



Banks Developments

Development With Care

**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 – MARK ALAN DOWDALL

**COMPANY WITNESS:
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT &
ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT**

ON BEHALF OF STEADINGS WIND FARM LIMITED

BERR REFERENCE: GDBC / 001 / 00278C

TYNEDALE COUNCIL REFERENCE: 20060540

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNCIL REFERENCE: 06 / 00023 / CPC

3 DECEMBER 2007 FOR INQUIRY COMMENCING 15 JANUARY 2008

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1. INTRODUCTION

S1.1 My name is Mark Dowdall and I am the Environment and Community Director for Banks Developments. I manage Banks' environmental management and community engagement teams and I am responsible for advising the company on the measures to be taken to ensure that best practice is used to minimise the risk of adverse environmental impact and disturbance and to look for opportunities to optimise the benefits to the environment, and the local community

2. SCOPE OF EVIDENCE

- S2.1 The scope of my evidence is to explain Banks approach to environmental management and community engagement.
- S2.2 I provide an introduction to Banks Developments, outlining the company's experience and commitment to Development With Care and how Banks will establish a Steadings community liaison committee where representatives of the company would meet regularly with local stakeholders during the operational phase of the development.
- S2.3 My evidence provides information on the EMS to ensure that high standards of environmental performance are maintained throughout the development and operation of the Steadings site.
- S2.4 Finally, I review environmental awards received in recognition of our environmental initiatives and the standard of our restoration, landscape and site management.

3. INTRODUCTION TO BANKS DEVELOPMENTS

- S3.1 Steadings Wind Farm Ltd is a wholly owned subsidiary of the Banks Group. Banks Developments, part of The Banks Group develops land for residential and commercial property, renewable energy, surface mining and waste management. Banks was established in 1976 in County Durham and employs approximately 300 people. Banks is committed to a “Development With Care” approach throughout our developments endeavouring to deliver a positive long term effect on both the environment and local communities.
- S3.2 Banks’ offices are based in at Tow Law and at West Cornforth in County Durham, at Chesterfield, Chorley, and Hamilton.
- S3.3 Banks has a successful track record of developing and operating large sites in sensitive locations. In Northumberland we are progressing plans for regeneration of the former Bates Colliery in Blyth and have worked and successfully restored a number of surface coal mines.
- S3.4 Banks will shortly be commencing construction of the West Durham Windfarm to the north of Tow Law in County Durham. This site will generate up to 24 MW of electricity from 12 wind turbines.
- S3.5 Banks has also received planning permission from Doncaster MBC to develop the Marr Wind Farm which will have four 2 to 3 MW wind turbines.
- S3.6 Barnsley MBC have granted planning permission to Banks for three 2 MW turbines at the Hazlehead Wind Farm at Crow Edge near Penistone.

4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNITY FUNDING

- S4.1 In this section of my evidence I explain the measures taken by Banks to engage with the local community through consultation, dialogue, and community liaison. I also explain our approach to supporting community and environmental initiatives through the Banks Community Fund.
- S4.2 Banks policy is to ensure that the local community is consulted on our development proposals and has a chance to comment upon them before a planning application is submitted.
- S4.3 Scoping proposals were distributed in August 2005 to all premises within approximately 1km of the proposed Steadings wind farm and a presentation on these proposals was made to Kirkwhelpington and Great Bavington Parish Councils.
- S4.4 Meetings were also held with other stakeholders and a news release was sent to the Hexham Courant and the Newcastle Journal newspapers.
- S4.5 Three public exhibitions have been held at Kirkwhelpington, advertised through the distribution of leaflets and letters to approximately 700 houses.
- S4.6 Public exhibition were held on 28 and 29 September 2005, 21 February 2006 in advance of the planning submission on 13 April 2006. Information leaflets were made available to take away from the exhibitions and comments received were considered during the subsequent design stages.
- S4.7 Another exhibition was held on 27 February 2007 to introduce the initiative of 'Warmer Tynedale' funded through the Banks Steadings Wind Farm Community Fund to improve energy efficiency of local buildings.
- S4.8 In summary Banks has ensured that local people have been made aware of our proposals at Steadings and have been given the opportunity to comment upon them throughout all stages of the development.

- S4.9 A draft constitution and agenda for the proposed Steadings liaison committee is shown in Appendix SWFL11.4.
- S4.10 The liaison committee will provide a forum to explain the progress of work and for local residents to raise any issues which are of concern.
- S4.11 The results of environmental monitoring, environmental audits and any comments received from the community and planning issues will also be reported to the liaison committee.
- S4.12 Liaison committees help to ensure that there is effective communication and understanding between Banks and the local community.
- S4.13 Banks' will establish a community fund if consent is granted to support a range of local activities. The administration of Banks Community Funds is carried out by our local Community Foundation. This provides a professional fund management service with promotion and assessment of all applications before recommendations are made to a local panel for determination. Appendix SWFL11.5 sets out draft proposals for the administration of the Steadings Fund.

5. BANKS ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

- S5.1 In this section of my evidence I review Banks EMS and explain how this will ensure that the highest levels of environmental performance are achieved at the proposed Steadings wind farm.
- S5.2 Banks environmental policy is reproduced in the draft Steadings EMP (Appendix SWFL11.3). Our standards are set out in a site specific EMP to achieve the latest and highest standards. Banks use best practice measures to ensure that operations are conducted to minimise potential adverse impact from noise, vibration, waste management, dust, transportation or landscaping works.
- S5.3 Banks environmental management system is certified to the BS EN ISO 14001:2004 standard.
- S5.4 The Steadings Wind farm will be subject to at least four different levels of inspection and audit as follows:
- a) Internal environmental audits conducted by Banks Environment Team. Members of the site liaison committee, including residents, council members and officers and the Environment Agency, will be invited to take part in environmental audits to see the standards of operation at the site.
 - b) Independent external audits will also be conducted by SGS (UK) Ltd our accredited auditors to maintain certification to the BS EN ISO 14001 standard.
 - c) The Council's Environmental Health Department will be responsible for the inspection of the mineral processing operations at the Steadings site to check compliance with relevant conditions.
 - d) The Council's Planning Department may at any time inspect the site to check on compliance with conditions and the requirements of the EMP.

- S5.5 The EMP contains objectives and actions, and explains the environmental monitoring regime and legislative controls.
- S5.6 A draft Steadings EMP is shown in Appendix SWFL11.3 and forms the basis of the items that will be checked during each environmental audit at Steadings. Any detailed requirements pursuant to any consents granted will be included in the EMP and issued before any site operations commence.
- S5.7 The condition of following issues will be checked at audits of the Steadings site.
- e) road access point
 - f) temporary office compound
 - g) road transport facilities including wheel washes
 - h) HGV and abnormal load movements and traffic routing
 - i) temporary storage of oils, fuels and chemicals used by plant during construction works
 - j) Waste material generated during construction and maintenance operations
 - k) dust control measures
 - l) site drainage
 - m) internal haul roads
 - n) material stockpiles
 - o) perimeter fencing
 - p) noise, vibration and air over pressure control measures
 - q) wildlife conservation, landscaping and restoration
 - r) external lighting
 - s) environmental monitoring results
 - t) documentation and consents

- S5.8 Items that do not meet the agreed standard will be recorded on a non-conformance notice (Appendix SWFL11.6) issued to the site manager recording remedial work, deadline and responsibility.
- S5.9 Results of environmental audits will be reported to the liaison committee and local residents will be invited to comment on the environmental standards at the site.
- S5.10 Routine environmental monitoring will be agreed with Council and the results of this monitoring will be reported to the Steadings liaison committee.
- S5.11 Questionnaires will be distributed to premises where environmental monitoring is conducted to record community perception of the site's environmental performance. An example of a questionnaire is shown in Appendix SWFL11.7.
- S5.12 Complaints and incidents are logged and investigated following Banks' complaint and notifiable incident procedure (Appendix SWFL11.8).

CONCLUSION

- S5.13 The Banks EMS requires the agreement of an EMP enforced by environmental audits, backed up by monitoring and surveys. This system has proved to be a very effective management tool ensuring that a high level of environmental performance is achieved at Banks projects.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL AWARDS

- S6.1 Banks has received a number of awards in recognition of high levels of environmental performance.
- S6.2 In 1996 Banks was awarded the Durham County Council Environment Award for the Oakenshaw Wildlife Reserve. An information leaflet on Hundred Acre is shown in Appendix SWFL11.9.
- S6.3 In 2000, Banks was presented with a Millennium Marque for environmental excellence and sustainable development by the Tidy Britain Group for the Oakenshaw Wildlife Reserve. Further information is shown in the article from Banks News and the photograph of the award taken at Oakenshaw shown in Appendix SWFL11.10.
- S6.4 In 2004 Banks was presented with the Noise Abatement Society John Connell Award for Innovation in recognition of the success of Banks Plant Noise Control Programme. A leaflet and article in relation to this award is shown in Appendix SWFL11.11. Banks noise control programme is explained in the report in Appendix SWFL11.12.
- S6.5 This was followed in 2005 by another award from the NAS - the Environmental Pioneer Award. A photograph of the award being presented to our Chairman, Harry Banks OBE is shown in Appendix SWFL11.13.
- S6.6 In 2004 Banks received two awards for Environmental Excellence from the Coal Authority for the environmental initiatives implemented at the Delhi site and for the standard of restoration design demonstrating community engagement at the Pegswood site in Northumberland. Appendix SWFL11.14 contains an extract from the Coal Authority annual environment report and an article on the two awards that appeared in Banks News.
- S6.7 In 2005 Banks was presented with the Bentley BE Award of Excellence for the design of the Northumberlandia (Appendix SWFL11.15) and a second

BE award was granted in 2006 for the design of Banks' Bowesfield development at Stockton on Tees (Appendix SWFL11.16).

S6.8 Following an external audit by SGS UK Ltd Banks received certification to the ISO 14001:2004 standard May 2005.

S6.9 Earlier this year Banks received the Business in the Community (BITC) "Big Tick" Award for Marketplace Innovation for Banks Noise Abatement Programme.

CONCLUSION

S6.10 Banks has demonstrated an excellent track record for designing and operating environmentally sensitive development schemes that have been developed without causing undue impact upon the occupants of local sensitive premises or the environment and in many cases providing significant local benefits. Banks Developments is committed to developing and operating the proposed Steadings wind farm to achieve a high level of environmental performance.

7. CONCLUSION

- S7.1 By adopting the approach to environmental management and community liaison set out above, the local community will be able to see that the standards set out in the Steadings EMP, and in the conditions imposed in any consents are being achieved.
- S7.2 The results of environmental monitoring for noise, dust, ground and surface water, visual impact, community questionnaires and the log of any comments and incidents will all be reported to the liaison committee.
- S7.3 I am satisfied that Banks EMS will ensure that the Steadings Wind farm will be developed and operated to the highest environmental standards.