

## LATE ITEMS REPORT

### FOR DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE MEETING OF 28 NOVEMBER 2007

#### **ITEM B1 : 2007/125 - REAPS MOSS, BACUP**

Since publication of the report in respect of the application for a Wind Farm at Reaps Moss a further letter of objection has been received. It expresses objection to the access track and states that the only people to benefit from these giant windmills will be the manufacturer.

I have also received a number of letters from the Applicant/Agent in relation to a number of the issues the application gives rise to and asking that determination of the application is deferred in order that this information can be reflected in the Officer's report. The following points are made:

#### Effects of the Development on Badgers

The site has been visited again within the last month and, in the vicinity of the proposed access track, new signs of badger feeding activity have been found and an old hole has been opened-up by badgers. This single hole, with no other entrances found in the surrounding area, is probably an outlying-sett from a main-sett further down the valley. The proposed track will not destroy this outlying-sett and, prior to the commencement of any work, a licence will be sought from Natural England. It does not consider that *"the slight disturbance from construction, if properly carried out under appropriate licensing and conditions, will have any significant effect on the conservation status of the local population"*.

#### Peat Deposit

In accordance with Natural England's wishes the vegetation on the site was surveyed using the NVC classification system. Accordingly, it is able to advise that no part of the wind farm infrastructure will directly impact on the central block of the bog, where was found nationally-significant blanket-bog. It does not consider that the construction will further degrade vegetation on the already degraded (eastern) section of bog, apart from the obvious loss of degraded vegetation on the actual construction footprint areas.

The peat where the access track at Reaps Moss is proposed is not particularly fibrous. Nevertheless, compression of the peat (due to the loading of a track) would still be likely to occur and could very well lead to settlement/pooling of water at its edges. Hence the intention to use, in places, floating-road design. Such a construction-method has been used extensively throughout the UK for wind farm construction where peat depths are in excess of 0.5m. Although such floating-roads result in slight changes to the peat thickness and the surrounding

hydrology they are often considered to have fewer impacts on peat and release less carbon than would conventional construction methods.

As the volume of water within the peatland area as a whole will be unchanged drying out of peat is not expected to result from the development. Difficult though it is to calculate the CO2 emissions that will result from the wind farms construction, two different methodologies have been used to arrive at a figure and this shows the wind farm would 'payback' its emissions in 2 months and 4 months of beginning electricity-generation, respectively.

Whilst it is not possible to avoid the entire bog area completely without encountering other planning issues, the area of high-quality blanket-bog has been avoided. The turbines and associated infrastructure will be on degraded bog and it proposes mitigation that would restore the bog to a better condition than it is at present.

The other planning issues that would be encountered if the turbines were moved further east, or a greater length of Limers Gate were to be up-graded to provide access to them, include: 1) encroachment on to Inchfield Common; 2) reduction of the separation-distances/oversailing of public rights of way, contrary to the advice of PPS22 guidance; & 3) the need to avoid polluting the numerous watercourses that feed Gorpley Reservoir.

#### Landscape and Visual Impact

It wishes to re-iterate that the site does not conflict with landscape designations in the region. It remains of the view that the national need to address climate change is a redressing consideration.

In siding with the opinion of Julie Martin Associates in terms of landscape & visual impact the Council is largely rejecting the landscape opinions of LCC(Planning) and Natural England. In particular, more weight should be given to the view of LCC's Landscape Assessor, who takes a more strategic objective approach to consideration of the application, cognisant of the need to achieve targets for renewable energy generation in the county.

It disagrees with Natural England's comment that the proposed turbines are out of scale with the landscape of Reaps Moss, saying that when the Lovejoy report was completed in 2005 1.3MW turbines were the standard, but this report is now clearly out of date as 2-3MW turbines are the norm. However, it offers to reduce the tip-height of the 3 turbines it proposes from 125m to 110m, enabling the visual spread of the wind farm to be reduced.

#### S.106 Planning Obligation

It is willing to enter into a Legal Agreement to ensure payment is made of £225,000 over the 25 year life of the wind farm into a Local Community Trust for

expenditure locally on regeneration and energy efficiency measures, or is willing to pay this sum over in a single payment at the time construction commences.

National Grid Wireless has indicated that the works it may require in order to maintain the BBC re-broadcast link from Winter Hill to Todmorden will cost in the order of £6,000. It is willing to meet this cost if the works are necessary.

The agreement of the landowners for the Habitat Management Plan to run for 10 years beyond the date of de-commissioning has now been obtained.

Key consultees have been provided with the additional information received from the Applicant/Agent. Officers will comment verbally upon any responses received from them.

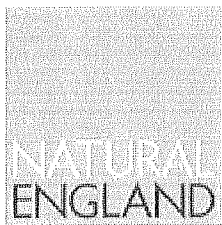
Appended is a recent press release from Natural England relating to the value of peat bogs as carbon sinks.

The Council is required to acknowledge all letters in support or in objection to planning applications. This was done and Democratic Services received the following calls:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Reason</b>
S Widdop	2 Moorside Paddock, Moorside, Clackheaton, W. Yorkshire	S Widdop not resided at address for some years. No residents of that address have written to the Council about the windfarm.
Mr Sheard	33 Longacres Drive, Whitworth	Mr Sheard and his wife were objectors but they are now in favour. Neil Birtles emailed 19/11/07.
Mr O M Malley	25 Abersway Grimsby, North East Lincs	Does not understand why he has been written to and the name was incorrect. Actual name is N McNalley.
R Hurst	4 Egerton Street, Littleborough, OL15	No-one by the name of R Hurst has ever lived at the address. Current resident has lived there since 1961.

In addition 27 letters have been returned undelivered by Royal Mail.

NEIL BIRTLES  
Senior Planning Officer  
27/11/07



## Press & News

# 'Better bogs create carbon sinks' - says Natural England

19 November 2007

'We must protect and enhance our upland peat bogs - they are the UK's most important and vulnerable carbon store' was the message from Natural England at this year's Moors for the Future conference in the Peak District on Monday 19 November.

Over 10 billion tonnes of carbon is estimated to be stored in UK soils, over half of which is in peat, equivalent to around a year and a half of global greenhouse gas emissions.

Sir Martin Doughty, Chair of Natural England, said: "Evidence shows that the degradation of soils through over-grazing, fires, drainage and erosion is releasing five times more carbon dioxide into the atmosphere every year than from all domestic flights in the UK. Peat soils contain significant amounts of carbon and, if damaged, can become a major source of emissions.

Improving the management of our upland peat bogs alone could reduce our carbon emissions by up to 400,000 tonnes per year. Natural England is encouraging land managers and politicians to recognise the vital role that protecting and enhancing peat bogs can play in reducing our carbon footprint."

### Top facts

- The amount of carbon stored in the UK's peatlands is equivalent to at least three years of the UK's total carbon dioxide emissions.
- There is more carbon stored in the UK's peat than in all the forests of Britain and France combined.
- Carbon dioxide emissions from soils totalled 13.69 million tonnes in 2005. By comparison, carbon dioxide emissions from domestic aviation was 2.47 million tonnes.
- All of the peatlands in England and Wales would absorb around 41,000 tonnes of carbon a year if in a pristine condition but could emit up to 381,000 tonnes of carbon a year if they are damaged by practices such as excessive burning, drainage and over-grazing.
- The restoration and enhancement of peatlands could save around 400,000 tonnes a year, which is equivalent to the greenhouse gas emissions from 1.1 billion car miles or 84,000 family-sized cars.
- Peat land landscapes are also important habitats for up to 5,000 species of plants and animals such as Sphagnum mosses and cotton grasses, adders, oyster catchers and short-eared owls.