

Black Law Windfarm Environmental Impact Assessment ScottishPower

ScottishPower's main business is the provision of dependable electricity supplies, and it operates several coal, gas, wind and hydroelectric power stations. In response to international and national concerns about climate change the UK is seeking to generate more of its electricity from renewable resources, and under the Renewables Obligation (Scotland) all electricity producers will be subject to escalating financial penalties if they fail to do this. On-shore 'windfarming' is an established renewable energy technology with the potential for substantial expansion in Scotland, and ScottishPower are relying on this to meet their obligation in the short to medium term.

Larger windfarms close to the main centres of demand are attractive for technical and environmental reasons, and ScottishPower identified a potentially suitable site at Black Law, near Forth, about 20 miles east of Glasgow. Here the company wishes to erect a 134 MW windfarm (sufficient to generate power for 80,000 homes), consisting of 67 turbines, each with a hub-height of 70m and a blade diameter of 80m. Entec was engaged to carry out the Environmental Impact Assessment of the project, co-ordinating inputs from external landscape and noise specialists as well as a multi-disciplinary in-house team, and

assisted in the design through constraints identification and mapping, and a series of specialist studies. Ancillary operations requiring assessment included the conversion of 480ha of conifer plantation to modified blanket bog and broadleaf woodland, and the sourcing of roadstone for use on the site through the reopening and restoration of a derelict opencast mine. These have required the development of a habitat management plan in consultation with the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) and the various landowners, and the reassessment of coal reserves and development of a revised method of working for the opencast mine, together with detailed restoration plans. Entec also undertook the EIA of the overhead power line that will connect the windfarm to the national electricity distribution system.

*Assessing the
environmental
impacts of a
large windfarm
in Scotland's
Central Belt*

