

Wind farms: new report provides latest know-how on reducing environmental impact

Title

A BirdLife **report** endorsed on the 6th of December at the Standing Committee of the **Bern Convention** presents the most up-to-date scientific information to reduce wind farms' impact on the environment. It updates a 2003 report which contains scientific evidence that is currently being used in wind farm projects.

Since 2003, there have been advancements in wind energy technology that allow for greater energy production and less environmental disturbance. These new advancements provide more possibilities in efficiency, sophistication, and the distance from towns and populations; even offshore locations! Research has also permitted developers to better design plans that avoid unwanted negative impacts on the environment and wildlife that are both costly and inefficient.

The report, based on literature and experience from projects on the ground from the past 10 years, outlines best practices in terms of strategic planning and environmental impacts. Countries and developers who want to optimize their wind farms' construction are now provided with a toolkit that will allow them to avoid biodiversity loss and save time and money.

Wind energy development and nature conservation can indeed share common interests: Whitelee, near Glasgow in Scotland, is a good example of wind farm contribution to habitat enhancement.

The development of this 5,000 ha Scottish Power Renewables site, includes large-scale habitat restoration and enhancement, delivered through a Habitat Management Plan (HMP). Part of the HMP involves the re-establishment of 900 ha of heathland and blanket bog through the clearance of conifer plantations, drain blocking, and the continued management of mosaic habitats benefiting black grouse and other wildlife. A steering group of environmental experts, including nature conservation NGO RSPB Scotland (BirdLife in Scotland), provides advice and helps scrutinise the delivery of the HMP. In favour of the development of renewable energy and encouraged by this experience, RSPB Scotland supported ScottishPower

Renewable's plan to add 75 turbines to the farm, extending its capacity to power about 300,000 homes. The Whitelee visitor centre, which opened in 2009, now attracts over 9,000 visitors a month and includes an exhibition on the construction of the wind farm and the ongoing habitat management work conducted on site.

Download or read the Bern Convention [report](#) **Wind farms and Birds: an updated analysis of the effects of wind farms on birds, and best practice guidance on integrated planning and impact assessment.**?

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