Estimating the type, cost and timescales of the studies needed to get planning permission for a wind power project

This exercise will encourage attendees to consider and discuss what information will be needed to support the planning application for a medium-to-large scale wind turbine, if expert support will be required, how long it will take to gather and prepare the information and how much it might cost.

Time needed
50 minutes (plus 10 further minutes if you want open discussion)

- 10 minutes to explain and break into groups
- 20 minutes for group discussions
- 20 minutes to feedback and create timeline
- Optional 10 more minutes for discussion

Films that accompany this exercise

- 'Getting planning permission' (disc 2): required
- 'Introduction to wind' (disc 1): required
- 'Setting up a wind project' (disc 1): required

Materials needed

- A3/flipchart sheets for each group to make notes and marked up like **Table 1** below.
- Pens/markers for groups to make notes.
- Series of A3 sheets and tape, blu-tack or similar, so they can be attached to the wall to create the timeline.
- Large marker for facilitator to create timeline.

Arranging the room
Stick the A3 sheets to the wall (landscape) and to create one long sheet which you will mark up with the timeline during the feedback from the exercise.

Running the exercise

Stage 1) Grouping and explaining (10 minutes)

Explain to the whole audience that you are going to work in groups to assess all the information needed to inform the preparation/determination of a planning application for a wind turbine.

Ask them to split into groups (how many depends on the total number of people/tables/flipcharts you have). Give each group a flipchart table to be completed and pens.

Tell them that they are going to consider all the potential information that will be needed to inform the preparation and/or determination of a wind turbine planning application, where this information could be available (or if it will need to be a bespoke commission), if expert support will be needed, the potential time needed to obtain the information and the potential costs involved.

They should record their thoughts on the pre-prepared **Table 1.**

Whilst the groups are doing the exercise mark up a skeleton timeline of the A3 sheets on the wall which will be added to during the feedback – see example at the top of the next page.

Setting up the groups and explaining this should take not more than 10 minutes

Stage 2) Carrying out the exercise (20 minutes)
Allow not more than 20 minutes for the groups to follow the instructions you have given. Circulate the room to make sure they all understand.

Stage 3) Feedback

Advise people when there are just 5 minutes remaining to allow them to finalise their feedback.

Once everyone has finished, get one person from each group to feedback a maximum of 2 points from each of the categories from the sheet – this limitation will allow all the groups to feedback with limited repetition. If you have a small number of groups you can ask for any other points once each group has given their initial feedback. As each of the groups provides their feedback annotate the timeline accordingly – see example below:

Once the timeline is filled with all the possible stages of the process, all the time estimates can be added together to give total timescale for the project, but remember that some of the research and studies can be carried out at the same time. The timeline can also be annotated with some cost estimates, where these are known.

Explain to the group that there are many factors involved and therefore this timescale can only be taken as a rough estimate at this stage, and the whole process may be quicker or slower.

Stage 4: Optional discussion period

This could be a useful point to take suggestions from the floor about what to research first. It's likely that the issue of *cost* will arise early on, so you can make it clear that you have information on funding and the financial support from the feed-in tariff which you will be addressing either later in this event, or in a future event.

Things you might want to throw into the discussion are:

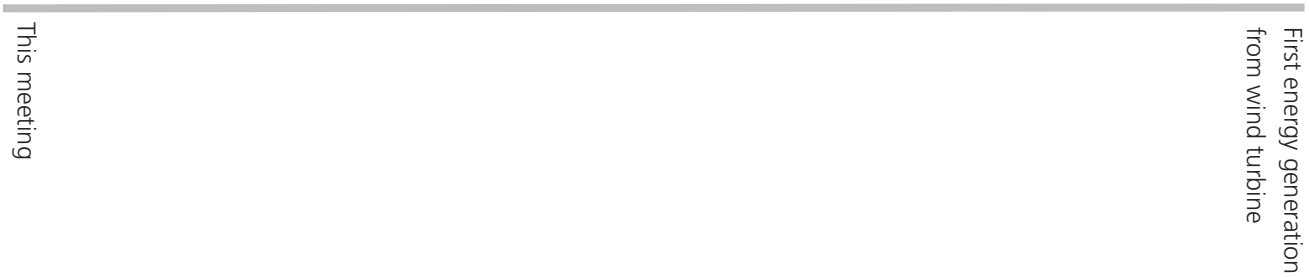
- Local knowledge, experience and contacts
- Working with the local authority
- Responsibilities for co-ordinating information/tasks

Tie up the discussion by asking if anyone would be interested in getting involved with researching the options. And remember to record all the comments made on a flipchart – you can ask a member of the audience to be the recorder if you are running this event alone.

Output

The feedback from each of the groups should be used to create a timeline of the planning application process, highlighting key milestones and illustrating the timing implications of requirements such as environmental and other surveys, which can only be conducted at certain times of the year. This can also be used to highlight necessary work that will incur significant costs, which can assist with budgeting for the project.

Timeline 1 Before filling in



Timeline 2 Example of what the timeline might look like as the group fill in the detail

Note for 'siting the turbine'

Although only an outline plan of the site showing the location of the turbine(s) is required to gain planning permission a full assessment of the wind resource will be required before planning permission is sought. Also note that planning permission will need to be sought for any wind speed measuring equipment (e.g. anemometer mast) and as a consequence it is recommend that the survey of public opinion, above, is done prior to seeking permission for any anemometer mast. See the 'Introduction to wind' and 'Setting up a wind project' sections of the DVD for a reminder of what is involved.

Table 1 Information needed to support the planning application for a medium-to-large scale wind turbine

Research and/or information needed	Potential sources	Expert support needed? (Y/N)	Timescale	Cost

Table 1 The information in this table (except for the column headings) is provided as a guide only and for the facilitator. This should not be given to the groups until the end of the feedback session. Timescales/cost will vary on a case by case basis, use the information in these columns as a guide to get attendees thinking about costs and timescales.

Research and/or information needed	Potential sources	Expert support needed? (Y/N)	Timescale	Cost
Siting the turbine (see note, below)	Local authority 'resource' study, which identifies suitable sites or areas	Initially no. However, to assess wind speed and determine financial feasibility, a consultant might be required	~ 1 month	Medium. £3k -£5k if a consultant study is required
Site plans	From Land Registry	Yes, if detailed plans required	A few weeks	Low. Less than £1,000 unless a complicated site
Survey of public opinion	Will need to be prepared by the community, unless a suitable survey has been conducted by the local authority	No	Approx 3 months – to allow time for the survey to be prepared, distributed, completed and the results assessed	Low, assuming volunteer time used
Visual Impact Assessment	A wider study covering the local area may be available from the local authority	Depends on level of info available from the local authority and if expertise exists within community, if not a landscape architect or consultant will be required	1-4 months depending on level of existing information and local expertise	Low to medium depending on existing information. Will require assessment, and creation of photomontages, which could cost £2k to £5k
Ecological Assessment	Likely to be needed from scratch as it's unlikely appropriate surveys will already be available	Yes - will require input from a Environmental Assessment expert	Up to 12 months to allow for the necessary surveys of different species	High. Could to be in the region of £50k-£100k
Architectural Assessment	Initially local authority or county archaeologist, who will indicate what studies will be required.	If survey required then yes - will require Archaeological expertise to conduct surveys	1-3 months to allow for the necessary surveys (if required)	Medium. Could to be in the region of £10k-£20k
Comms (microwave & radar) & TV assessment	Ofgem can provide initial information	Yes – Specialist Consultant	Could take several months from initial contact	Medium. Survey could cost around £10k
Landscape Impact	A wider study covering the local area may be available from the local authority	Yes – specialist consultant, if information not available from local authority	2-3 months depending on information already available	Medium. Study could cost around £15k depending on information available
Noise Assessment	Will require info from turbine manufacturer, and software to assess impact on 'receptors' (e.g. residential properties)	Yes, Specialist Consultant is likely to be required to model and assess the level of impact	1-4 months depending on level of existing information and if any local expertise exists	High. Study could cost between £30k and £50k, depending on number of 'receptors' and level of measurement required
Shadow Flicker Assessment	Study by specialist consultant likely to be required	Yes, Specialist Consultant is likely to be required to model the level of impact	1-4 months	Medium. Study could cost between £5k and £15k depending on number of 'receptors'
Heritage and conservation area considerations	Local Planning Dept – Heritage or Conservation Officer	Yes, if in a sensitive area and a survey or assessment is required	1-2 months	Low. £1k to £2k unless a complicated site
Electrical connection – design constraints	District Network Operator	Yes, if design study required	Could take several months from initial contact	Medium. £3k- £5k (if study required)