

UK: Call for national guidelines to protect birds and bats from turbines

November 6 2012



A micro-turbine. Credit: Laurent Duverge

Scientists at the University of Stirling are calling for national guidelines to be drawn up to protect bats and birds from domestic wind turbine developments.

Research by the School of Natural Sciences has shown that there are

wide variations in the planning process for installing micro-turbines, with some planning authorities requesting ecological surveys pre-construction as a matter of course and others very rarely.

Lead author of the study, published today in the [Journal of Applied Ecology](#), Dr Kirsty Park said: "The potential wildlife impacts of small [wind turbines](#) are ranked of lower importance by many planning officials than visual or noise concerns. We also found major variations in the planning process between different local authorities in England, Scotland and Wales."

The results, say the authors, illustrate why policy makers, ecologists and industry need to collaborate more. Dr Kirsty Park said: "Micro-turbines are fast becoming a common sight within the UK and elsewhere in Europe and the United States. However, in spite of the rapid growth in numbers, there has been little study of their possible impact on wildlife, which could include collisions of birds and bats with the turbines, or disturbance effects. This means the evidence-base upon which to establish any guidance relating to siting is very limited. We wanted to look at how this affects the planning process for micro-turbines throughout the UK".

The study, funded by the Leverhulme Trust, involved surveys of local authority planners and turbine owners throughout the UK (excluding [Northern Ireland](#)). In the report the authors emphasise that further research on the effects of micro-turbines on wildlife is urgently required but that this needs to occur in parallel with the development of siting guidance.

More information: Bibliographic information: Kirsty Park, Alex Turner & Jeroen Minderman (2012). Integrating applied ecology and planning policy: the case of micro-turbines and wildlife conservation. *Journal of Applied Ecology*. [DOI 10.1111/jpe.12005](https://doi.org/10.1111/jpe.12005)

Provided by University of Stirling

Citation: UK: Call for national guidelines to protect birds and bats from turbines (2012, November 6) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2012-11-uk-national-guidelines-birds-turbines.html>

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