

Project Specification

A scoping study on assessment practices for noise impacts from renewable technologies

Introduction

[ClimateXChange¹](#) wishes to commission a scoping study to explore the evidence for the need for a review of the way that councils in Scotland are assessing the noise impacts of three renewable technologies: onshore wind turbines, hydropower schemes and air source heat pumps.

Background

CXC's [Wind Farm Impacts Study](#) (undertaken by consultants SLR and Hoare Lea Acoustics) was published in June 2015. The study looked at whether the visual, shadow flicker and noise impacts predicted by wind farm developers in documentation submitted with their planning applications were consistent with the impacts experienced once the wind farm is operational.

The report made a number of recommendations for better guidance on how these impacts can be predicted and mitigated, including several relating to noise impacts from wind turbines. There were recommendations relating to:

1. ... establishing whether the existing derivation of noise limits offers the appropriate balance between protection, simplicity and robustness.
2. ... understanding the range of [residents'] responses ... and assessing the significance of acoustic features.

ClimateXChange wishes to commission a scoping study to explore what the evidence might be to support a review of the way councils are assessing noise impacts. As well as looking at wind turbines, the scoping study will consider the assessment of noise impacts for hydro schemes and air source heat pumps including the guidance and standards these impacts are judged against.

Requirement

The scoping study will look at practice from the planning and environmental health services in six local authorities: Highland, West Lothian, Aberdeenshire, East Renfrewshire, East Ayrshire and Fife.

¹ For more information on ClimateXChange, the Scottish Government-funded Centre of Expertise on Climate Change, see www.climatexchange.org.uk

The study will be undertaken as a series of tasks.

Tasks:

1. Identify all relevant Environmental Health and local development plan (adopted and proposed, including supplementary guidance) policies on noise.

Specifically: identify all relevant local policies and guidance relating to wind turbine, hydro scheme and air source heat pump noise, in the six local authorities specified above. At a minimum, the sources that must be considered are:

- (i) Local Development Plans
- (ii) Supplementary Guidance (both statutory Supplementary Guidance and non-statutory planning guidance)
- (iii) Environmental Health policies on noise related to renewable energy
- (iv) Relevant Local Authority Noise Policies
- (v) Any specific noise policies, guidance or advice

Where there is a main issues report or proposed development plan, an assessment should be made as to whether the new plan would suggest a change in practice for the assessment and interpretation of noise impacts with respect to the three technologies under study.

A similar assessment should be made if revised guidance or policy for environmental health is under preparation.

Consideration should be given to how Planning Advice Note 1/2011 – Planning and Noise, and Technical Advice Note: Assessment of Noise, and any other relevant guidance and standards, have been taken into account in local policies. The Microgeneration Certification Standard (MCS) planning standards (MCS 020) for air source heat pumps apply in Scotland for the purposes of permitted development rights for domestic air source heat pumps. Installations made under this legislation will not require planning permission and so will not be picked up in the study but the principles of MCS 020 may be reflected in local guidance.

Reference to any superseded guidance, policies or advice should be noted.

2. In light of Task 1, and drawing on the contractor's own knowledge of practice in Scottish local authorities, review a representative sample of planning applications (including reports of handling and decision notices), noise assessments, in the past 12 months. The sample should be sufficiently representative for each of the three technologies. This review should seek to understand the relationship, with respect to noise impacts, between policies and decisions and also between the planning application and the decision. It should seek to answer the question 'how are policies being applied?' It should set out the range of practice reviewed (see Outputs, below). This task relates to all three of the technologies under study.
3. Based on the evidence gathered in Task 2, reflect on how noise limits are being set and why limits are being set in this way. For example, are noise limits being applied, and if so, where do these derive from? It would be helpful to also respond to the question 'are these limits

generic to the council or are they case specific to the proposal under consideration?' This task will involve conducting a small number of interviews with planners and Environmental Health officers (we suggest eight interviews, two per authority). ClimateXChange can support the contractor in identifying interviewees as required. Again, this task relates to all three of the technologies under study.

In the event that only a very small number of applications are found for a given technology across all six authorities in the past 12 months, the contractor may be asked to review practice over a longer time period, for that technology. You should provide indicative costs in your proposal for extending the scope of enquiry to the past 36 months.

Outputs

The scoping study will produce a report that responds to the three tasks. The report will describe findings from Tasks 1-3 under three broad headings:

- Relevant policies
- Decisions
- Reflections on practice

Reporting under each heading should clearly distinguish between findings for onshore wind turbines, hydro schemes and air source heat pumps. The report is not expected to identify individual planning authorities' practices, but rather to present findings for the full sample of six. Any authority-specific findings should be anonymised, as should specific sites, developers and operators considered by the study.

The report should be short (a maximum of 20 pages plus appendices) and written in plain English. It must be accessible to a non-expert audience. ClimateXChange will supply a template and good practice examples of reports. Early drafts of the draft report will be subject to comment by the ClimateXChange Secretariat and you should reflect this step in your proposal costs.

Time scale

The project will commence in August 2016 with the project output due by end February 2017.

Project Steering Group

A small group, likely to include Scottish Government officials and ClimateXChange and other stakeholder representatives, will help steer the project, providing advice and guidance and reviewing draft outputs. The steering group will meet with the successful bidder at project commencement and at the end of the project. Day-to-day communication will be between the review team (the contractor) and CXC project manager, and is likely to involve short catch-up phone calls either fortnightly or on some other agreed basis.

Award Criteria

The quotation will be evaluated using the following criteria and weightings:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Price	20%
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understanding of the research topic and policy context, including demonstrated expertise in acoustics. Experience with wind turbine noise is preferred.	20%
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Demonstrated knowledge and experience of reviewing environmental health and planning policy and guidance relevant to a range of technologies.	15%
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Demonstrated experience of, and quality of proposed approach to, accessing and analysing planning applications and related data.	15%
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Demonstrated experience of, and quality of proposed approach to, undertaking interviews and analysing interview data.	15%
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Demonstrated experience in synthesising and presenting analysis for policy audiences.	15%

Submission of proposals

Please send CVs for the proposed team, applicable day rates, a brief outline of the approach you propose, relevant research experience and the number of person-days' work proposed.

Proposals need to be submitted to lee.callaghan@ed.ac.uk and cc'd to darcy.pimblett@ed.ac.uk for evaluation **by noon on Thursday 28th July 2016**. Please contact Darcy Pimblett on 0131 651 4645 if you would like clarification of any of the above.

The costs of proposals for this project are expected to be in the range of £25,000 - £40,000 (including VAT). However, ClimateXChange would welcome proposals for less than this amount.

You should highlight any potential conflicts of interest in your proposal. For queries about what may constitute a potential conflict of interest, please contact darcy.pimblett@ed.ac.uk.