SUMMARY PROOF REFERENCE: SWFL 2.1

ELECTRICITY ACT 1989 (SECTION 36 AND SCHEDULE 8)
TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 (SECTION 90)
THE ELECTRICITY GENERATING STATIONS AND OVERHEAD LINES (INQUIRIES PROCEDURE) (ENGLAND AND WALES) RULES 2007

PUBLIC INQUIRY TO CONSIDER SECTION 36 ELECTRICITY ACT 1989 APPLICATION BY STEADINGS WIND FARM LIMITED FOR CONSENT AND DEEMED PLANNING PERMISSION TO CONSTRUCT AND OPERATE A WIND FARM AT KIRKWHELPINGTON, NORTHUMBERLAND (KNOWN AS STEADINGS)

SUMMARY PROOF OF EVIDENCE OF

STEPHEN PEARS, BSC

CONSTRUCTION AND SITE INFRASTRUCTURE

ON BEHALF OF STEADINGS WIND FARM LIMITED

BERR REFERENCE: GDBC/001/00278C

TYNEDALE COUNCIL REFERENCE: 20060540

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNCIL REFERENCE: 06/00023/CPC

S1 My name is Stephen Pears. I have a degree in Applied Geology and have worked in the engineering and construction industry for 13 years of which nearly 11 years have been specifically related to the wind farm industry.

S2 The purpose of my evidence is to describe the design, construction, operation and decommissioning of the proposed Steadings Wind Farm. The proposed wind farm scheme has been refined during the planning application stage. This proof relates to the latest layout scheme and proposal.

S3 The layout of the proposed wind farm has been refined following the original application. The refined site layout is shown on drawings HJB/639/PA04b (Site Layout During Operation) and HJB/639/PA05b (Site Layout During Construction) [SWF 1.7].

S4 The proposed wind farm currently comprises of 21 turbines (max installed capacity 63MW), 2 anemometer masts, temporary construction compound, one borrow pit, site connection building and associated access tracks.

S5 The construction would be either let on a "Turnkey" basis, where on company would carry out all the design and construction, or with two principal contracts, one for the turbine supply and installation and one for the design and construction of the civil and electrical infrastructure. SWFL would employ a full-time site representative and a part-time ecologist to monitor the works.

S6 The proposed 18 month construction programme for constructing the 21 turbine wind farm, including all associated infrastructure, is a realistic and achievable programme. It is possible to accelerate the programme if required dependent on the availability of turbines and the agreed grid connection date.

S7 The principle access route to the wind farm site has been identified as using the A1/A696 junction at Kingston Park. Turbine delivery traffic would leave the A696 and join the B6342 at Kirharle, and then travel along the latter for around 4km before turning right onto the minor public road serving Great Bavington. After 500m the deliveries would leave the public highway network, joining a new access track onto the wind farm site.

S8 Only minor street furniture alterations were identified as being required on the classified roads. Upgrading works on the minor road serving Great Bavington were identified. The works would include a combination of temporary widening and realignment works and permanent hardening of the verges. A survey of the section of the road, including the adjacent trees, between the junction with the B6342 and the site entrance was carried out. The survey also identified the position and level of braches overhanging the carriageway. The survey was used by the ecology consultant to identify mitigation measures during construction.

S9 Steadings Wind Farm Ltd has committed to provide an Environmental Mitigation Plan (EMP) and a Construction Method Statement (CMS) in consultation with the local planning authority, Natural England (NE) and the Environmental Agency (EA). The topics covered within the proposed CMS are detailed in Section 5.2 of the ES [SWF 1.2].

S10 Originally 4 borrow pits were proposed, which has been reduced to one. The location of the proposed borrow pit is identified on drawing HJB/639/PA05b [SWF 1.7]. Site investigations by Natural Power Consultants Ltd has concluded that the material from the borrow pit would be suitable for wind farm construction.

S11 The proposed wind turbine would be within the range of 2MW to 3MW rated capacity. The maximum hub and tip heights proposed are 80m and 125m respectively.

S12 The wind farm will collect the power generated by the turbines via a 33kV collection system. The 33kV underground cables will transport the power to the proposed grid connection building.

S13 Three grid connection routes have been identified within the Regulation 13 submission [SWF 1.3]: a 66kV wooden pole line to either Bedlington substation or to an existing 66 kV line north of Cramlington, or a 132kV wooden pole line to Stella North substation.

S14 A 2km corridor has been identified for each of the possible grid connection routes. From a desktop review it appears that all routes are physically possible. The overhead lines are likely to be owned by NEDL who would design and Wayleave the route.

S15 Towards the completion of the site works, where it has not been possible to reinstate immediately, reinstatement of the road edges, cables trenches, crane hard standings and turbine bases will be carried out. The construction compound will be reinstated by placing a layer of topsoil over the stoned area. The restoration works will be overseen by the project ecologist.

S16 The turbine supplier will maintain the turbines for at least the first 5 years following the wind farm commissioning. SWFL would then have the option of continuing with the turbine supplier on year by year basis or using a third party specialist company. Approximately 2 personnel will be required to carry out the maintenance of the turbines carrying out planned work. Additional personnel may be required infrequently for certain tasks and any unplanned work.

S17 SWFL will also need to employ a full or part-time manager to look after the day to day matters and to manage any maintenance work related to the civil or electrical works. The manager may also have the required training to operate the electrical system and reset equipment when required.

S18 It is proposed that a Decommissioning Method Statement (DMS) is prepared at least six months prior to the end of the operational period in consultation with the planning authority, as it is difficult to predict what land use is required at the end of the 25 years lifetime.