

COVID 19 Industry Guidance note for bird and bat surveyors and other essential workers

Context

There is a growing concern among IWEA members about the implications for carrying out scientific environmental surveys by ornithologists and ecologists should greater restrictions on movement be imposed by the relevant authorities as part of the response to the Covid-19 virus. As part of the Irish and EU environmental law every proposed large-scale wind farm must produce an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR). This report is prepared by the developer and explains what impact the project, if it was allowed to go ahead, would have on the environment. A crucial part of this process is a 24-Month Bird Survey.

If the professionals who conduct bird and bat surveys are unable to carry out surveying work at any point during the crucial breeding season (April – September) it could jeopardise the rest of the planned surveys for the remainder of the season and greatly damage the usability/robustness of the overall dataset. These surveys are seasonally dependent and must be undertaken in particular months to compile a full 24-month dataset. If a proposed wind farm project had been scheduled for lodgement in Q3 2020 or afterwards and was dependent on this year's summer bird surveys, the lodgement of the planning application would likely have to be deferred until Q3 2021. This would obviously have serious implications for delivery timelines for onshore wind farm development and, consequently, on the Climate Action Plan.

IWEA believe that these activities should fall under the category of 'scientific and research development activities' as surveying work for proposed wind farms is the exact same as other work undertaken on research projects that would fall within the definition of "scientific research and development activities". Additionally, the nature of the work carries a very low risk due to the low likelihood of contact with other people as it is carried out.

Guidance

IWEA has developed this guidance for these key personnel and is recommending adherence by all IWEA members.

This guidance is based on publicly available information and industry good practise as at 6th April 2020. Further government or health advice may supersede this guidance note. In the event of any conflicts, please default to national health guidance issued by the HSE or the Irish Government. Companies should be aware of any limitations on availability of emergency response personnel that may be notified in future by the HSE or National Ambulance Service.

Where teams are working across two different jurisdictions, we recommend using the more conservative guidance available.

General Requirements for Teams

- Surveyors should check their personal health before leaving home. If surveyors are showing any [symptoms of COVID 19](#) they should notify their employer, should not travel to work and begin self-isolation

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- In the event of becoming symptomatic or having a suspected case, surveyors should share this information with employers, site owners and other potentially affected personnel, and be fully transparent with any contact tracing measures required
- All personnel coming to site should provide a declaration stating their current health status re: COVID-19 (i.e. any symptoms) and any relevant details from previous fourteen days
- Where possible there should be limited physical interactions between different service colleagues and physical distancing should be maintained at all times
- It is advised to strictly limit the number of colleagues working with each other. Employers must risk assess team numbers in line with HSE guidance

Vehicle

- Where possible personnel should travel to site independently of one another
- Where travel to the site must occur in a single vehicle (e.g. boat) personnel should maintain a distance of 2m between individuals in the vehicle.
- Personnel should work in the same service vehicles used by the same individuals as far as reasonably practicable
- Where this cannot be achieved consider any other appropriate measures [and follow strict hygiene protocol from official sources](#)
- Regularly **disinfect** surfaces in vans (door handles, steering wheels, dash boards)

Lunch & breaks

- During lunch breaks personnel should maintain physical distancing rules
- Break periods should be staggered
- Restaurants and other public places should be avoided
- Personnel should bring their own lunch / drinks to site
- Wash any utensils in dishwasher or warm soapy water, if available
- Personnel should wash hands using [HSE guidance](#) after lunch and breaks. If water is not available, hand sanitiser should be used

Paperwork / Computer Related Tasks

- All other works not on survey site such as completion of reports, answering emails etc. should be completed at home where possible to avoid unnecessary trips to business office.

General

- Face to Face meeting surveyors and clients should be cancelled and replaced with online meetings / conference calls
- Avoid exchanging personal items between colleagues such as mobile phone, laptop, binoculars, scope, notebook, pens etc.
- Tools which are shared by teams should be handled with clean gloves to avoid risk of spreading contamination and should be **disinfected** after use
- All Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is for the sole use of the individual. PPE shall never be shared

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- [HSE's guidance on Physical Distancing, Disinfecting, Washing Hands, Hand Sanitiser, Symptoms, Notifying should be adhered to at all times](#)

Mental Health

- Stay informed through official sources and set limits for news and social media
- Keep up healthy routines such as exercise and diet
- Stay connected to others
- Try to anticipate distress and support each other
- Don't make assumptions which may stigmatise an individual's health
- Recognition of other colleagues' physical health and age brackets may categorise them in vulnerable groups impacting roles and responsibilities