Key Issues –
The Tullymurdoch Wind Farm (turbines 1-7 shown above) is located between an operational wind farm (to the north west), a single consented turbine (to the east) and a large proposed (at time of Appeal) wind farm to the south east.

Following submission of the original Planning Application (which contained a noise assessment by a third party) the Institute of Acoustics published ‘A good practice guide to the application of ETSU-R-97 for the assessment and rating of wind turbine noise’ (GPG). The GPG provides detailed guidance on how cumulative wind turbine noise should be assessed and how noise limits should be set.

Due to the complex nature of the site and the fact that the noise budget in the area had already been allocated to the operational scheme TNEI had to propose a cumulative noise condition. The concept of a cumulative condition was introduced in the GPG but Tullymurdoch became the first site to be consented at Appeal with such a condition.

Purpose of the project
TNEI was appointed to provide assistance in relation to noise at the Public Inquiry for the proposed wind farm in 2013. The original noise assessment required an update following the release of new good practice guidance relating to wind farm noise assessment.

TNEI’s Expert Witness Stephen Arnott presented evidence at the Appeal which involved consideration of the very complex cumulative noise situation.

Description of the project
The wind farm is located to the north of Tullymurdoch Farm, approximately 30km to the north of Perth in Scotland.

RDS Element Power is developing the 7 turbine wind farm which will have a rated capacity of approximately 14.4MW. The turbines are expected to provide enough electricity to power up to 9,300 homes.

The development was granted consent in September 2014.
Lessons learnt
Development of the cumulative noise conditions required careful consideration of a number of factors. The condition had to be workable from a technical point of view whilst also meeting the tests of a planning condition as set out in Circular 4/98 'The use of planning permissions'. The circular details that conditions must be:
- Necessary;
- Relevant to planning;
- Relevant to the development;
- Enforceable;
- Precise; and
- Reasonable.

TNEI staff worked to create a condition whereby the operator of Tullymurdoch would be responsible for ensuring noise from the development operating in conjunction with the existing scheme would need to meet the relevant noise limits at nearby properties.

Whilst cumulative noise was expected to meet the limits, the condition means that in the event that the existing turbines become louder than expected (to the extent that the noise limits were exceeded), that noise from the Tullymurdoch turbines would need to be reduced to compensate.

Lessons learnt cont.
This approach potentially involves significant risk as the Tullymurdoch operator would have no control over the existing turbines.

Our team worked closely with the legal teams and with RDS Element Power to draft a condition which was robust and workable in practice. This included looking at what impact reducing noise would have on the electrical output of the wind farm to ensure that the scheme would still be financially viable.

Involvement with the scheme suggests that cumulative conditions may not be viable on all sites. It is also clear that the wording needs to be very carefully considered to meet the seven tests in the Circular (which are also relevant in England and Wales as they are included in the NPPF).

Contact details
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