

WIND FARM DEVELOPMENTS ON PEAT LAND

The Scottish Government has supported the development of the [carbon calculator](#) for use in the consideration of carbon savings from wind farm developments on peatlands. Originally published in 2008, a [revised version](#) launched in June 2011, has refined the calculator following feedback and further research to be an even more effective tool.

The purpose of the tool is to assess, in a comprehensive and consistent way, the carbon (GHG emissions) impact of windfarm developments. This is done by comparing the carbon costs of wind farm developments with the carbon (GHG emissions) savings attributable to the wind farm. The calculation is summarised as the length of time (in years) it will take the carbon savings to amount to the carbon costs; this is referred to as the payback period.

Applications for wind farms (or extensions of wind farms) submitted under s36 of the Electricity Act (50 MW capacity or above) are screened to establish whether they are on deep peat sites (i.e. greater than 0.5 metres) and where loss or disturbance to peat could occur; where they do, developers will be expected to use the carbon calculator in preparing their application. Following the launch of the new version of the tool, such applications will be expected to include a carbon calculation in the new format provided by the refined tool. There is also an expectation that the tool will be used purposefully early in the development process to influence design, to reduce the carbon payback period and maximise carbon benefits. As part of their statutory consideration of windfarm applications, SEPA will validate final carbon assessments supporting Section 36 applications and the findings will be a material consideration by Ministers in determining such applications.

It should be noted that the carbon calculator is designed for developments on peatlands, and is not directly relevant to other land. The [Land Use Strategy](#)'s Map 6 (depth of peat) is a good initial guide to the areas where application of the calculator is likely to be required. More site-specific analysis will be necessary to make the calculation.

Planning authorities also have access to the information provided by the calculator which is readily available in the public domain. Planning authorities, like all public bodies, have a duty under the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 to take account of the GHG emission effects of their decision-making. They should encourage developers to apply the carbon assessment tool to proposals for all wind farms on deep peat as a matter of good practice.

Consideration is being given to what further guidance may be required on the assessment of the implications for emissions of development on deep peat.