

13. Proposed Installation of Wind Turbine at Ham Hill Visitors Centre (First Resolution)

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Purpose of the Report

To seek permission under Regulation 3 of the Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992 to apply for planning permission for the erection of a wind-turbine on the roof of the Visitor's Centre at Ham Hill Country Park.

Recommendation

That a First Resolution be passed seeking planning permission under Regulation no. 3 of the Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992 for the erection of a wind-turbine on the roof of the Visitor's Centre at Ham Hill Country Park.

Background

The Visitor's Centre is in a very windy location and so has been chosen by South Somerset District Council to be suitable to showcase wind turbine technology to reduce electricity bills. Electricity is the main energy source at the centre used for lighting, computers and heating. Although the renewably generated electricity is expected to be 1000-2000 kilowatt hours a year, electricity use at the Centre will always exceed generation from the turbine. This means that the wind-generated electricity will have the highest possible value.

One of South Somerset District Council's corporate objectives is "to facilitate delivery of three CO₂ emission reduction exemplar projects by 2009". Installation of this turbine would be the first such project. It will provide us with valuable data about this type of turbine and how it operates at the wind speeds found at Ham Hill. We will use this information to guide householders who look to us to give an unbiased informed opinion on wind turbines.

In addition :

At the Ham Hill Centre, we see around 2,000 school children on formal education visits, members of the public on family activity days, children's holiday activities, workshops, slide shows, meetings and guided walks every year, and that number seems to be ever increasing. As well as informing these people about the geology, history and wildlife of the hill, sustainability and reducing climate change are important issues that we are also keen to educate people about and do help contribute towards ourselves. To do this, we need to be seen to be 'green' too, and having a wind turbine with it's display showing how much electricity is being produced every day would be a fantastic feature, and, would add to other 'green' features of the centre such as our new recycling bins that are inside the centre. The relatively low cost of the wind turbine may encourage people to install one on their own home or place of work.

Planning

The proposals have been discussed with the Area North Planning Team who advise that they have no objection to the proposal, in principle.

Financial Implications

The cost of this work, which will be in the region of £1,500, will be met from the Climate Change Officers Budget.

Background Papers: *Objective 19 of the Corporate Plan, 2005-2012*
