Environmental considerations

As part of the planning process, RES will undertake an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). The purpose of an EIA is to identify any significant potential effects of a development on the environment and, where applicable, identify mitigation measures to avoid or reduce potential effects. It also identifies opportunities for restoration and enhancement. The EIA for Clune Wind Farm will include the following assessments:

Hydrology and Hydrogeology

A series of hydrology surveys have been undertaken to allow the project hydrologists to obtain a thorough understanding of the site and areas which might be at flood risk or have a higher hydrological sensitivity. The surveys have included identifying potential watercourse crossing locations, confirming the location of private water supply sources and visiting habitats (in consultation with the project ecologists) which might be sustained by groundwater. The findings of these surveys are now being used to inform the emerging wind farm design and will be reported in full in the EIA Report.

Phase 1 and Phase 2 peat probing surveys, along with a peat condition survey, have also been taken across the site. These surveys have been used to inform the site layout, avoid areas of deeper peat wherever possible and inform potential habitat enhancement and restoration plans.

Should any significant impacts be identified as part of the EIA process, appropriate mitigation will be proposed. Mitigation seeks, first, to avoid adverse impacts and, where impacts are unavoidable, to reduce the significance of residual effect to an acceptable level. It also seeks enhancement and compensation, where possible, to provide the best practicable outcome.

Ecology

A wide range of ecological surveys have taken place to collect any evidence of the presence of protected mammal species, suitable fish habitat, and for the presence of bats – either roosting or foraging on site.

Surveying for bat species involved an initial habitat assessment, then the deployment of static detectors to identify bat calls, and therefore bat activity within the site boundaries and at the turbine base locations. Collected data from bat surveys was used to inform the suitability of proposed turbine locations.

The non-avian Ecology Impact Assessment will involve a range of studies including habitats, protected species, notable species (e.g. national and European Protected Species) and locally protected species. Full details and findings of the ecological surveys will be available within the EIA Report.