

Project Profile

Upper Ogmere Wind Farm: Ecological Support And Impact Assessment

Overview

BSG Ecology provided ecological and ornithological survey, assessment and stakeholder consultation services to RES in relation to their seven turbine Upper Ogmere wind farm scheme.

Nature conservation stakeholder feedback on the draft EclA was positive. The scheme is now submitted, and will be determined by the Planning Inspectorate on behalf of Welsh Government in 2022.

Challenges

BSG Ecology was commissioned by Renewable Energy Systems (RES) Ltd in 2014 to provide ornithological and terrestrial ecological support for their proposed Upper Ogmere Wind Farm, in the County Borough of Bridgend, South Wales.

Due to complicated issues with regard to land ownership, the scheme took six years to be submitted to planning. The main ecological and ornithological challenges were:

- Deriving a robust but proportionate approach to baseline work, and refreshing this periodically as data aged and industry standard guidance changed.
- Adapting to the requirements of the consenting process for Developments of National Significance (DNS), introduced following the Planning (Wales) Act 2015.
- Determining how to achieve the biodiversity enhancement required under the Environment (Wales) Act 2016. Enhancement could not be delivered on site due to common grazing rights making management changes difficult to practically administer.

Solution

Following the establishment of the DNS process, BSG organised a Discretionary Planning Advice Service (DPAS) meeting with Natural Resources Wales (NRW) to discuss the scope of ornithological work, and agree any further survey required to support the application.

Baseline extended Phase 1, protected species and bird survey work was then periodically updated taking account of the comments from NRW made during the DPAS meeting and in their subsequent scoping response. These updates also included some minor changes in the focus of bat survey to bring it into line with multi-agency industry guidance for bat survey and monitoring at wind farms (SNH et al., 2019).

The draft ecological and ornithological impact assessments were provided to NRW as part of the final pre-application consultation. A very positive response was received, with only minor points of clarification requested. These were addressed in the final Environmental Statement following further consultation with NRW.

Ahead of the planning submission, an in principle arrangement was made with Bridgend County Borough Council to help fund locally important biodiversity initiatives, thereby delivering the biodiversity enhancement requirements of the planning process in Wales.

Outcome

The scheme was consented in September 2022.

Testimonial

"BSG Ecology has now worked closely with RES on a number of renewable energy projects for more than a decade and consistently provides first class professional support. The unexpected project delays at Upper Ogmere required a flexible approach and BSG provided timely advice and survey resources to ensure the application was submitted at the earliest opportunity."

Chris Jackson, Senior Development Project Manager, RES

