

Bird Studies – The Scottish National Heritage SNH are the recommended bird survey methods to inform impact assessment of onshore wind farms

The purpose of the SNH guidelines is to define a set of standards for bird surveys at proposed wind farms on land. Survey is usually required to inform turbine layout, species protection plans (particularly with specially protected species), and mitigation including habitat management plans. It also forms a baseline for any future monitoring. This guidance, if followed, should produce sufficient quantitative information to assess the potential effects of the development on birds

The guidance covers:

Essential pre-survey requirements needed to define a site-specific survey programme;

Detailed recommendations for survey methods.

It is part of a package of ornithological guidance for renewable energy developments which is cross-referenced throughout; see <http://www.snh.gov.uk/planning-and-development/renewable-energy/onshore-wind/> for a full list.

Many of the survey methods and principles behind this guidance can also be applied to assessment of other types of development but this guidance is not suitable for the offshore and inshore elements of marine renewables projects.

Potential Impacts on Birds

Wind farms present three main potential risks to birds (Drewitt & Langston 2006, 2008; Band *et al.* 2007):

Direct habitat loss through construction of wind farm infrastructure;

Displacement (sometimes called indirect habitat loss) if birds avoid the wind farm and its surrounding area due to turbine construction and operation. Displacement may also include barrier effects in which birds are deterred from using normal routes to feeding or roosting grounds;

Death through **collision** or interaction with turbine blades and other infrastructure.

For each of these three risks, detailed knowledge of bird distribution and flight activity is necessary in order to predict the potential effects of the wind farm on birds.

Autum 2018 / Winter 2019 season Bird studies at the proposed wind farm site on the northern slopes of Slieve Bernagh are currently ongoing. This includes Vantage point and Transect surveys.