

Environmental Considerations

Overview

ABO Energy is currently undertaking an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), and preparing an Environmental Statement (ES) which will be submitted alongside the planning application for the proposed Pullytean Wind Farm project. The information in the ES will then be considered by officials and statutory consultees (technical experts) to assess the potential impact of the proposal. Examples of the topics they will consider include:

- Socio-Economic Impact Assessment
 - Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment
 - Flora and Fauna Assessment
 - Fisheries Assessment
 - Avian Assessment
- Water, Geology and Peat Slide Hazard
 - Archaeology and Cultural Heritage
 - Transport, Access and Haulage
 - Noise Assessment
 - Shadow Flicker Assessment
- Telecommunications and Aviation Assessment
 - Grid Connection Assessment
 - Assessment of Significance of Impact Interactions

All considerations are site specific and are informed by detailed surveys and assessments. Whilst the ES for the proposed development may include the range of topics above, for the purposes of this pre-application community consultation process we have selected key topics to provide further information on below. If you are unsure about any aspect of the EIA process or want more information, please speak to a member of our project team.

Shadow Flicker

Shadow flicker is a flickering effect caused when rotating wind turbines periodically cast shadows – it is subject to strict guidelines based on best practice standards. A specialist computer modelling programme will be used to calculate the incidence of shadow flicker based on the positioning of the turbines and the maximum dimensions within the proposed range of turbines. Derry City and Strabane District Council Plan Strategy (2032) planning policy and Planning Policy Statement 18 Renewable Energy Best Practice Guidance (BPG) acknowledge that proposals for wind energy projects need to demonstrate that they will not cause significant harm to the amenity of any sensitive receptors by way of shadow flicker. Noting the location of the proposed turbines to the south, southwest and west of sensitive receptors on Ballymongan Road and Pullytean Road, a Shadow Flicker Assessment is currently being prepared and will be included in the ES. Shadow flicker limits will be strictly adhered to and will be controlled by planning conditions where necessary.

Tourism

As part of the Pre-application Discussions (PAD) with Council and statutory consultees, a Tourism Impact Assessment was prepared to de-scope this environmental discipline from requiring further assessment in the Environmental Statement. The Assessment was undertaken by CHL Consulting Company Ltd. who undertake a wide range of consulting across the tourism, hospitality, heritage, culture and arts sectors. The assessment found no evidence for, and no likelihood of, an outcome that might significantly compromise tourism value in the area were the proposed Pullytean Wind Farm to be approved. CHL Consulting concluded the proposed development will be neutral from a tourism perspective and complies with the relevant planning policy requirements in relation to tourism. As such, this does not need further assessment in the Environmental Statement.

Noise

Noise impacts from the proposed Pullytean Wind Farm will be assessed against the most up-to-date noise standards and in line with the Institute of Acoustics - Good Practice Guide. Background noise level measurements were undertaken in the locality, at 4 residential properties representative of the rural dwellings along Ballymongan Road, Pullytean Road and Shannaghy Road. The cumulative impact of the proposed Pullytean Wind Farm in addition to operational wind farms such as the Crighshane Wind Farm and the Tievenameenta Wind Farm will therefore be assessed. Noise modelling is currently ongoing with respect to finalising the layout and candidate wind turbine selection. The candidate wind turbines will have the ability to operate in a variety of noise ‘modes’ and therefore noise levels can be reduced (if deemed appropriate) post construction.

Ecology

AECOM has carried out a suite of terrestrial ecology surveys to inform the EIA for the proposed Pullytean Wind Farm. This has included a Phase 1 habitat and National Vegetation Classification (NVC) survey of the entire site, which identified ecologically sensitive habitats such as blanket bog. The findings from these surveys have directly informed the layout of the proposed development, helping to minimise impacts to blanket bog and other habitats. Regarding fauna, targeted mammal surveys have been carried out for badger and otter, with further surveys for bats and butterflies currently underway. The butterfly surveys are focussed on the protected species marsh fritillary and large heath. All surveys have been carried out in line with best practice guidance issued by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency. The results from the surveys will identify any requirements for mitigation measures to avoid or minimise potential impacts on protected and important species. In addition, a range of habitat enhancement measures are being implemented as part of the proposed development. These will include the removal of non-native conifers and rhododendron from the blanket bog, to prevent their spread.

