

<b>Subject:</b>	Rooley Moor and Scout Moor Wind Farms update	<b>Status:</b>	For Publication
<b>Report to:</b>	Council	<b>Date:</b>	17 <sup>th</sup> December 2014
<b>Report of:</b>	Planning Manager	<b>Portfolio Holder:</b>	Operational Services and Development Control
<b>Key Decision:</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Forward Plan <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	General Exception <input type="checkbox"/>	Special Urgency <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Equality Impact Assessment:</b>	Required:	Yes/No	Attached: Yes/No
<b>Biodiversity Impact Assessment</b>	Required:	Yes/No	Attached: Yes/No
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1.	<b>RECOMMENDATION(S)</b>
1.1	That Council note the current situation on Scout Moor and Rooley Moor Wind Farms and the decision making process.
1.2	All future minor amendments to be delegated to the Director of Business in consultation with the Portfolio Holder.

## 2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 2.1 To update members of the current position regarding progress on major wind farms in the area.

## 3. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- 3.1 The matters discussed in this report impact directly on the following corporate priorities:
- **Regenerating Rossendale:** This priority focuses on regeneration in its broadest sense, so it means supporting communities that get on well together, attracting sustainable investment, promoting Rossendale, as well as working as an enabler to promote the physical regeneration of Rossendale.
  - **Responsive Value for Money Services:** This priority is about the Council working collaboratively, being a provider, procurer and a commissioner of services that are efficient and that meet the needs of local people.
  - **Clean Green Rossendale:** This priority focuses on clean streets and town centres and well managed open spaces, whilst recognising that the Council has to work with communities and as a partner to deliver this ambition.

## 4. RISK ASSESSMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 All the issues raised and the recommendation(s) in this report involve risk considerations as set out below:
- Demonstrating that there has been a thorough balanced appraisal of the proposals in the context of the various conflicting interests
  - Use of consultants to process the application would save some staff time but would require careful management

## 5. BACKGROUND AND OPTIONS

### 5.1 Scout Moor

There have been a number of significant changes to the Scout Moor proposals since the last Report on this topic was presented to Council. Following the submission of comments to the developer on the Preliminary Environmental Impact Assessment earlier in the year a number

of major changes have been made to the proposal. Scout Moor Wind Farm Expansion Ltd has completely revised the scheme in light of the comments received and have significantly reduced the number of turbines proposed from 26 to 16 of which 15 would be in Rossendale. It is understood some additional work on siting is still being undertaken to minimise visual impact and effects on bridleways. A draft Local Employment and Supply Chain support has been submitted and is currently being looked at.

- 5.2 Because of the reduction in the number of turbines the size of the scheme will fall below 50MW and therefore no longer falls within the ambit of the National Infrastructure Directorate. The development therefore will now be decided by the Local Planning Authorities with Rossendale being the Lead Authority and therefore receiving the relevant planning fee. A planning application is expected to be submitted in late January 2015. Scout Moor Wind Farm Expansion Ltd has already undertaken further pre-application consultation including leafleting 15 000 homes and meeting with relevant Area Forums.
- 5.3 The previous Report indicated that completion of a Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) between the developer and the three affected authorities was close to resolution. In light of the changes in the project resulting in it becoming a locally determined scheme the PPA required re-consideration. With all but one of the turbines being within Rossendale it has been agreed that the PPA will now be only between Scout Moor Wind Farm Expansion Ltd and Rossendale Borough Council. The agreement is now finalised and is in the process of being signed. It will provide a contribution up to a maximum ceiling which can be used as the Council determines, such as for funding consultants. In return the Council commits to a project timetable to determine the application within defined timescales with a decision expected to be made in the early summer.
- 5.4 The application will be accompanied by substantial documentation covering a wide range of topics. A considerable amount of work will be required to assess the application. In light of the current high workload in the planning team consideration is being given to appointing a consultant to process the application and make recommendations. Officers will however be actively involved in all stages of the application process.
- 5.5 *Rooley Moor*
- An application for a 12 turbine scheme was received from Coronation Power Ltd on 12<sup>th</sup> September. Two of the turbines are in Rossendale and ten in Rochdale. As lead authority on this application Rochdale have commissioned a number of studies including topics such as landscape impact, ecology and heritage. As a result of this a significant number of concerns have been raised with the applicant.
- 5.6 The visual impact of the turbines is a significant issue, with four in particular being of concern, including the two in Rossendale. Heritage assets such as Whitworth Cemetery and St Bartholomew's Church would also suffer adverse effects. Rooley Moor Road is also a matter of concern both with respect to its significance as a local heritage asset but also its function as part of the Pennine Bridleway.
- 5.7 A well-organised and vocal action group has been established to oppose the proposals. This includes Rossendale residents. This Council has to date received 29 letters of objection to the proposals with 457 letters of support. The latter virtually all use a standard template and emanate from active canvassing by the applicant.
- 5.8 As a result of the issues raised the applicant has reconsidered their proposals and is submitting Further Environmental Information on their current scheme. Supplementary

Environmental Information is also being submitted on a reduced eight turbine scheme. This would remove both turbines located in Rossendale leaving only Habitat enhancement land located in the Borough. Removal of two turbines in Rochdale would reduce the impact of turbines on Rooley Moor Road. Both alternative proposals would be considered as part of one application. As a result of this further information being received it is likely that the application will not now be determined until after the elections.

5.9 Negotiation of a Planning Performance Agreement with Coronation Power remains challenging with offers made and then retracted. The Council continues to pursue this matter.

5.10 *Other Matters*

As reported to Cabinet in November, an update of the Julie Martin “South Pennines Wind Energy Landscape Study” has now been published. This provides revised guidance on the impact of wind turbines in the landscape. The study will provide useful background evidence for assessing both applications.

**COMMENTS FROM STATUTORY OFFICERS:**

**6. SECTION 151 OFFICER**

6.1 Members are reminded of item H1 and paragraph 16 of the minutes re Council 20th July 2011. Under the new arrangement for local government financing, 100% of business rates raised from renewable energy schemes are retained by the local billing authority. As such the Scout Moor scheme in particular has the potential to raise significant revenues for Council. This income stream will be fundamental to achieving the Council’s Medium Term Financial Strategy and the goal of eliminating its future forecast annual budget deficit.

6.2 As a result of this update Officers will reduce income forecasts in the next update of the Medium Term Financial Strategy by c £350k per annum for 2018/19 and future years.

**7. MONITORING OFFICER**

7.1 No additional comments.

**8. POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT**

8.1 Both these proposals, individually and together, would represent a significant expansion to the existing Scout Moor turbines, creating England’s largest Wind Farm. A number of concerns have already risen about the proposed Rooley Moor scheme which has resulted in a delay and revision of the proposal. The Scout Moor scheme is still being refined but is expected to be submitted in January.

8.2 Rossendale will be the lead authority for the Scout Moor scheme. Significant consultancy support will be sought on this application to ensure a detailed and unbiased consideration of the proposals.

8.3 Both applicants have undertaken pre-application consultations on their proposals. As part of the consideration of the planning applications a wide variety of consultee views have been sought.

**9. CONCLUSION**

9.1 There have been significant changes to the position on these schemes since the last Report to Council. Due to Scout Moor expansion now becoming a locally determined scheme and the submission of further information on the Rooley Moor proposal both applications will be subject to consideration on very similar time scales. There will be significant workload

considerations.

Background Papers	
Document	Place of Inspection
Rooley Moor application 2014/0388	Council website & One Stop Shop