

**SCHEDULE OF ACTIONS MATTER 16 (ENVIRONMENT)**  
**(Action 16.2)**

**WIND TURBINE DE-COMMISSIONING**

<b>16.2</b>	Include further detail on de-commissioning of wind turbines, setting out what a de-commissioning scheme would be expected to contain [see also Main Modifications]
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**1 Introduction**

1.1 This note sets out a response to the Inspector on the above question, following the Matter 16 Examination Hearing held on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2019. It is proposed that this information will be included in the explanatory text of emerging Local Plan policy ENV7 (Wind Turbines). This will be consulted on as a Main Modification to the Plan.

**2. Background**

2.1 There are two main options for wind farms when a project nears the end of its original lifespan: *repowering* (turbines and foundations are completely removed and updated) and *decommissioning*. The latter is when the wind plant is completely removed with the goal being to restore the occupied area to a condition which is as close as possible to that which existed before construction.

2.2 All wind energy applications should acknowledge the need for decommissioning, restoration and aftercare at the end of the permission or the life of the turbines (whichever is earlier) and if the proposal is not renewed or replaced.

2.3 In many cases, wind turbines can be decommissioned and sites cleared and restored easily and rapidly. Turbine bases tend to be left in situ to avoid damage taking place through removal. Planning authorities should ensure that site restoration takes place either on the expiry of the consent or in the event of the project ceasing to operate for a specified period. When granting planning permission for turbines, therefore, authorities should include conditions for the decommissioning of developments, including their ancillary infrastructure, and for site restoration. Authorities should also ensure that sufficient finance is set aside to enable operators to meet their restoration obligations, and should consider financial guarantees through a section 106 agreement.

2.4 If the option is taken to decommission, then a mechanism should be in place to ensure that the turbines and associated structures are removed. A reinstatement plan should be submitted giving proposals of how developers would intend to restore the ground to its former condition. This may involve the removal of turbines and associated components and, if required, exposed parts of the concrete foundations could be ground down (with the remaining foundation left in situ) and covered with appropriate topsoil, hardstandings restored, and cables disconnected and left buried. Access tracks should be restored where necessary.

### **3. Possible contents of a decommissioning/restoration scheme**

3.1 The following points could form the basis of conditions to be attached to a planning permission for wind turbines.

3.2 All proposals will be assessed in relation to the reinstatement of the site at the end of the development along with any ancillary works. Reinstatement details must be submitted with any development proposals;

(a) Where appropriate, conditions for a restoration bond (or legally acceptable equivalent) will be imposed on any permission granted, requiring implementation measures to be agreed with the Council in accordance with best practice at the time of decommissioning; a restoration bond would allow the Council to commission the required restoration works in the event of the developer (or their successor) being unable to do so themselves;

(b) No development should take place unless the developer has appointed a full time independent and suitably qualified person to oversee the commissioning and subsequent decommissioning of the development (in consultation with Natural England and the Environment Agency). The developer should entirely fund the employment and necessary expenses of this person who should be appointed for the period of implementation until 12 months after commissioning of the development and for the period of decommissioning;

(c) Prior to the decommissioning of the development, a written scheme for the decommissioning of the wind farm and restoration of the site should be submitted to and approved in writing by the planning authority. The scheme should incorporate an accurate scaled plan of the site, and include a specification of all land reinstatement including any form of planting, a traffic management plan for the decommissioning period, and a timetable for implementation. Decommissioning in accordance with the approved scheme should be completed within 12 months of the end of the period of the planning permission or any alternative timescale agreed with the planning authority in writing. The approved decommissioning scheme should be overseen by the suitably qualified person mentioned above;

(d) If any wind turbine fails to produce an electricity supply to the local grid for a continuous period of 12 months then, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the planning authority, that wind turbine and any associated above ground infrastructure solely required for that turbine, together with the above ground elements of the turbine foundation, should be dismantled and removed from the area around the turbine restored in accordance with a scheme to be submitted to and approved in writing by the planning authority. The scheme should be submitted to the planning authority within 3 months of the expiry of the 12 month period and shall include a timetable for its implementation.