

## ADVICE NOTE

### Assessing the effects of wind turbines on bats



Baker Shepherd Gillespie (BSG) has been involved at a Public Inquiry in Cornwall for a proposed wind farm development at which Dr Peter Shepherd, Partner, presented evidence in relation to bats and wind turbines. The experience gained at this Inquiry highlights a number of issues that are considered to be relevant at sites throughout the UK.

At the Inquiry it was recognised that there is now a sufficient body of evidence to show that bats can reasonably be expected to be adversely impacted by wind turbines in the UK. It was this evidence that had led the local council, which had refused the application, and third party objectors to place great emphasis on the issue of bats at the Inquiry.

In preparing for the Inquiry our research revealed that a number of anti-wind farm websites now provide links to various research papers on adverse impacts

on bats. As such we believe that bats will increasingly form part of the case against turbine applications by objectors.

Given the increasing evidence base about bats and turbines, it is considered that it would be potentially counterproductive for any wind farm application requiring an Environmental Statement not to include a baseline survey for bats. Such a gap in the baseline data may leave any application vulnerable to a refusal due to lack of survey data or any approved scheme open to judicial review on the grounds of insufficient environmental information. This view is reinforced by guidance published by Eurobats (to which the UK Government is a signatory) and by interim guidance published by Natural England.

Whilst Natural England has not recommended that the Eurobats guidance is followed rigorously, their interim guidance does indicate that developers will need to gather sufficient data to understand how bats use the proposed wind farm site, particularly with regard to roost sites and flight paths. It is likely that in areas with good bat populations and high activity that a greater level of survey will be required than sites of low quality for bats.

The Natural England interim guidance states the following regarding survey effort at a proposed wind farm site: *"Until further evidence is provided we are unable to recommend prescriptive guidelines for survey effort. As a rough guide, it may mean at least one visit per month, or using remote detectors during that period of time. More effort is required in high risk situations. This may mean increased numbers of visits during key times, or increased use of remote detectors which may be left in situ for longer."*

BSG therefore recommends that advice is sought as early as possible about the scope of the bat survey work that is likely to be required at a particular development site.

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