

Noisy birds at Cockenzie

by Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter

A noise survey at an industrial site proposed for testing rocket engines found the loudest sound in the surrounding area was birdsong.

Edinburgh-based rocket company Skyrora has lodged plans to set up an equipment testing site at part of the former Cockenzie Power Station site on the East Lothian coast.

As part of its proposal, it commissioned a noise survey to establish the impact on surrounding residential areas.

And a survey of the current noise levels revealed a picture of rural life in the Garden County, with birdsong named as the “dominant noise” in most of the tested surroundings.

Skyrora wants to build a test site for its equipment at the southern end of the former coal store site at Cockenzie.

Surveyors sent out to monitor current noise during the day said that at houses closest to the proposed rocket launch – 200 metres to its west – on Preston Crescent in Prestonpans, the dominant source of noise picked up by monitors was “fairly constant birdsong”.

At houses to the north on Whin Park, Cockenzie, which lies 650 metres from the site, the survey reported that “the dominant noise source was a constant humming/buzzing from a nearby pylon. Birdsong was a significant contributor to total noise levels and was occasionally dominant”.

It added that traffic noise from the nearby residential estate was a “lesser contributor”.

A survey of noise at Cedar Drive, Port Seton, 490 metres from the site, recorded a spike in current levels which was "attributed to a lawnmower operating in a nearby garden".

The report concluded: "The noise environment was dominated at most monitoring positions by fairly constant birdsong."

It recorded noise levels at between 43 to 51 decibels during its monitoring time. The report said estimates on the impact of testing had shown increased noise during operations of up to 74 decibels at the most and 55 decibels at the housing nearest.

It said that while "significant adverse impacts" had been identified in the areas surrounding the site during tests, they would be of a very short duration and "potential annoyance is therefore limited."

It also said that Skyrora, which expects to hold seven test days each month with up to 10 tests on each day, lasting 30 seconds each, would publish the dates and times of the tests in advance for local residents. The application is currently on East Lothian Council's website for comment.

The site formerly occupied by the Cockenzie Power Station is now owned by East Lothian Council and will be used to promote economic growth in the local area along with jobs. It is a key part of the East Lothian Economic Development Strategy and features within the current National Planning Framework NPF3. Scottish Ministers have granted permission for an onshore substation and electricity cables. There are also plans for a potential cruise port.



Cockenzie during demolition in September 2015