

WOS Position Statement on Onshore Wind Farms 2024

WOS in general supports the development of renewable energy projects due to the acknowledged climate crisis but believes they should not be detrimental to any bird populations given the ongoing biodiversity crisis and the severe declines in many bird populations especially upland birds.

Site selection is crucial and WOS recommends that detailed screening is undertaken by developers before they commit to any site so that sensitive sites, especially designated sites such as SPAs and SSSIs where the designated species are possibly vulnerable to windfarm constructions are avoided to save developers time and money.

Curlew are known to be vulnerable to windfarm development (<https://www.bto.org/our-science/publications/peer-reviewed-papers/greater-impacts-wind-farms-bird-populations-during>) and given the critical nature of curlew populations in Wales sites with breeding curlew or immediately adjacent to known breeding curlew sites must be avoided.

Detailed bird surveys, to include breeding birds, wintering and passage birds and overflying birds will be required to inform an Environmental Impact Assessment. Surveys should be for a minimum of 2 years and follow the latest SNH (now known as NatureScot) Guidance. <https://www.nature.scot/doc/recommended-bird-survey-methods-inform-impact-assessment-onshore-windfarms> . It should be noted however that parts of this guidance are specific to Scotland, especially the list of sources on information and further contacts and that Natural Resources Wales and Welsh local record centres will need to be contacted for specific Welsh guidance.

Environmental Impact Statements should follow the guidance provided by CIEEM - <https://cieem.net/resource/guidelines-for-ecological-impact-assessment-ecia/>

In any cases of doubt the precautionary principle must be applied, especially when any Birds of Conservation Concern are present on the proposed site. <https://birds.wales/milvus-contributions/birds-of-conservation-concern-wales-4-the-population-status-of-birds-in-wales/>

All sites should include a management plan to detail how biodiversity gain will be achieved as part of the development, with sufficient funds allocated for the life of the development.

*The Welsh Ornithological Society is registered as a charity in Wales and England, no. 1037823
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