

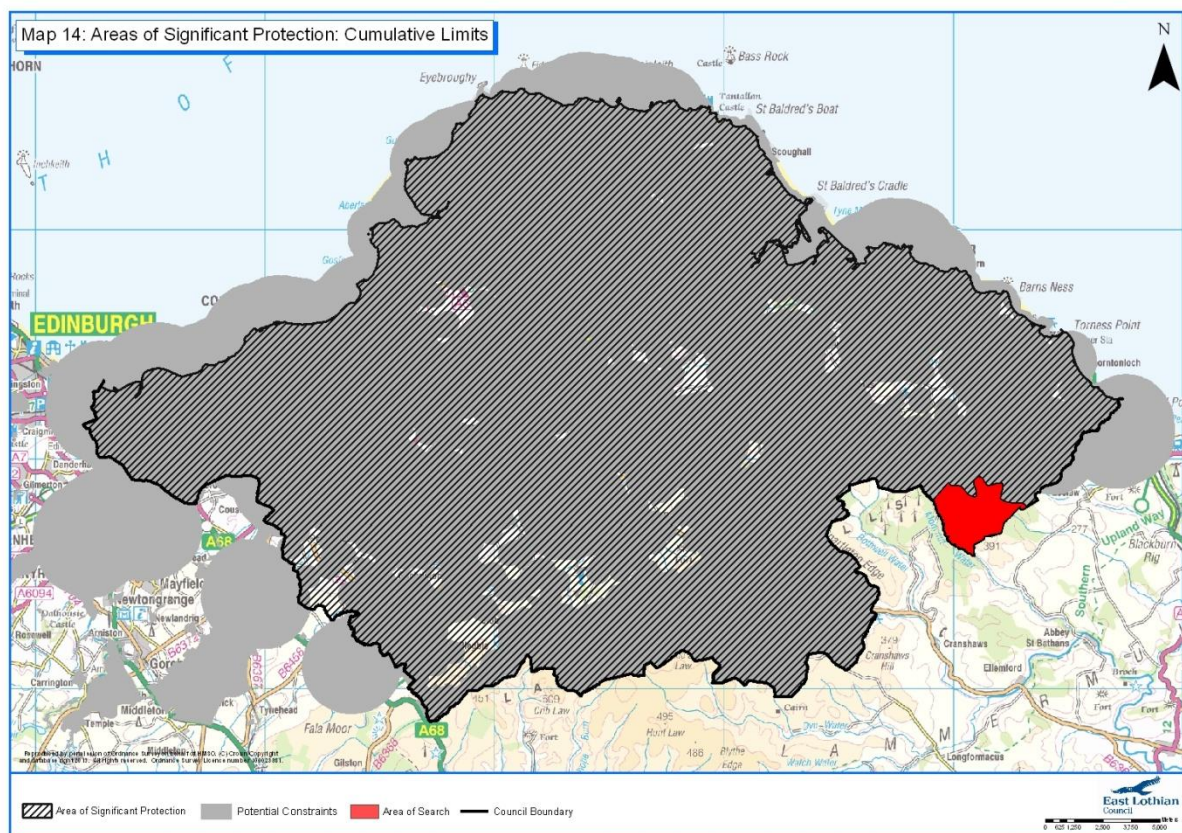
Explanatory note - Guidance for Windfarms of Over 12MW –

Scottish Ministers require Councils to produce a spatial framework for windfarms of over 20MW. This guidance should show:

1. Areas requiring Significant Protection because they are designated for their national or international landscape or natural heritage value, are Green Belt, or are areas where the cumulative impact of existing and consented windfarms limits further development
2. Areas with potential constraints where proposals will be considered on their individual merits against identified criteria; and
3. Areas of Search where appropriate proposals are likely to be supported subject to detailed consideration against identified criteria.

Local variations on this approach are acceptable where justified.

Map 14 from the Guidance for Windfarms of Over Twelve Megawatts, below, shows the Area of Significant Protection (hatched), the Area of Search (red) and below that, in grey, areas which have at least one potential constraint.



The Guidance varies from Scottish Ministers approach by reducing the size of wind farms covered to 12 MW, which is equivalent to about 5 -6 turbines 120m high (roughly the size of those at Crystal Rig). This lower limit is a better fit with the sizes of development looked at in the Council's Landscape Capacity Studies, which were specifically chosen to suit the East Lothian landscape. Due to East Lothian's topography, a windfarm of this size is likely to be visible over much of the area, and so will raise much the same issues as a windfarm of 20MW.

The other main variation is that the interest of the Northern Coast and Landmark Hills were considered so important locally, and the impacts of development so hard to overcome, that these areas were given the same protection as the Green Belt and national and international sites have. The Northern Coast contains most of the attractive tourist beaches of East Lothian as well as many golf courses, while it was thought that development on the Landmark Hills (the Garletons, North Berwick Law and Traprain Law) would define the character of East Lothian.

In preparing the Guidance, a mapping exercise was done of all the constraints listed by Scottish Ministers. This showed that due to the rich natural and built heritage of the area, there are no large areas which are free of constraint. The Council also had to judge where the cumulative limits of development had been reached.

While this was being done, an application was made at Wester Dod for large scale wind farm development. This forced early consideration of this site. The Council decided broadly to support this proposal. For the same reasons that the Council supported this proposal, the area has been included as an Area of Search in the Guidance. Since writing the draft Guidance this application has been approved by Scottish Ministers, and if constructed this proposal is expected to take up the whole capacity of this Area of Search for wind development of this size.

Looking at cumulative landscape and visual issues, it was considered that limits of this scale of development had been reached in all other parts of East Lothian. There is a clear existing pattern of cluster and space of large scale wind development in the uplands, with smaller scale development in lowland areas. Further large scale development would, cumulatively with this existing development, have unacceptable impacts on the Lammermuir landscape, Lammermuir skyline, Landscape Character (maintaining distinctiveness) and visual effects on the non-Lammermuir area. Other cumulative considerations are the intervisibility of the area and loss of wild land.

An Environment Report (ER) has been prepared for the Guidance. The ER sets out the current state of the environment, and the impacts that the Guidance is expected to have. Environmental problems relevant to windfarms were also considered, and indicators were chosen to try and identify the impacts that the GWOM would have. The ER must consider reasonable alternatives to the plan or strategy. As a reasonable alternative to the chosen strategy, the ER considered the identification of the Lammermuir Plateau as an Area of Search. The main conclusions from the ER were that the allocation of the Area of Search at Monynut would have an impact on loss of wild land and potentially on Oldhamstocks Conservation Area, and that restricting development in other areas would have an impact on the meeting of targets for renewable energy generation and so the mitigation of climate change.

Comments on both the Guidance and the Environment Report are welcome.