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Wind Turbine / Farm Scoping Opinion Requests and Pre-Planning Enquiries

NATS have a policy of early engagement with developers, particularly in the area of wind turbines and wind farm developments. Since NATS is processing an unsustainable number of scoping opinion requests received from developers and Local Planning Authorities (LPAs), the decision has been made to provide some clarification on this matter.

NATS have offered pre-planning services to developers since 2005, however, in 2010, it revised and launched its pre-planning consultancy service. This provides an early, yet formal indication to developers of the anticipated impact of their proposed development upon NATS' infrastructure. The service subsequently allows developers and applicants to engage in dialogue with NATS in order to identify and discuss any potential mitigation. This allows identified solutions to be discussed and potentially agreed, at an early stage, *before the formal planning process*.

In order to promote a consistent nationwide approach, NATS has determined that all pre-planning enquiries and scoping opinion requests received from planning authorities or directly from applicants should be treated in the same manner. To this end we provide two options: our free self-assessment maps, and the chargeable pre-planning application.

As such we kindly request that developers and applicants use either of these tools to determine whether an impact on the NATS infrastructure is anticipated or not.

If your request is for scoping, we advise you to use our self assessment maps to determine whether a planned application is likely to have an impact. Instructions for using our maps are included below. Should a planned application fall within an area of radar coverage or other safeguarded zone, our advice would be to undertake our pre-planning assessment in order to engage with us early. Should an application fall outside the radar or other safeguarded zone, it is unlikely that NATS would object during the planning process.

Please note that NATS will continue to meet its statutory obligations and comment on all formal planning applications received by local planning authorities.

Instructions for the use of NATS self assessment maps.

To ascertain whether your development is likely to have an impact or not, you will need to use our self-assessment maps. You will also require a GIS/mapping package to plot your turbines (ARCGIS etc or GOOGLE "Forestry GIS" (fGIS™) which is freeware). All turbine heights are tip heights.

- You should be able to visualise your turbine(s) position(s) on the GIS map. For most packages you can create a text file with the NGR Eastings and Northings, to plot the turbine position.
- Download our self assessment maps free from our website.
- Add the relevant map for the turbine height to the GIS map, i.e. the height equal to the turbine height, or just below it if the exact height is not listed. e.g. 60m map for a 60m turbine, 40m map for a 50m turbine, 80m map for a 90m turbine etc.
- You should now be able to see both the radar coverage map AND the turbine position.
- You can now determine whether your turbine is visible to radar. Ideally a radar will not cover the turbine's position at all, or coverage will be at heights greater than the turbine height.
  For example, if you have a 60m turbine, ideally the radar will not cover that area at 60m.
  i.e. although there may be cover over that position at 100m and 80m, when selecting the 60m map, the cover is reduced leaving the turbine outside radar cover. Conversely if you have a 100m turbine, and the radar can see down to 100m over the turbine location, that turbine is visible to radar.
- By using the different maps, you should then be able to look at radar cover in different areas at different heights. This can be a useful tool for assessing a specific area and in some cases can be used to determine which positions are more likely to be an issue than others. It can also be used to determine a maximum acceptable turbine height.
  e.g a potential location is visible to radar at 120m and 100m but not 80m hence a 120m and a 100m turbine would be visible to radar (possible objection) whereas an 80m turbine would be acceptable.

Once you've assessed your turbine location against primary radar cover, the same must be done for secondary radar (SSR), navigation aids and radio stations by downloading and adding the SSR, AGA and NAV maps. These have 15km/15nm circles representing safeguarded areas for these assets. When you have carried out your self-assessment, you will have determined whether your proposed turbine(s) falls in an SSR/NAV/AGA safeguarded or radar cover area:

If the turbine is outside all these areas, it is unlikely that NATS would object as there should be no technical impact.

If your proposed development is within a safeguarded or radar cover area, while this does not automatically mean an objection, it is recommended that you take out our pre-planning assessment whereby NATS undertakes further studies and provides you with a formal statement on the turbine's impact.

More generic information can be found on our website together with the details of our pre-planning assessment.

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