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Case Study **01** ScottishPower Renewables - Whitelee Windfarm

At Whitelee Windfarm, well planned early engagement and demonstration of real commitment to safeguarding the natural environment has speeded up the planning process and enhanced ScottishPower Renewables' reputation leading to savings in time and money for the business.



Bringing change to life

Business Benefits

- Rigorous stakeholder engagement enabled rapid progress through the planning system.
- Company reputation enhanced, minimising planning objections for similar projects elsewhere.
- Created a new eco-tourist destination, generating additional income through a visitor centre.

Wider Benefits

- A new centre for education and recreation has been created in an area previously shut off from local people.
- Long term employment opportunities created on the site.
- Biodiversity measures deliver an improved landscape, safeguarding peat bogs and birdlife.

Awards

Queens Award for Enterprise: Sustainable Development (2011)
Top Award at the Scottish Awards for Quality in Planning (2010)
Best Renewable Energy Project at the Scottish Green Energy Awards (2009)

Context

Whitelee is the largest onshore windfarm in the UK and the second largest in Europe. It supplies the greater Glasgow area with safe, clean, green electricity (in line with the Scottish Government's target of 50% renewables by 2015). Schools, community groups and the general public are encouraged to visit the site to appreciate its unique aesthetic, and its educational and environmental qualities.

The windfarm is located on Eaglesham Moor, 20 minutes from central Glasgow. It has 215 turbines which can generate 539MW of electricity - enough to power over 300,000 homes. It is calculated that this output will have the equivalent of displacing between 0.57 and 1.3 million tonnes of CO₂ production a year.

ScottishPower Renewables (SPR) developed plans for creating a windfarm on the site in 1999. It was selected due to a combination of factors - wind, topography, lack of environmental sensitivities, good infrastructure, and the presence of a large local demand for electricity within the greater Glasgow conurbation.

The windfarm covers an area of 55 km², leased from 8 landowners including Scottish Water, Forestry Commission Scotland and private farmers. Prior to the windfarm, the land was a mixture of peat bog and plantations of conifers which were scheduled for harvesting. Public access was not encouraged.

So why did SPR go beyond the minimum requirements of planning agreements? The answer may not be obvious but it is based upon sound economic principles and will ultimately affect the profit margin and sustainability of the enterprise in the long term.

Positive Community Engagement

The development of large-scale multi-million pound projects such as Whitelee can be beset by issues such as planning objections, can incur lengthy delays, causing

them to exceed budgets. SPR was mindful of this, and from the start of the project through to completion, it was committed to a thorough engagement strategy with local communities and stakeholders in order to be as transparent as possible, and to respond to concerns directly rather than through the standard planning process.

In this respect, 'Meet the Developer' days and site tours were held frequently and proved to be popular. As a result of this engagement only 32 objections were raised, which is remarkable given the size and sensitive nature of the project. The company also believes that this engagement activity has had a positive effect on advancing a number of subsequent planning applications.



Looking After Wildlife

SPR has committed to a multi-million pound investment in the biodiversity of Whitelee to demonstrate that wildlife and windfarms can co-exist successfully. Nearly half the



site (25 km²) is designated as a habitat management area and a working group has been established to monitor and improve the site's biodiversity value. This includes members of RSPB, Scottish Natural Heritage and Forestry Commission Scotland. The key aim is to enhance the landscape and create an environmental legacy, rather than simply minimising the impact of the project.

The group is working to promote blanket bog and moorland regeneration and improve conditions for native species such as the Black Grouse, as well as a variety of upland wildlife.

Creating a Visitor Destination

Whilst a visitor centre was a condition within the original planning agreement, SPR saw the potential of such a resource to help inform and educate the general population about the advantages of generating electricity from wind.

As a result, a £2m state-of-the-art visitor centre was built on the site, including an exhibition room, a learning hub, a café and a shop. The centre has proved to be a great success and returns a modest profit. Around 250,000 people, plus 10,000 school pupils, have visited since the opening in September 2009.

Opening Up Access

It is estimated that more than 500,000 people have used the 130 km network of paths around the windfarm since it was opened. Two thirds of the paths are 'floating roads' specially designed to minimise damage to the deep peat on which they sit. The paths are relatively smooth, making them suitable for joggers, walkers, mountain bikers and horse riders.

East Renfrewshire Council, one of the local authorities spanning the site, operates a ranger service at the windfarm, funded by SPR. Two full time rangers work to promote responsible access and host education sessions

"Our aim is the restoration of the native habitat for the Black Grouse and other wildlife and return Whitelee to an area brimming with numerous indigenous species."

Peter Robson, Ecologist for SPR.

on site. These cover sustainability, wind and water cycles, natural history field studies and more informal guided walks. Walking and cycling clubs have set up events and races from the site and even Tai Chi sessions have been held there.

Due to the interest in visiting the site, the car parking facilities had to be increased to create adequate space for horse boxes and coaches. In addition, SPR helped to fund road network improvements to allow better access to the car parks.

Future

Further improvements are planned within the windfarm area including new paths, viewpoints, wet weather shelters and upgrading of site entrances.

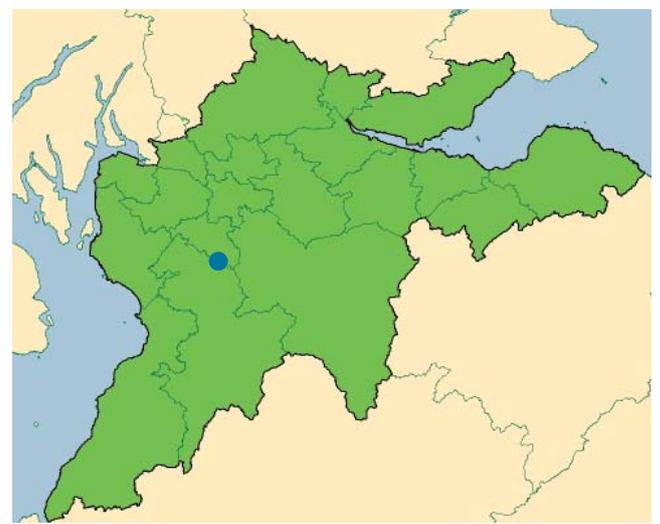


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Costs and Value

- The windfarm development cost approximately £300 million, of which £2 million has been spent on a state-of-the-art visitor centre.
- The visitor centre received a four star rating from VisitScotland and in 2012, became the first renewable energy project to gain membership of the Association of Scottish Visitor Attractions.
- £1 million was provided to set up the Ranger Service and to initiate the continuing access improvements works.
- Whitelee Windfarm is an important asset in communicating ScottishPower Renewables' corporate social responsibility.

The map shows Whitelee Windfarm in relation to the CSGN area



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The CSGN will change the face of Central Scotland by restoring and improving the rural and urban landscape of the area.

What is the CSGN?

The CSGN is one of the 14 national developments in the National Planning Framework 2. It is the biggest greenspace project in Europe and will help to make Central Scotland a more attractive and distinctive place to live, to visit and to do business. The CSGN has wide political and partner support and an all encompassing remit, far beyond just a 'green' initiative, with economic development central on the agenda.

What are these Case Studies for?

These case studies demonstrate that green network and green infrastructure approaches can save money and create better solutions for businesses. They are intended to inspire other businesses to take similar approaches and to inform interested parties, such as planning authorities, in order to encourage a supportive environment for such initiatives.

Getting in Touch

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For further information on the CSGN and other case studies please visit: www.centralscotlandgreennetwork.org

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