

Wind power choosing a site and getting planning permission

Choosing a site

Wind speed

The amount of electricity a wind turbine can generate depends on the wind speed on your site. For a wind turbine to be economically valuable, you need an average wind speed of at least five meters per second (5m/s) in an area free from turbulence caused by surrounding obstacles such as trees or buildings. There are a range of tools that let you find out whether you have an adequate wind speed in your area for a wind turbine.

Assessing wind speed is crucial to the economic viability wind turbines; it is therefore very important to measure wind speed before taking any decision to proceed.

Not enough wind speed? Explore other renewable and low-carbon technologies to suit your home with our [Renewables Selector](#).

Obstacles

Wind turbines work best in exposed locations, without turbulence caused by obstacles such as trees or buildings.

[Go to the RenewableUK website](#) for information on siting a small wind turbine. RenewableUK is the trade and professional body for the UK wind and marine renewables industries.

Off grid

Is your home located away from the local grid? Small domestic wind systems are particularly suitable for use in remote locations where mains electricity is unavailable. Unless the grid is very close by, the cost of getting a mains connection can easily be more than the cost of installing an independent wind power system. Find out more about off-grid possibilities.

Planning permission

In Scotland, a domestic wind turbine may be classified as Permitted Development, in which case planning permission will not be needed. However, the criteria are complex so we recommend that you contact your local planning office at an early stage to check whether planning is required.

In Scotland, a building-mounted wind turbine requires planning permission, but other domestic-scale machines are considered permitted development unless:

- it would result in the presence within the curtilage of a dwelling of more than one free-standing wind turbine
- the wind turbine would be situated less than 100 metres from the curtilage of another dwelling
- the turbine would be within a conservation area, a World Heritage site, a site of special scientific interest, or a site of archaeological interest or within the curtilage of a listed building.

In addition, before beginning the development the developer must apply to the planning authority for:

- ✔ the approval of the authority in respect of the design and size of the proposed wind turbine; and
- ✔ a determination as to whether the prior approval of the authority will be required in respect of the siting and external appearance of the proposed wind turbine

The application also needs to be accompanied by a range of other information and a number of other conditions apply. [Download a PDF of the Town and Country Planning \(General Permitted Development\) \(Domestic Microgeneration\) \(Scotland\) Amendment Order 2010](#) for full details.

Extra documentation

One of the things that your local planning authority (LPA) might consider necessary if the hub height of the turbine exceeds 15m (or more than two turbines are proposed) is an Environmental Impact Assessment to assess any environmental impact of the proposed turbine. Even if it is less than this, they may, after consultation with stakeholders such as the Environment Agency, request things like a bat or bird survey which can be prohibitively expensive.

In addition to any further documents that your LPA ask you to submit, all applications for planning permission require:

- ✔ the standard application form
- ✔ site and block plans (these must be to the required scale) - [buy these from one of the Planning Portal's accredited suppliers for around £40](#)
- ✔ ownership certificate
- ✔ agricultural holdings certificate - this is a document which confirms whether or not any of the land to which the application relates is, or is part of, an agricultural holding
- ✔ (in a Conservation Area) a Design and Access Statement
- ✔ the application fee - in January 2012 this was £150. [Visit eplanning fee calculator online to work out the cost of your planning application.](#)

Find out more about what is required at the [Scottish government's Planning Portal](#).

Pre-planning advice

Before making an application for planning permission you should discuss your plans with your neighbours and other third parties who may have an interest in your plans in order to address any concerns that they have. It is also advisable to contact your local planning authority before submitting a planning application to discuss the information they will require with the planning application on the following planning issues:

- ✔ visual impact
- ✔ noise
- ✔ impact on local heritage (listed buildings and archaeology)
- ✔ ecology (particularly bats)

Although it might be possible to do this by telephone, it is often better to do this at an informal meeting with a planning officer. This is known as pre-planning advice and it is something that some LPAs charge for, so check beforehand whether or not there will be a charge.

Many turbine manufacturers and installers produce planning packs covering issues such as noise, safety and visual impact to help their customers provide the information they need for a planning application. In addition many installers

can offer as an additional service the preparation and submission of the planning application. It is a service worth asking for if you do not feel confident about making the planning application as it can be a long and complex process.

[Download RenewableUK's Small Wind Turbine Planning Guidance](#), outlining key planning considerations for a small wind turbine installation.

