

## BWEA on Political Party Conference Tour with 'Climate Clinic'

By Chris Tomlinson, Director of Operations

The 2006 Party Conference season saw the birth of a consortium of 16 organisations each with climate change at the top of their agenda. BWEA has pulled together with other trade associations, companies and NGO's to launch 'Climate Clinic', the main event in Brighton, Manchester and Bournemouth.

In the context of a snowballing of activity in the climate change agenda stemming from the release of Al Gore's film, 'An Inconvenient Truth', the Tyndall Centre's recent report, Richard Branson's announced commitment to biofuels and a sea change in cross-party support, BWEA devised a fringe event to answer these calls for urgent action on climate change.

With support from npower renewables, Gamesa Energy UK and Ecotricity, BWEA delivered, "The Power of Planning: Delivering Onshore Wind - Securing the Government's 10% target", a fringe event that reached into the heart of the onshore wind debate. The Independent's Environment Editor, Mike McCarthy provided inspirational and insightful chairmanship of distinguished panellists to explore the difficult path the wind industry has in securing planning decisions and to investigate solutions.

The theme of the event was whether the UK can meet its renewable energy targets, which have become an essential tool in measuring success at many levels of Government and business, but count for little if no one is held accountable. The UK is nearly half way to achieving the 2010 target and with only four years left to deliver we asked is the target still achievable, are there going to be shortfalls and what can be done? The deciding

factor lies in how Government and industry can work together in delivering onshore wind - the proven powerhouse for renewable energy generation.

Half of the UK's new renewable energy capacity realistically needs to come from onshore wind power if the government is to meet its 2010 renewables target, but urgent decisions are needed by the DTI, the Scottish Executive and local planning authorities to turn the target into a reality. Onshore wind is delivering at a remarkable rate having increased generating capacity by almost 50% in less than 8 months. 511 new megawatts (MW) have been commissioned to date in 2006, taking the total onshore wind capacity to 1,632 MW but 7,200MW of onshore wind capacity remains in the planning system. This capacity is equivalent to an impressive 5.4% of UK electricity supply currently awaiting planning decisions - so what is the government waiting for?

Common themes at the Party conferences included:

- a call for solutions that correspond with the urgency of the situation
- global and national interest versus local concerns
- the planning system as 'democracy in action' or 'an ineffective process'
- the need for a joined up Government approach to help deliver awareness raising at the local level.

Some key points also raised by the speakers included:

- Maria McCaffery, BWEA CEO called for the introduction of targets to determine projects under Section 36 of the Electricity Act (those over 50MW) and for evolving targets for local authorities to incentivise decision making once their existing 16 week target has been missed. "The 10% target cannot be met without corresponding targets for decision making - one is dependent on the other". Maria also highlighted a

"simple solution" of tackling resource shortfalls at the Scottish Executive who are tasked with assessing over 30 large onshore wind projects which make up two thirds of all the onshore wind capacity in planning in the UK. Many of these schemes have been in the planning system for three or four years.

- Martin Marais of npower renewables restated the need for the DTI and Scottish Executive to be "properly resourced to deal with the volume of applications" and supported Dale Vince of Ecotricity who led the call for the leading political parties to proactively engage with their respective elected members and build awareness of the climate change agenda and the need for onshore wind power.

- Angela Smith MP, Minister of State for the Department of Communities and Local Government, recognised the need for the planning system to "give room for investment in UK industry" and agreed with the need to improve awareness citing her own experience of installing solar panels on her home. Angela highlighted the need to communicate to the public the dire consequences of not pursuing renewables energy as well as highlighting the economic benefits of doing so.

The onshore wind industry has proved it can deliver on a large scale but in order to build projects by 2010, decisions must be made by December 2007 - at the latest. The UK Government needs to lead by example, demonstrating its desire and commitment to meet its renewable energy target through encouraging prompt action in decision-making. In turn, this will allow the flagship onshore wind industry to signal the UK as a buoyant and sustainable renewable energy market, building investor confidence for a long-term renewables future. Government at all levels has the power to make the target count - the time to act is now.

Contact Chris on 020 7689 1963 / [chris@bwea.com](mailto:chris@bwea.com)