Planning Status Report
Onshore wind
March 2007

Executive Summary

- Wind energy in the UK wind industry is now a mature industry capable of delivering rapid growth in clean, carbon free electricity supply
- Onshore wind is key to meeting Government's target for 10% of UK electricity supplies to be sourced from renewable energy by 2010
- The UK is falling behind on the target, with renewables currently generating just 5% of supply compared to the anticipated 6.7%
- 2,000 megawatts (MW) of installed wind energy capacity in the UK, 80% from onshore wind and 20% from offshore wind
- In the 4 months since the release of the Stern Review, UK planning approval rates have plummeted to lowest level ever – only 33%
- Wind energy fares badly in the planning system compared to other types of major development which have approval rates of 76-90%
- In the 4 months since the release of the Stern Review, just 2 positive decisions have been made by the Planning Inspectorate from 7 inquiries
- Just 5 appeals from 16 inquiries were allowed by the Planning Inspectorate in 2006
- Slow determination times are unduly delaying potential new capacity with an average of 15 months for local planning decisions, and some projects taking 3 years or more
- In the 4 months since the release of the Stern Review, not a single decision has been made by either the DTI or the Scottish Executive on the 42 largest onshore wind projects
- Cumulatively, these projects total of 4,575 MW, equivalent to over 3% of UK electricity supplies; most have been in the planning system for several years
- A total potential 6% of UK electricity supply is held up in the onshore planning system
- Consent for an additional 660–1,000 turbines or 2,000 MW onshore is needed to meet almost half the UK's 2010 target, or 4.5% of supplies
- This 2 GW of capacity must be consented by the end of 2007 in order to be built by 2010.

BWEA is calling for:

- UK Government, the Scottish Executive and the Welsh Assembly to monitor and enforce their own national policy and provide greater commitment, clarity of advice and where necessary, resources to decision makers
- Provision of a Government national planning statement which makes their position clear in relation to the various issues relevant to wind energy, in order to promote consistency in decision making and to prevent numerous non-planning issues being rethought at one inquiry after another
- Local planning and appeal decisions from the Planning Inspectorate to be in line with national planning and energy policy and to better reflect the national need for renewable energy
- Government provision of improved information, especially the Statement of National Need contained in the Energy Review, to raise the awareness of decision makers of the need for wind energy, and of the issues to be addressed in decision making
- Decision times to be significantly reduced at the local level and to be monitored and enforced with a combination of incentives for prompt decision making and disincentives for delays
- A greater commitment to decision making for larger wind farm projects determined under Section 36 of the Electricity Act. This requires greater resource on a scale to match the contribution that these onshore wind projects can make in tackling the urgent issues of climate change and energy security

Introduction

In January 2000, the Government announced its aim for 10% of electricity to come from renewable sources by 2010. This was restated as a firm target in the February 2003 Energy White Paper: *Our energy future – creating a low carbon economy*.

The current target is 6.7% for 2006/07 rising to 15.4% by 2015/16. At present the UK is falling behind with just 5% of supply coming from renewable energy sources in January 2007, and delays in planning decisions for wind energy projects remains a primary reason for this deficit.

Since the introduction of the UK's 10% renewable energy target, the case for urgent action on climate change and the need for greater renewable contributions to secure the UK's energy supplies, has never been stronger. In October 2006, the report on the economics of climate change by Sir Nicholas Stern, head of the Treasury's economic service and former chief economist at the World Bank, was launched. It was reported around the world, and much lauded as a landmark in the policy debate surrounding global warming. The Stern Review resulted in comment about how the landscape has now changed with new things possible in Stern's wake, as the economics of climate change became clearer.

The Stern Review has been one of the most influential reports on climate change ever published, warning of the ever growing costs of climate change if urgent action is not taken. Yet, BWEA is increasingly concerned by emerging data on local decision making for onshore wind farm planning

applications, at a time when the UK Government wants to lead the world in delivering a reduced carbon economy. In the four months since the Stern Report was published, UK local planning application approval rates are worse than they have ever been since the first wind farm was approved in 1991.

BWEA's data shows that approval rates for local planning applications during the period 29th October 2006 to the end of February 2007 stood at just 33%, with one in three projects being approved (equating to a 35% approval rate by capacity, out of a total 283 MW capacity decided). This compares poorly to average UK approval rates in all previous years. If the pattern of planning decisions since the Stern Review was published continues, then 2007 looks set to become the worst year on record for the progress of wind farms through the local planning system, at a time when:

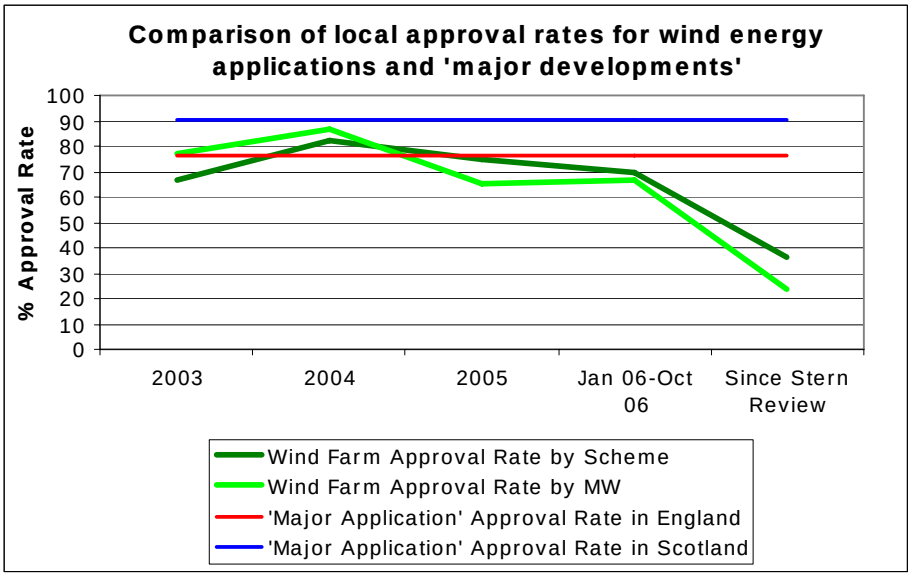
- the UK is falling behind on renewable energy targets
- there is overwhelming meteorological and economic data making the case for urgent action on climate change
- onshore wind is the only renewable technology able to deliver clean, carbon free energy on a large scale
- onshore wind continues to receive the greatest level of public support of any form of energy generation, with a consistently high level of 80% in favour of onshore wind energy.

Wind farm proposals also fare badly in the planning system compared to other types of development, with UK approval rates in the past 2 years for 'major developments' across the UK of between 76-90% depending on Country[1].

Local planning and appeal decision data since the publication of the Stern Review: 29/10/2006 – 28/02/2007

	Projects decided	MW decided	Decision time	Approval rate by scheme	Approval rate by MW
All decision types	18	283	21 months	33%	35%
(LPA)	11	160	15 months	36%	24%
(Appeal)	7	123	28 months	29%	48%

[1] Data for planning decisions between the years 2005-2006 sourced from Scottish Executive and Department of Communities & Local Government.



Local planning authority approval rates & decision times 2003 - 07

Year / Period	Projects decided	MW decided	Decision time	Approval rate by scheme	Approval rate by MW
2003	18	306	10	67%	77%
2004	22	274	11	82%	87%
2005	28	507	12	75%	65%
Jan 06 – Oct 06	33	514	17	65%	59%
Since Stern	11	161	15	36%	24%

Another critical issue is the length of time it takes to get a wind farm proposal through the planning system. In the period since publication of the Stern Review, UK local planning authority and appeal decisions took an average of 21 months. In 2006 decisions took on average 16 months, an increase in decision times for the fourth year running. The statutory time period for decisions is 16 weeks.

Finally, with respect to both large onshore (50 MW capacity and above) and all offshore applications (which are determined by DTI or the Scottish Executive) local authorities are putting forward objections, which trigger lengthy and expensive public enquiries, further reducing the prospect of meeting the UK's 2010 target and climate change agenda. Not a single decision has been made by either the DTI or the Scottish Executive on the 42 largest onshore wind projects (assessed under Section 36 of the Electricity Act), since the Stern Review's publication four months ago.

Sterilising the potential

Onshore wind is expected to make the largest single contribution to the 2010 target. In order to deliver the total 6,000 MW of potential that BWEA estimates the sector could contribute, consent for an additional 2,000 MW is needed by the end of 2007, equivalent to an additional 660 to 1,000 modern 2-3 MW wind turbines. This additional necessary capacity, plus existing operational and consented capacity, would meet about half of the UK 2010 renewable electricity target (4.5% of UK supply), and would result in the installation of approximately 3,500 turbines in total (about twice the current number installed).

At present there is nearly 8 GW of capacity held up in the onshore planning system, equivalent to nearly 6% of potential UK electricity supply. Despite this promising capacity the critical issue in meeting the Government's 2010 target is the urgency to approve the additional MW capacity needed and deliver timely planning decisions for the onshore projects that are required to make the greatest contribution.

If wind energy projects currently in planning are delayed and refused in bulk, there is no chance that the Government's renewable energy targets will be met. For every delay and planning refusal, investor confidence in the UK wind energy market is further damaged, which in turn is threatening the UK's intended position as a leader in all forms of renewable energy.