

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT - RESULTS

Title of Policy	Public Engagement for sub-20MW Wind Turbine Proposals – Good Practice Guidance
Summary of aims and desired outcomes of Policy	
Directorate: Division: team	Local Government and Communities, Planning and Architecture Division, Energy and Climate Change team.

Executive summary

The Public Engagement for sub- 20MW Wind Turbine Proposals – Good Practice Guidance provides a framework advice on how meaningful public engagement could be undertaken in the context of wind energy development proposals. The guidance is being produced as an agreed outcome of a public petition.

An EQIA was undertaken during the development of the guidance, the results of which informed the content of the final good practice guidance.

No significant issues have been raised as a result of the EQIA and the assessment found that there would be a positive impact on advancing equality of opportunity for the protected characteristics of age, disability, sex and race.

Background

Public Petition PE1469 sought to urge the Scottish Government to increase the neighbour notification distance for wind turbine proposals from the present 20 metres. A commitment was given to the Public Petitions committee to consult publically on draft

good practice guidance on public engagement on planning proposals involving wind turbines.

The Public Engagement for sub-20MW wind turbine proposals Good Practice Guidance sets expectations for good practice for local authorities, developers, landowners, community representatives and other relevant stakeholders and aims to provide practical help on better engaging with the public.

The aims of the policy contribute in particular to the national outcomes of:

'Our public services are high quality, continually improving, efficient and responsive to local people's needs'

But also to:

We have tackled the significant inequalities in Scottish society. We take pride in a strong, fair and inclusive national identity. We live in well-designed, sustainable places where we are able to access the amenities and services we need. We realise our full economic potential with more and better employment opportunities for our people.

The Scope of the EQIA

The Equalities Impact Assessment provided data relating to the individual protected equality groups of age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, race and religion or belief. No specific information was available for the protected characteristic of religion or belief or sexual orientation. The Government's equality evidence finder was used to collect information alongside evidence from:

- a public consultation with two specific questions linked to equalities issues was accompanied by a partial EQIA.
- previous public consultation exercises undertaken by Planning and Architecture Division for example on the contents the

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revised Scottish Planning Policy (2014) and Revised National Planning Framework (2014)

- impact assessments undertaken with Planning and Architecture Division for previous planning policies.

The EQIA process opened up dialogue on the issue, and helped to identify positive impacts of the guidance. The findings of the EQIA have informed the content of the good practice guidance.

Key Findings

The assessment found that there would be a positive impact on advancing equality of opportunity for the protected characteristics of age, disability, sex and race. However, limited information was available on the protected characteristics of gender reassignment and religion or belief.

The information contained within the initial impact assessment a provided general support for the good practice guidance. Information supported the view that better, more accessible engagement principles had the potential to improve relations between all parties involved in a development, as well as the wider public.

Responses from the consultation reported:

- Some Positive Impacts on particular groups of people. There was a feeling that Good public engagement benefits all groups of people and a suggestion that in particular the guidance has the potential to improve involvement for established gypsy / traveller communities.
- A view from one respondent that the impact would be neutral.
- Little in the way of negative impacts directly arising from the guidance, but recognition of the need to not directly or indirectly discriminate those without internet access.

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- Potential to advance equality of opportunity between different groups, in terms of promoting engagement, improving information as well as benefits to democracy.

In response to information gathered and consultation responses, the guidance now places more emphasis on:

- encouraging consulters to identify and engage with relevant communities in the vicinity, as well as those which may be 'harder to reach'

- encouraging engagement style that it is inclusive and reduces barriers (physical or otherwise) to those who wish to engage but feel like they are not able to.

- encouraging consulters to be aware of and respond to those who may have specific additional needs in order to participate.

All of the above are considered to impact positively on groups with protected characteristics, particularly the young and the old, and those with reduced mobility including pregnant women and those with young children.

Recommendations and Conclusion

The impact assessment suggests that the implementation of the good practice guidance will have a positive impact on a number of protected characteristics. The assessment process provided evidence which supported promoting better quality public engagement on wind turbine applications.