Planning Statement & Application

Land North of High Thorneyburn Farm

Falstone, Northumberland

April 2013

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared in support of a planning application for the development of two wind turbines (74m to tip) on land north of High Thorneyburn Farm, Falstone, Northumberland.

1.2 The wind turbine development constitutes a Schedule 2 type development under The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011. Noting that the development is not within proximity to any designated sites in terms of ecology or heritage it is considered that the development did not constitute requiring an EIA.

1.3 The purpose of this Planning Statement is to examine the acceptability of the proposed wind turbines in planning policy terms. The structure of this Planning Statement follows the decision making process under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended), which determines that decisions on planning applications should continue to be made in accordance with relevant policies in the Development Plan unless outweighed by other material planning considerations.

1.4 In order to assess the acceptability of the proposed wind turbines it is necessary to consider the energy related planning policies and guidance in terms of wind energy development. The policy framework for renewable (including wind turbines) is delivered in National Policy Statements EN1 and EN3, the National Planning Policy Framework, and the Development Plan for the area (excluding the Regional Spatial Strategy as this is revoked as of 15th April 2013).

1.5 The proposal is to construct and operate two turbines (74m to tip) and their associated infrastructure including unit transformers and upgrading of existing access tracks.

1.6 The candidate turbine selected for this site is the Enercon E48 and would have a hub height of up to 50m and 48m rotor diameter totalling a tip height of 74m. The finish of the turbines is proposed to be semi-matt pale grey.

1.7 Each of the turbines would generate electricity in wind speeds between 4 and 25 m/s. At wind speeds greater than 25m/s (56mph) the turbines would shut down for self-protection. Such high wind conditions occur for a maximum of approximately 1% of the year. For approximately 80-85% of the year the wind turbines would be generating electricity.

1.8 The main vehicular access to the site would be directly from the east via the A69 and is detailed in the Design & Access Statement accompanying this application. Existing unclassified public roads would also be utilised for short distances in order to access the site and to minimise the length of any new access tracks required.

1.9 The installed capacity of the proposed wind turbines is up to a maximum of 1.6MW. It is estimated that the wind turbines would offset approximately 4,500 tons of CO2 emissions per year. The proposed wind turbines would also make an important contribution to the security and diversity of UK energy supplies. The proposed wind turbines are designed to have an operating life (in terms of electricity exported to the National grid) of 25 years. After this period the site would be fully restored through a decommissioning scheme to be agreed via a planning condition with the National Park Planning Authority.

CHAPTER 2: DEVELOPMENT & SITE

Development

2.1 The proposed development would consist of a mid-size wind energy development comprising of two 800kW wind turbines of 74m (to blade tip) and associated infrastructure in terms of access tracks and transformer units. Further information relating to the turbines is outlined within the relevant sections of the application documents.

2.2 National planning policies and guidance support the principle of renewable energy across the whole of the U.K. in order to meet ambitious targets set by the EU Renewable Energy Directive (2009). Mid-size developments (reflective of this application) offer a direct contribution towards meeting the ambitious emissions reduction targets and increasing renewable energy generation capacity.

2.3 Due to the mid-size nature of this development proposal and having considered the landscape character and sensitivity, and receptors in proximity to the site it is anticipated that there will be very little impact upon the surrounding residents, landscape, ecology or cultural heritage. Appropriate regard is provided to the National Park designation in the appraisal of this application.

Site

2.4 The site of the proposed turbines is 550m north of High Thorneyburn Farm (see image below). The turbines would be 2.3km northeast of Donkleywood. The site is approx. 241m AOD.

2.5 Due to the rural nature of the landscape residential properties are largely limited to a small number of farm steadings in the wider landscape and villages the largest being Falstone (4.2km west of the application site). Residential properties in the wider area are located 650m southwest (Hill House), 900m southwest (Low Thorneyburn), 950m southeast, 1.5km southwest (Crag House Farm) and additional properties are located 1.8km southeast and 2km northeast. Recognising the rural nature of the landscape in terms of proximity to sensitive receptors it is considered that the development would not have an adverse impact on residential properties (in terms of residential amenity including noise, shadow flicker, and highways).

Design Evolution

2.6 A desk-based study and site visits were undertaken in order to determine the most appropriate location for the turbines. The key criteria supporting the choice of location include:

Elevation

The wind turbines would be situated at 241m AOD which is an elevated position able to gain the necessary wind resource;

Proximity to Farmstead

The wind turbines would be viewed in context to the existing farmstead at High Thorneyburn Farm forming a visual part of the operational farm and associated buildings;

Highways

Vehicular access and utility infrastructure is present at the farmstead able to accommodate large agricultural vehicles and machinery. This access and infrastructure would be utilised to afford access for the wind turbine development;

Ecology and Hydrology

Each of the turbines is in excess of the recommended stand-off distances (50m) from any potential sensitive wildlife habitats including hedgerows and watercourses.

General Safety

The turbines are not within topple distance nor sail-over of PROW, residential properties, roads, or existing utility infrastructure;

Landscape and Visual Impacts

Associated with farmstead and associated structures;

Limited receptors in proximity to the site in order to observe each of the turbines;

Limited views of the site from surrounding areas (residential and highways) due to topography and mature woodland / hedgerows providing screening of the site;

Noise

Closest non-owned residential dwelling approximately 650m southwest from the development site;

Required distance (in terms of noise and shadow flicker) from nearby noise sensitive receptors.

Turbine Specification

2.7 Specifications for the Enercon E48 turbines are appended to the application documents in order to assist with assessments, appraisals, and proposed planning conditions by the National Park Planning Authority.

2.8 All cabling from the turbines will be underground.

Site Access

2.9 Existing road networks will be used to access the site for all deliveries during construction and decommissioning. The existing road network sustains the capacity for large agricultural vehicles and it is considered that the road network, with minor modifications, can provide access for the two turbines. A suitable planning condition in terms of highways access and highway safety would require a Construction Management Plan and any additional highway works identified by the Highways Authority.

2.10 Access to the site of each turbine will include an area for a crane pad. This will be constructed with an approximate size of 30m x 30m. Storage compound areas during the construction and decommissioning periods, and welfare facilities are to be made available within the farm steading complex forming part of High Thorneyburn Farm.

Decommissioning

2.11 The operational period of the turbine development will be 25 years. At the end of this period full decommissioning will take place reinstating the land to its original use with decommissioning works subject to a suitable planning condition.

CHAPTER 3: PLANNING POLICY

Introduction

3.1 Section 38(3) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that the Development Plan for any areas of England (outside of London) comprises the:
a) The regional spatial strategy for the region in which the area is situated, and
b) The Development Plan documents (taken as a whole) which have been adopted or approved in relation to that area.

3.2 Section 38(5) of the Act confirms that if to any extent a policy contained in a development plan conflicts with another policy, the conflict must be resolved in favour of the policy which is contained in the last document to be adopted, approved or published. Section 38(6): *"regard is to be had to the development plan for the purpose of any determination to be made under the Planning Acts the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise".*

3.4 In terms of Paragraphs 3.1 to 3.3 (above) the Development Plan for the area are formed by the Northumberland National Park Core Strategy and Development Policies (March 2009). It has recently been confirmed that the RSS for the North East will be abolished and revoked as part of the Development Plan on 15th April 2013.

National Policy and Guidance

3.5 National planning policy and guidance supports the principle of renewable energy and support is provided by guidance including:

- *Meeting the Challenge - Energy White Paper (2007)*

  This sets out the Government's energy strategy, the long term energy challenges and policy goals in terms of cutting CO2 emissions, and maintaining energy security. The Energy White Paper seeks for decision makers in considering applications that they should look favourably on renewable energy developments.

- *Climate Change Act 2008 (November 2008)*

  The Climate Change Act 2008 represents the world's first legally binding targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The UK has signed up to the Climate Change Act and is committed to reducing CO2.

- *UK Renewable Energy Roadmap (July 2011)*

  The UK Renewable Energy Roadmap provides a study to how domestic use of renewable generation may evolve by 2020, and the actions required to meet the necessary target levels. The document reiterates that the Government remains committed to increase the amount of renewable energy in the UK.

- *English National Parks and the Broads: UK Government Vision and Circular (2010)*

  The priorities of the Circular are set out in Chapter 4 and include a renewed focus on achieving the purposes of the National Park including:
  - Leading the way in adapting to, and mitigating climate change;
  - Achieving a diverse and healthy natural environment, enhanced cultural heritage and supporting the change towards sustainable living and enjoyment of the countryside;
  - To maintain vibrant, healthy and productive living and working communities;

3.6 National Planning Policy is provided by the National Planning Policy Framework (2012) which sets a positive framework for sustainable development and renewable energy. NPPF policies including 14, 115, and 116 are key in determining this application.

Local Planning Policy

3.7 The Development Plan for the area is made up of the policies from the National Park Core Strategy and Development Policies (March 2009). This provides the key planning policies used for appraising development proposals and the following policies are considered to be relevant to the application:

- Policy 1 Delivering Sustainable Development
- Policy 2 Climate Change
- Policy 3 General Development Principles
- Policy 4 Major Development within the National Park
- Policy 17 Biodiversity and Geodiversity
- Policy 18 Cultural Heritage
- Policy 19 Tranquillity
- Policy 20 Landscape Quality and Character
- Policy 21 Farming
- Policy 25 Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency
- Policy 28 Utilities and Infrastructure

Landscape Supplementary Planning Document

3.8 The Northumberland National Park Authority adopted its Landscape Supplementary Planning Document on the 14th September 2011. The Landscape SPD is used to inform the determination of planning applications.

Landscape Character Assessments

3.9 In 2010 Northumberland County Council undertook a Landscape Character Assessment. This provides a detailed assessment of landscape character types across Northumberland and provides landscape sensitivity appraisals for selected land uses.

3.10 Landscape Appraisal for Onshore Wind Development (July 2003) (The Benson Report). This report provides the research and foundation supporting the aims and objectives of the North East Regional Spatial Strategy and provides the basis for landscape character assessments in the region.

CHAPTER 4: PLANNING ASSESSMENT

4.1 This chapter provides the appraisal for the proposal and assesses it against the appropriate planning policies.

4.2 National Policy Statement for Energy (EN1) supports the principle of renewable energy developments stating it is vital to economic prosperity and social well-being and so it is important to ensure that the UK has secure and affordable energy.

4.3 Section 3.4 of EN1 sets out the Government's commitment to renewable energy development (including wind) reiterating the UK commitment to sourcing 15% of energy from renewable sources by 2020. EN1 recognises that to hit this target, and to largely decarbonise the power sector by 2030, it is necessary to bring forward new renewable electricity generating projects as soon as possible and that the need for new renewable electricity generation projects is therefore urgent.

4.4 National Policy Statement for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (EN3) supports the Government's principle of renewable energy development (including wind) stating that onshore wind farms are the most established large-scale source of renewable energy in the UK. Onshore wind farms will continue to play an important role in meeting renewable energy targets.

4.5 The National Planning Policy Statement (NPPF) (Policy 97) requires Local Planning Authorities to help increase the use and supply of renewable and low carbon energy and to have a positive strategy to promote energy from renewable and low carbon sources. Policy 97 requires Local Planning Authorities to design their policies to maximise renewable and low carbon energy development while ensuring that adverse impacts are addressed satisfactorily, including cumulative landscape and visual impacts.

4.6 Policy 98 of the NPPF requires that Local Planning Authorities when determining planning applications, local planning authorities should:

- Not require applicants for energy development to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy; and
- Approve the application if its impacts are (or can be made) acceptable.

4.7 The Northumberland National Park provides the Development Plan policies for the local area. Policy 4 relates to Major Development and states that major development will only take place in exceptional circumstances where proven to be in the public interest. Applications will be required to demonstrate criteria within Policy 4. Noting the NPPF it is not necessary to demonstrate the need for the development and the development in its location and scale would not result in detrimental effects on the special qualities of the National Park.

4.8 Policy 25 provides guidance relating to renewable energy and energy efficiency. Having regard to Policy 25 it is noted that the principle of renewable energy and energy efficiency is supported and the policy offers limited direct guidance in terms of wind turbine development. The supporting text Paragraph 12.4 considers that as a result of the impact large scale renewable energy development may have on the special qualities of the Park, the National Park Authority consider that its contribution to both regional and national targets to cut CO2 emissions will be through small scale generation and energy efficiency measures.

4.9 Whilst the supporting text to Policy 25 considers the potential for an impact from large scale renewable energy development this is not quantified in either development type (wind, biomass, etc) nor does it define large scale (in terms of height of turbines). The text refers to the potential for large scale developments that *may* have on the qualities of the National Park. This does not quantify the impact that would, or would not occur from a development.

4.10 It is therefore considered that the proposed turbines are supported in principle by national and local planning policies and it is considered that the development proposal accords with policies of the NPPF and Northumberland National Park Core Strategy.

CHAPTER 5: LANDSCAPE

5.1 The landscape of the study area is classified into various distinctive landscape character areas (LCAs) at national, regional and local levels.

5.2 The proposed turbines will fall within the within NCA 5: Border Moors and Forests. This area is defined as including;

- Large-scale landscape of high, rolling or undulating plateau with expanses of sweeping moorland, extensive coniferous woodlands and large reservoirs, sparsely populated and with no major settlements;
- Exposed moorland areas heavily grazed by sheep and characterised by mixed heather and unimproved grassland, on broad hills which offer extensive, long-distance views;
- Extensive plantations mainly consisting of a patchwork of felled areas and different age classes of non-native conifers;
- Few broadleaved trees, mainly restricted to small woodland blocks, hedgerows and remnant semi natural woodland in the more sheltered valleys.woodland in the more sheltered valleys

5.3 In terms of the Northumberland National Park the Landscape Supplementary Planning Document (September 2011) provides additional planning guidance to the Core Strategy. In terms of wind development the SPD states that care should be taken to prevent landscape and visual impacts associated with wind farm development, and in terms of this site (9. Moorland Forestry Mosaic) Wind farm development proposals (either in Scotland or England) wind farm development should avoid adverse impact on this expansive upland landscape and the setting of the National Park.

5.4 The Landscape Appraisal for Onshore Wind Development (2003) known as the Benson Report defines this area as 3. Upland Forests and Moorlands. The summary of the physical criteria of this area is:

Large scale wind energy development would relate well to the scale of this largely unsettled LCT. Landform is generally masked by trees, although development should be located to accentuate the broad shape of plateaux summits that are evident. Existing open areas and the reservoir and its immediate surrounds should be avoided. Wind energy development could associate well with the character and scale of reservoir infrastructure, although this only occupies a small part of the overall type. The area is stated as having a Low Sensitivity

5.5 Having regard to the landscape character of the area the development would be accommodated in a location resultant of limited impacts in terms of the landscape character or landscape visual impacts as views of the site are considered limited in the immediate and wider landscape. The Benson Report supports the ability for the landscape to accommodate wind turbine development and whilst the wider landscape character area may be within the National Park it is considered that the development would not have a significant adverse impact on the purpose function of the National Park designation.

Viewpoint 1: East of the application site toward Falstone

Viewpoint 2: West of the application site toward Greenhaugh

Viewpoint 3: North to the application viewed in the middle distance

Cumulative Landscape Impact:

5.7 All proposed, consented and operational wind turbines within the immediate and broader landscape have the ability to cause a cumulative effect with the proposed wind turbines at land north of High Thorneyburn Farm.

5.8 No notable wind turbine schemes either operational, or consented, are within a radius in terms of the potential for cumulative impact and no turbines would be visible in from views interrelated to the application site.

5.9 The proposed turbines High Thorneyburn Farm have been assessed against in terms of landscape character, visual impact and cumulative impact. It is acknowledged that the turbines will add a new feature into the local landscape, having a localised noticeable change to the landscape character. The impact of the turbines would be minor-adverse in the broader landscape but would not result in an unacceptable visual impact in terms of the landscape character and visual impact.

CHAPTER 6: HERITAGE AND CONSERVATION

6.1 Central government policy regarding planning and the historic environment are outlined in the NPPF (2012). The protection and enhancement of the historic environment is one of the key dimensions of the NPPF and is outlined under Section 12: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment.

6.2 Taking into account the principles explored above, an assessment of the potential impacts of Heritage Assets in the localised area has been undertaken and a small number Listed Building and Schedules Ancient Monuments are located either in proximity to the site or in the wider area. The English Heritage results gained through an assessment of heritage assets in proximity to the site confirm that High Thorneyburn Farmhouse is Grade II Listed and is the closest Listed Building to the site. Additional Listed Buildings are located in the nearby settlements of Falstone and Greenhaugh.

6.3 Giving consideration to the Listed Buildings in the area and noting their distance from the site, intervening topography, the setting of these Listed Buildings would not be directly affected by the development and no significant adverse impact would occur.

6.4 In terms of archaeology as there have been no designated sites identified within the footprint of the proposed development or even within the site boundary there is limited scope for disturbance of sub-surface archaeological features.

6.5 It is also important to consider that this development is of a temporary nature and is presumed to only exist in the landscape for 25 years. At this point the turbines will be removed from the site in accordance with a decommissioning statement via a planning condition.

CHAPTER 7: ECOLOGY

7.1 An initial desktop survey and site visits was undertaken in order to identify any potential ecological constraints to the proposed construction of two wind turbines on land north High Thorneyburn Farm.

7.2 No further survey was considered necessary in respect of bats as the proposed turbine locations ensure a buffer of at least 50m between blade tip and hedgerows forming field margins.

7.3 The land encompassed within the application boundary and adjacent to the site has no ecological designation in terms of nature conservation and is unmanaged moorland forming a peripheral part of Thorneyburn Common.

7.4 A broad assessment of the site within a radius of 5km from the site identifies the following ecological designations:

National Nature Reserves
None within 5km of site.

Ramsar Sites
None within 5km of site.

Special Protection Areas
None within 5km of site.

Special Areas of Conservation
North Pennine Dales Meadows
SAC for grassland (flora)

Sites of Special Scientific Interest
Thorneyburn Meadow; 1km south of site; SSSI for grassland (flora)
Greenhaugh Meadow; 2.7km southeast; SSSI for grassland (flora)

7.5 In terms of the potential for the development to impact upon ecological designations in the immediate or wider landscape the development of two wind turbines 74m to tip of a medium scale development at land north of High Thorneyburn Farm lies a considerable distance from any designated environmental sites (in terms of SSSI, SPA, SAC, etc).

7.6 The designations identified within 5km of the site are designated for flora, not fauna, and therefore no impact would occur upon the designated sites by construction, operation and decommissioning of two turbines. Through the siting and positioning of the proposed wind turbines any potential ecological impacts will be insignificant.

7.7 In accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework in particular Section 11 "conserving and enhancing the natural environment" and Policy 17 of the Northumberland National Park Core Strategy the development would not result in significant adverse impacts to ecology in the area.

CHAPTER 8: NOISE

8.1 The NPPF (2012) and the Technical Guidance to the NPPF (2012) guides Local Planning Authorities on the use of their planning powers to minimise the adverse impacts of noise. It outlines the considerations to be taken into account in determining planning applications both for noise-sensitive developments and for those activities which generate noise.

8.2 Former guidance provided by PPG24 provided examples of planning conditions designed to limit however in is noted that neither during previous planning guidance (PPG24) and following the adoption of the NPPF there is no standardised planning condition designed specifically for wind energy developments.

8.3 A companion guide to PPS22 was published in 2004 and remains part of national planning guidance. Paragraphs 41-46 relate to noise issues. The guidance refers to two quite distinct types of noise source within a wind turbine:

- The mechanical noise produced by the gearbox generator and other parts of the drive train; and
- The aerodynamic noise produced by the passage of the blades through the air.

8.4 ETSU-R-97 The Assessment and Rating of Noise from Wind Farms (September 1996) provides the key technical guidance in terms of noise generated from wind turbines and establishes the interrelation between background noise levels, noise from the turbine components, and noise nuisance.

8.5 Since the early 1990s, there has been a significant reduction in the mechanical noise generated by wind turbines and it is now usually less than, or of a similar level to the aerodynamic noise. Aerodynamic noise from wind turbines is generally unobtrusive – it is broadband in nature and in this respect is similar to, for example, the noise of the wind in the trees.

8.6 The proposed wind turbine is located in an area of low population density. The noise environment in the surrounding area is generally characterised by natural sources such as wind, rustling vegetation and birds. Other noise sources include local road and agricultural vehicle movements. The location of the proposed wind turbines has been chosen to ensure any increase in noise levels has a minimal effect on surrounding residential property.

8.7 The noise generation characteristics of the turbine are illustrated on the next page in specification details by the turbine manufacturer. The location of the site for the two wind turbines is of a rural nature with significant setback distances in terms of residential properties forming potential receptors of potential noise. The location and scale of the development and the noise characteristics of the turbines are within the acceptable limits of ETSU-R-97 and the chosen location conforms to the requirements set out in the Companion Guide to PPS22.

Sound Power Level of the E-48 with 800 kW rated power

hub height / V_s in 10 m height	50 m	56 m	60 m	65 m	76 m
4 m/s	89.0 dB(A)	89.2 dB(A)	89.4 dB(A)	89.5 dB(A)	89.9 dB(A)
5 m/s	93.3 dB(A)	93.7 dB(A)	93.9 dB(A)	94.2 dB(A)	94.7 dB(A)
6 m/s	97.5 dB(A)	97.9 dB(A)	98.1 dB(A)	98.3 dB(A)	98.8 dB(A)
7 m/s	100.5 dB(A)	100.7 dB(A)	100.8 dB(A)	101.0 dB(A)	101.3 dB(A)
8 m/s	101.5 dB(A)	101.7 dB(A)	101.7 dB(A)	101.8 dB(A)	101.9 dB(A)
9 m/s	102.5 dB(A)	102.5 dB(A)	102.5 dB(A)	102.5 dB(A)	102.5 dB(A)
10 m/s	102.5 dB(A)	102.5 dB(A)	102.5 dB(A)	102.5 dB(A)	102.5 dB(A)
95% rated power	102.5 dB(A)	102.5 dB(A)	102.5 dB(A)	102.5 dB(A)	102.5 dB(A)

Measured value at 95% rated power					***101,9 dB(A)*** *WICO 439SEC04/06* ***101,1 dB(A)*** *KCE 29349-1.003* ***102,2 dB(A)*** *MBBM 64 550/7*

in relation to wind speed at hub height									
wind speed at hub height [m/s]	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**11**	**12**	**13**	**14**	**15**
Sound Power Level [dB(A)]	95.0	98.1	100.2	101.4	101.8	102.4	102.5	102.5	102.5

1. The relation between the sound power level and the standardized wind speed v_S in 10 m height as shown above is valid on the premise of a logarithmic wind profile with a roughness length of 0.05 m. The relation between the sound power level and the wind speed at hub height applies for all hub heights. During the sound measurements the wind speeds are derived from the power output and the power curve of the WEC.

2. A tonal audibility of $\Delta L_{a,k} \leq 2$ dB can be expected over the whole operational range (valid in the near vicinity of the turbine according to IEC 61 400 -11 ed. 2).

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CHAPTER 9: SHADOW FLICKER

9.1 Shadow flicker may occur under certain conditions when sun passes behind the blades of a wind turbine and causes a shadowing effect through window apertures.

9.2 Shadow flicker is recognised as occurring within 10 rotor diameters of a turbine (subject to landscape features that may provide a degree of screening).

9.3 The chosen wind turbine model (Enercon E48) would have the potential to cause shadow flicker at a distance of 480m. No properties not in the ownership of the applicant are within this distance and the occurrence of shadow flicker would therefore not occur.

9.4 Furthermore the location of the turbines in relation to the suns pattern and positioning would potentially only generate shadow flicker to the northeast, north, and northwest of the turbines onto Thorneyburn Common with no residential receptors in this area.

CHAPTER 10: HIGHWAYS

10.1 Construction of the turbines is expected to occur over a broken 8 - 12 week period. The volume of vehicle traffic is expected to be focussed upon key activities including foundation construction and the erection of the wind turbines.

10.2 A full Transport Assessment is not considered appropriate at this site as the traffic volumes are considered to be low and only relevant during the construction period. As the construction phase is relatively short lived and the long term traffic is likely to be one vehicle every 6 months no impact assessment should be necessary.

10.3 A Transport Statement will be submitted to the relevant roads department when a final route for the construction traffic has been chosen. This will include the final delivery route and swept analysis will be provided for any sections of highway deemed necessary.

CHAPTER 11: ADDITIONAL BENEFITS – REDUCING FUEL POVERTY

11.1 A key benefit of the proposed development in addition to providing renewable energy and supporting the reduction of CO2 emissions is the direct contribution to reducing fuel poverty. This development will directly contribute toward aiding fuel poverty initiatives in the local area and in order for this to be achieved in the most effective method it is proposed for this to be agreed in detail with the Local Planning Authority. An appropriate planning condition or legal agreement may then be appended to any planning permission ensuring full implementation of the fuel poverty scheme delivered to the local community.

11.2 The Fuel Poverty Initiative would be delivered by the Renewable Power Exchange who is a new energy generation and supply company that will:

- Generate 100% renewable energy through all sources including wind, solar and hydro;

- Target its supply to customers living in fuel poverty - it will do this by partnering with organisations that have membership bases that live in fuel poverty (eg. housing associations, local councils, community organisations);
- Retain a local connection, wherever possible, between the generation and the communities being supplied;

- Specifically target customers that access energy using a prepayment meter:
  - this mechanism costs its users between 10% and 25% more than a customer that pays by direct debit
  - those least able to afford rising energy costs are in fact those that are charged at the highest rate
  - Charge its customers a more affordable price – more in-line with standard cheaper tariffs - thus attempting to bridge the inequality that exists in this sector
- Actively encourage energy efficiency and effective energy management;
- Innovate in payment systems and customer information to reduce costs and support customer behaviour change;
- Create a hub-based operation system maximising local development and job opportunities, as well as increasing skills in the local community

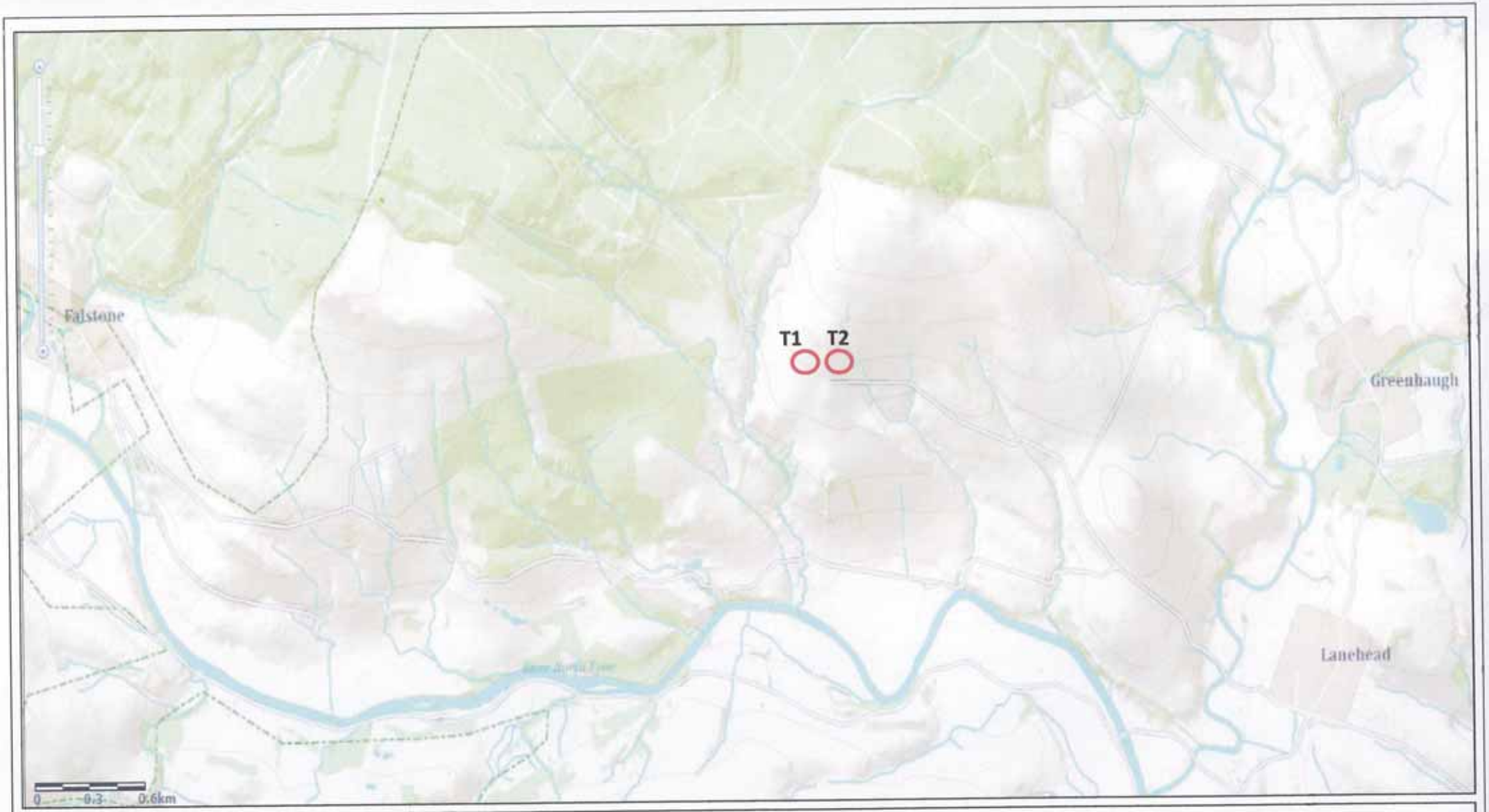
The Renewable Power Exchange has been set up and will be run by a team with a track record in the social enterprise and community development sectors:

CHAPTER 12: CONCLUSION

12.1 The proposed development has been assessed against planning policy and other material considerations. High Thorneyburn Farm is taking positive steps to minimise its reliance on non-renewable energy by off-setting C02 emissions and contributing to the national need for renewable energy without adversely affecting the amenity of nearby residents or having a significant adverse on the landscape or the function and purpose of the Northumberland National Park.

12.2 The land north of High Thorneyburn Farm does not fall within any environmental designations and the two Enercon E48 wind turbines would not cause an adverse impact on ecology or nature conservation.

11.3 The development will not unduly harm the landscape character, nature conservation interests, residential amenity or sites of archaeological interest and therefore accords with the NPPF and the Development Plan.



Plan: Location Plan

Title: High Thorneyburn Farm

Date: April 2013

North