

Environmental considerations

As part of the planning process, RES will undertake an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). The purpose of an EIA is to identify any significant potential effects of a development on the environment and, where applicable, identify mitigation measures to avoid or reduce potential effects. It also identifies opportunities for restoration and enhancement. The EIA for Beinn Bheag Wind Farm will include the following assessments:

Ecology

The non-avian Ecological Impact Assessment will involve a desk based assessment of key sources to inform baseline ecological conditions, including review of ancient woodland, designated sites with non-avian ecological features, local ecological records, peatland, and deer and red squirrel distribution. In addition, a suite of surveys focusing on habitats and protected species (including bats, fish and notable species) will be undertaken to determine the presence of sensitive habitats and species' populations.

To date, we have undertaken various surveys to identify habitats that are of conservation importance or have groundwater dependence; investigate presence of protected mammals (such as badger, otter, pine marten, water vole and bats); and electrofishing and fish habitat suitability surveys. Further habitat and species assessment work will be undertaken over the coming months as the design develops and infrastructure siting is refined.

Ornithology

The understanding and avoidance of impacts to bird species, wherever possible, is an important factor in the siting of infrastructure within the site. We have commissioned over 500 hours of baseline ornithological survey work over the two years during breeding and non-breeding seasons to build our understanding of the species on site and inform our initial design.

Surveys have included flight activity, breeding bird and winter walkover surveys, as well as specific black grouse, breeding diver and raptor surveys. Consultations with third-party recording groups have also been undertaken to obtain existing monitoring data from the surrounding wider area. Some of the key species we have collated information on to inform the design of the project and identification of biodiversity enhancement opportunities include common scoter, red and black-throated diver, black grouse and white-tailed eagle.

Hydrology and Hydrogeology

The Beinn Bheag Wind Farm proposal has the potential to cause changes to the baseline hydrological and hydrogeological conditions on the site and to the receiving water environment so the EIA process will seek to identify sensitive water environment features; assess potential impacts and propose mitigation where required.

A number of initial studies and assessments have been carried out to map the groundwater-dependent terrestrial ecosystems (GWDTE), groundwater, water supplies and surface water features, and other potential water environment receptors.

Beinn Bheag Wind Farm proposal

beinnbheag-windfarm.co.uk

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