



as necessary or for further survey or monitoring. Reports should be accompanied by appropriately detailed plans.

In accordance with Local Development Plan Policy DM14: Biodiversity Protection and Enhancement and the Council's duties under the Habitat Regulations, the impacts upon the Usk Bat Sites Special Area of Conservation (SAC) is required to be considered for all turbine applications – a screening form is included in Appendix A.

This guidance combines existing best practice guidance at the date of publication. If newer guidance has been published and adopted as best practice by the industry then this should be taken into consideration when formulating survey proposals.

All wind turbine development applications will be required to comply with national and local Planning Policies relating to nature conservation including Planning Policy Wales, Technical Advice Note 5 and relevant Local Development Plan policies.

The Council is also required to meet its duties under the Conservation of Habitat and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended) and Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.

For all small scale wind energy developments a Preliminary Ecology Appraisal (PEA) will be required to be submitted to include a desk study and field survey. Further surveys may be required dependant on the nature, scale and location of the turbine(s) and the sensitivity of the local environment as identified by the PEA. It is expected that in almost all cases additional species specific surveys for birds and bats will be required.

Surveys will only be accepted by the Council where;

- x they have been undertaken by a suitably qualified, knowledgeable and experienced ecologist and evidence of such is provided within the report
- x have been undertaken within the appropriate seasons
- x follow best practice survey standards and methodology
- x are compliant with the British Standard for Biodiversity: Code of Practice for Planning and Development (BS42020:2013)

For every development a desk study and field survey will be required to be undertaken to determine the likelihood of any potential impacts on biodiversity. This must include the site of the turbine and any works related to the development such as temp17. i-hood oTd a

by the consultant and all surveyors. The Council will only accept reports from tree surveyors who hold the following qualifications or industry recognised standards:

- x Certificate in Arboriculture level 4 (Tech Arbor A)
- x Diploma in Arboriculture level 6 (Dip Arb (RFS))
- x BSc or MSc (Degree or Masters) in arboriculture
- x Professi

amended) to ensure that there will not be an impact upon the features of the SAC as a result of any proposed development.

LDP Policy DM14 states that;

“Development proposals which are within 10km of the Usk Bat Special Area of Conservation (SAC) that would have an impact on connectivity corridors or cause direct or indirect disturbance to the features must be subject to a project level Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)”.

Each turbine application within 10km of the SAC is required to be screened for any likely significant effect upon the SAC, if a significant effect is identified as being possible then a full ‘appropriate assessment’ is required. Information should be provided to allow the LPA to undertake a HRA screening exercise for all small scale wind energy developments. Additional information and the appropriate form to undertake the HRA screening is contained in Appendix A.

For all turbine applications developers are required to undertake proportionate surveys to assess impacts upon bird species. Bird surveys should be carried out in accordance with the Scottish National Heritage guidance on birds and wind turbines (SNH, 2014 and SNH, 2006). A proportionate level of survey based on the size and scale of the wind energy development will be expected. Surveys should be undertaken by suitably qualified, knowledgeable and experienced ecologists (ornithologists). Relevant information should be provided at the beginning of reports to demonstrate the ecologist’s validity. Evidence of competency may be requested via CV, copies of previous reports and/or references.

Where methodologies including number of hours, number of seasons, timings etc. are not in accordance with these guidelines there must be a valid reason (the applicant has not provided enough time is not reasoned justification).

Impacts with regards to bird surveys should take into account the following:

- x Annex I birds of the EC Birds Directive;
- x Schedule I birds of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981);
- x NERC Act Schedule 42 species;
- x Birds listed on the RSPB Cymru’s red list of Birds of Conservation of Concern (‘Population Status of Birds’); and
- x Bird species which are included in the Blaenau Gwent Local Biodiversity Action Plan.

Key aspects to include within the bird survey reports include:

- x An assessment of desk top and field information carried out so far.
- x Details of the survey including dates, timings, duration, weather and survey vantage points, transects etc.
- x Results including estimated number of individuals and species, details of type of behaviour, a map with flight patterns, etc.
- x An assessment of the results in terms of a turbine of the specified height at that location including:
 - (i) The functionality of the site for foraging, migration and/or dispersal purposes;
 - (ii) The risk of incidental injury or killing through collision, disturbance and displacement; and
 - (iii) Cumulative impact assessment.

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- x Recommendations including further survey work and mitigation/compensation measures and any proposed monitoring.
 - x Recommended enhancements (added value to ecology over and above mitigation and compensation for impacts).

A final ecological report should be submitted to the Council to accompany the planning application. The report should be written in accordance with CIEEM guidance for ecological report writing and should include an assessment of the impacts associated with the development.

The assessment of impacts should include impacts associated with the operation of the development along with an assessment of construction and post construction impacts, including (but not limited to):

- x Impacts on protected sites or their features E.g. pollution, habitat loss, impacts on mobile species (in particular birds and bats).
- x Habitat loss. E.g. birds/bats due to disturbance from habitat, badger sett destruction, loss of reptile basking/hibernacula, amphibian feeding area, bat roosts, bird breeding sites etc.
- x Disturbance E.g. bats/birds from habitat, breeding birds during nesting, breeding badgers, water voles.
- x Displacement. E.g. birds from breeding/feeding sites.
- x Death to individuals. E.g. birds and bats through collision and barotrauma, killing/injuring of reptiles, killing/injuring of badgers.
- x Cumulative impacts from all of the above along with other wind turbines/farms and projects that have a similar effects.

Recommendations for further survey work, mitigation, enhancement or monitoring as appropriate should also be included along with detailed and clearly referenced plans.

When planning the location and construction of the turbine, in order to try to reduce risks to species and habitats from the turbine and in accordance with TAN 5 and LDP Policy DM14: Biodiversity Protection and Enhancement, the following points should be considered at an early stage. This may reduce the amount of mitigation required or reduce the survey effort, and in some cases may remove any ecological objections.

Improved fields or industrial sites should be considered in the first instance when locating turbines. However it is important to note that in some instances improved fields may be good habitat for wintering bird flocks. Similarly, industrial land can also be of biodiversity value – e.g. brownfield sites can make very good breeding habitat for lapwing. Therefore, care must be taken in not assuming that all improved and industrial land is automatically acceptable for turbines but would be a more suitable place to start.

Any cabling, access tracks or other requirements associated with the turbine which are included in the application, including off-site access, temporary compounds or lay down areas, should avoid removing trees, hedgerows, marshy grassland, scrub, woodland or any other habitat important for biodiversity. Additional survey work and mitigation will be required for these areas and this should be considered at an early stage.

Turbines should be located at least 50m from habitat more likely to be used by bats and 30m for Micro turbines. However siting a turbine over 50m away from habitat suitable

7. Conservation Objectives (as defined in NRW core management plan)	screes and ravines The vision for this feature Lesser Horseshoe Bat Rhinolophus hipposideros (EU species code:1304) is for it to be in a favourable conservation status, where all of the following conditions are satisfied: x The site will support a sustainable population of lesser horseshoe
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