and form part of a wider prehistoric landscape along the Cree Valley. The layout design has been revised in response to feedback from HES to minimise impacts on these designated assets as far as possible.

Ecology

Extensive ecological surveys have been completed across the site for habitats, protected species and fish. The survey findings show that the habitats are a mix of areas of commercial conifer plantation and a mosaic of common upland vegetation types which are grazed by livestock, including areas of acid and marshy grasslands, bracken, wet heath and bog. The protected species surveys indicate the presence of otter, badger, bats, reptiles and potentially pine marten at, or in close proximity to, the site. The fisheries surveys indicated many of the suitable watercourses on and around the site contained brown trout, with one watercourse downstream having low numbers of Atlantic salmon. The design of the wind farm has included avoidance and buffering off key features. Full survey details and results will be presented in the EIA Report. The results of the surveys will help to inform the development an outline Biodiversity Enhancement Management Plan.

Ornithology

Extensive ornithological surveys have been undertaken across the site. These comprised of targeted flight activity surveys and a range of distribution and abundance surveys for breeding waders, raptors and owls, black grouse and wintering birds. The survey findings showed limited presence of breeding waders with only snipe recorded breeding in relatively low numbers. Barn owl were identified to be nesting at one location within the site and potentially nesting at a second. Black grouse were also identified to be lekking at two locations within the survey area with one to two males present at each lek location.

The design of the wind farm has included appropriate buffers on known breeding sites for barn owl and lek sites for black grouse. Full survey details will be presented in the EIA Report.