

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

Friday 6 December, Brussels – A report endorsed today at the Standing Committee of the [Bern Convention](#) (1) presents the most up-to-date scientific information to reduce wind farms' impact on the environment.

“This new report provides to countries and developers who want to optimize their wind farms’ construction the best practices that will allow them to avoid biodiversity loss and save time and money.” said Willem Van den Bossche, BirdLife Europe European Nature Conservation Officer.

The [report](#) (2) entitled **“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”** was commissioned by the Bern Convention to BirdLife. 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. This new report, based on literature and experience from projects on the ground from the past 10 years, demonstrates that advanced technology development and nature conservation can indeed share common interests. It also shows the best existing practices on strategic planning – what to consider when setting up a new wind farm – and environment impact assessments.

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.

“We are definitely supporting the development of wind energy if plans are designed following these recommendations.” concluded Willem Van den Bossche, BirdLife Europe European Nature Conservation Officer.

BIRDLIFE EUROPE

BirdLife Europe is a Partnership of nature conservation organisations in 49 countries, including all EU Member States, and a leader in bird conservation. Through its unique local to global approach BirdLife Europe delivers high impact and long term conservation for the benefit of nature and people.

Notes to the Editor

- (1) The [Bern Convention](#) is an International body for nature conservation. It is constituted with 51 European and African countries, including all EU Member States. Other entities such as the EU, non-Contracting States, governmental and non-governmental organisations are part of the Convention as observers.

Its members gather once a year to monitor the implementation and the review of the Convention's legal agreements. The meeting is attended by delegations from 51 Contracting Parties, including the European Union, observer States, representatives of governmental and non-governmental organisations, international biodiversity conventions, agreements and programmes, as well as by independent experts. Over 100 participants are expected at this year's meeting to discuss issues such as climate change, invasive alien species, protected areas, illegal killing of birds, among others.

BirdLife works with Conventions such as the Bern Convention, the [Convention on Migratory Species \(CMS\)](#) and [AEWA \(African- Eurasian Waterbird Agreement\)](#), in which experts exchange knowledge, to develop and promote best practices.

- (2) Link to 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": <https://wcd.coe.int/com.instranet.InstraServlet?command=com.instranet.CmdBlobGet&InstranetImage=2392222&SecMode=1&DocId=2012800&Usage=2>

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