

Addendum to Environmental statement

A three volume Environmental Statement (ES) has been submitted in support of a planning application for a proposed community wind farm on Mynydd y Gwrhyd in the Upper Amman and Swa

nsea

Valleys

, within the administrative area of Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council. The Ordnance Survey grid reference for the centre of the site is SN727 107. The planning application was submitted in September 2004.

The planning application was for the erection of five (5) turbines, each with a height to the nacelle (the 'hub') of 60m with 80m diameter blades. The total height to the blade tip of the turbines would therefore be 100m. In addition, a substation facility, site access tracks, anemometry mast, on-site borrow pits and a temporary construction compound were required for the construction and operation of the wind farm site. The generating capacity of each of the turbines would be up to 2.75MW. The potential overall capacity of the wind farm site would therefore be 13.75MW.

Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council (NPTCBC) Planning Department released its Planning Report in March 2005. The Report recommended refusal on visual grounds. In order to provide more information on the visual impact, Awel Aman Tawe sought a deferral of the decision by the Planning Committee. Three additional photomontages have now been prepared from locations selected by NPTCBC. In addition, Awel Aman Tawe has decreased the number of turbines from five to four in order to reduce the visual impact. The turbine with the most significant visual impact (turbine 4 on the Site Layout, Figure 2 in the ES) has been dropped from the scheme.

In the Planning Report, the community wind farm was assessed against seven Key Issues. This Amendment has been provided to show the changes that result from the decrease in the number of turbines.

1. Development Plan Policies

The proposal was considered not to be a departure from the Development Plan. Visual impact has now reduced by dropping turbine 4 from the scheme (see point 7).

2. Ecology and Archaeology

The Planning Report considered that, subject to the implementation of the mitigation measures, the proposal would not have a significant adverse affect on the ecological and historical environment.

The ecological impact will now be reduced as foundations, hardstanding and a 300 metre

stretch of new access track for turbine 4 will not be built.

The archaeological impact will now be reduced as turbine 4 and the access track were near archaeological interests, 03397w, 03398w and 03399w as noted in the ES. All of these are post medieval boundary stones.

3. Noise Implications

Noise issues were assessed in the ES and background noise measurements were made at four locations neighbouring the site.

The Planning Report considered that noise implications will be insignificant. Dropping turbine 4 from the wind farm will further reduce noise levels.

4. Traffic Implications

The Planning Report considered that the windfarm would not have any significant adverse impacts on highway safety.

Since turbine 4 has now been dropped from the scheme, the number of heavy goods delivery vehicles will be reduced from approximately 648 to 518 over the course of the six months construction period.

5. Sustainability

The Planning Report notes the wind farm will generate renewable energy, reduce harmful emissions which are associated with climate change, acid rain and environmental pollution, and provide an income stream for community regeneration.

Dropping turbine 4 will reduce the generating capacity of the wind farm from 13.75MW to 11 MW. It will also decrease the amount of energy produced by the windfarm from 36,135 MWhrs to 28,908 MWhrs. This means the wind farm will be able to supply the equivalent of 6,880 households. The proposal will therefore provide the equivalent of approximately 12% of the energy needs of the County area, based on the 2001 Census which showed 57,600 households.

In terms of the reduction in emissions, the decrease in the number of turbines will result in the following:

5 turbines

4 turbines

Emissions

Tonnes/annum

Tonnes/annum

CO2

31,076

24860

SO₂

361

289

NO_x

108

86

The income stream for community regeneration will be reduced from £200,000 per year to £160,000 per year. With associated match funding, this revenue could generate a further 32 jobs over the 25 year lifetime of the wind farm.

Although one of the turbines on the Common has been dropped from the scheme, four local farming farmers will still be benefiting from rental from turbines and access tracks on their land.

6. Affect on Amenity

The Planning Report categorised Amenity as visual impact, noise and disturbance, ground stability, possible subsidence, affect on natural water supplies and traffic disturbance.

The impact of the wind farm was considered to be acceptable on all grounds excluding visual impact. The imposition of a condition to protect water supplies was considered to be appropriate.

7. Landscape and Visual Effects

The Planning Report recommended refusal due to the visual impact of the development on King Edward Rd and Llwynceilyn Rd in Tairgwaith; various locations in Gwaun Cae Gurwen; and on the Gwrhyd Road and on New Road between Gwaun Cae Gurwen and Tairgwaith.

Dropping turbine 4 from the scheme reduces the extent of the wind farm along the horizon and removes the turbine with the greatest visual impact on Tairgwaith and Gwaun Cae Gurwen. This can be seen from Viewpoints 2 and 4 in the ES. It can also be assessed from the additional

photomontages from King Edward Rd, Llwynceilyn Rd and Crescent Rd, Gwaun Cae Gurwen.