

Bat Conservation Trust



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Microgeneration Consultation Responses
Communities and Local Government
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Sent via email to: microgenresponses@communities.gov.uk

Dear Sir/Madam

Changes to Permitted Development Consultation Paper 1: Permitted Development Rights for Householder Microgeneration

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the above consultation. The Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) is very concerned about global warming and therefore is positive about embracing alternative energy sources and reduced energy use to mitigate climate change, and welcomes a freeing up of systems to facilitate better take-up of microgeneration. However, it has serious reservations about micro-turbines and, to a lesser extent, solar panels becoming permitted development (PD), and considers that the implications need further investigation in order to inform the government's decision.

The BCT is the only organisation concerned solely with the conservation of bats within the UK and Eire, and has a membership of well over 4,000. Government agencies, professional and volunteer bat workers support the work of the BCT. There are also nearly 100 bat groups throughout the UK.

BCT has anecdotal evidence indicating that micro-turbines kill bats in the UK, and research on the European Continent and in the USA has found that full size turbines cause significant numbers of bat deaths. Given the reliance of many bat species on man made structures including houses for their roosting, BCT is concerned about the threat that micro-turbines could pose to bats. We do not know why bats appear to be susceptible to turbines, but it could be that they are attracted to them in some way, or because the echolocation messages coming back to the bat get confused because of the turning blades.

The ODPM/Defra Circular 06/2005 Biodiversity and Geological Conservation – Statutory Obligations and their Impact within the Planning System, together with the Guide to Good Practice that accompany PPS9 were welcomed, and BCT has reservations about some aspects of microgeneration being removed from the checks that the planning system provides for protected species. To bring all forms of microgeneration outside the normal checks of the planning system we consider would move the Government away from its overall aim of sustainable development and ultimately result in legislative complications which could be interpreted as the UK Government not complying with the Habitats Directive or its own biodiversity duty in the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.

Enclosed is a copy of the letter that BCT submitted to Entec about this matter, which explains our stance. Also attached is a document with details of bat mortality caused by micro-turbines that we have heard about so far. I would stress that this is for micro-turbines only; there is far more evidence of bat mortality caused by full size wind turbines in the USA and on the European Continent where formal research has taken place. No research has yet been

undertaken to assess bat mortality caused by micro-turbines in the UK as micro-turbines are a fairly recent phenomenon, but some research is now underway which should inform decisions in the future.

I attach also our response to your specific questions in the table (as requested), but I would also like to add below our observations in addition to those raised by your questions.

Paragraph 26 – Sparks and Jones were to advise whether developments requiring planning permission are likely to impact on neighbours and the wider environment. However, their approach does not seem to have taken account of the wider environment for bats.

Paragraph 27 – despite the fact that Ministers require the interests of the environment to be protected, and that changes to current arrangements should be based on evidence and fully tested, there is no evidence to say that micro-turbines do not impact on bats; in fact, there is some evidence to say they do, and we feel this needs further testing before a decision is made on PD.

Paragraphs 29 and 30 – BCT is disappointed that these paragraphs do not mention impacts on protected species.

Paragraph 34 – ‘potential impact on others’ should include the impact on protected species, particularly as there is an impact beyond the host property if wildlife is affected. There is a duty for public bodies to have regard to biodiversity/protected species.

Paragraph 102 – whilst BCT agrees that evidence of bat mortality is lacking, we would point out that the evidence we do have that micro-turbines kill bats has been sourced without concerted effort and, given the difficulty of finding dead bats anyway (they tend to be small, brown, unobtrusive and may be scavenged quite quickly leaving no evidence of their collision), we think that the precautionary principle should be followed on this.

Also relating to this paragraph, BCT cannot understand how the procedures to minimise potential effects on bats through development (as per the end of paragraph 102) can afford sufficient protection if microgeneration, particularly micro-turbines, is to be made PD in most areas.

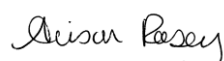
BCT does have concerns that the biodiversity duty set out by the NERC Act only last year will not be fulfilled if this proposal goes ahead as per the consultation.

Finally, BCT notes that the Regulatory Impact Assessment does not mention the issues that exist regarding bat mortality and micro-turbines, and we wonder why.

At the present time therefore, pending further investigation into micro-turbines and their impact on bats, BCT would like to see micro-turbines remain within the planning system, in accordance with the precautionary principle and the biodiversity duties.

BCT would be delighted to discuss possible options to facilitate this, such as a notification scheme or presumption in favour of micro-turbines, or perhaps reduced planning fees and simple (cheap) submission drawings to increase the take-up of micro-turbines.

Yours faithfully



Alison M Rasey

Encs: Letter to Entec (2006)
Anecdotal evidence of bat mortality caused by micro-turbines
Summary of Questions form