

Onshore Wind Continues to Climb the Upward Curve, but can the Level of Growth be Maintained to Deliver the 2010 Target?

By Chris Tomlinson, Director of Operations

There can be no disputing 2006 as a successful year for delivering new operational onshore wind projects. A record breaking 570 MW has already been commissioned, an increase of 50% on performance in 2005 which in turn saw a 100% increase in capacity commissioned in 2004. 625 MW is currently under construction and the wind industry as a whole is on the brink of breaking the 2 GW barrier, only 18 months after completing the first gigawatt, firmly positioning the wind industry as a key player in the UK energy market, and the UK wind industry in the top ten wind players globally.

So what does the future hold for onshore delivery? In the short term at least, 2007 looks like another record breaking year. 594 MW is already under construction and with a few projects about to break ground, the sector can be confident of breaking 700 MW in 2007. This is all in keeping with the forecasts in BWEA's report, *Onshore Wind: Powering Ahead*, part of the industry's Energy Review submission.

Analysing consents, there has been yet another year on year increase in the capacity being awarded planning approvals with 825 MW consented in 2006 in comparison to 728 MW in 2005. However, BWEA cautions that this is not the level of increase required for the industry to deliver

the Government's 2010 target. The level of capacity consented in 2007 from the 7.2 GW currently held in the planning system needs to be ramped up considerably if the forecasts for delivery in 2010 are to remain a realistic proposal.

2007: Decisions, Decisions, Decisions

It is neither an underestimation nor an exaggeration to state that 2007 is the year which determines whether the Government's 10% renewable energy target by 2010 can be met. It has been widely reported that if the Government is to get close to its target, half of that target must be met from onshore wind projects alone. As is proven time and again, the UK wind industry is well established and more than able to cope with increasing growth in delivery. However, the issue is now out of industry's hands.

The opportunity is there for the taking if only decisions can be made promptly in 2007. Encouraging recommendations from the recently published Barker Review echo strong calls from BWEA to increase the resources for planning authorities and the planning inspectorate. In order to give greater confidence to decision makers and speed up decision making, BWEA goes further in calling for greater awareness building of the need to tackle climate change and the key role wind energy has in this

regard. The Statement of National Need for renewable energy as set out in the Energy Review sends a strong message, but only to those who have sight of it. BWEA is therefore calling on the Government to ensure that a copy of the Statement of National Need finds its way on to the desks of planning officers and Planning Committees across the country.

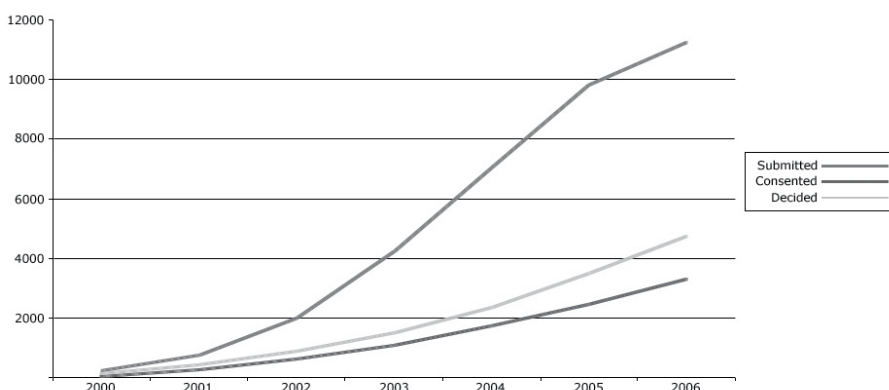
Two thirds of all onshore wind capacity in the UK remains in the hands of the Scottish Executive and DTI for determination under Section 36 of the Electricity Act. BWEA will continue repeating calls for an increase in resources for teams engaged in assessing and deciding applications to reduce decision times back from the four year period which is becoming commonplace. If Government at all levels are serious about meeting renewable energy targets, associated targets for decision making must be set and adhered to, be they voluntary or statutory targets.

Finally, it is time to recognise underperformers who are threatening renewable energy targets across the UK. In the New Year, BWEA will launch a detailed analysis of planning decisions over the last two years, but one of the most notable results shows that Perth & Kinross local authority alone, is responsible for refusing one-third of all wind farms in the UK.

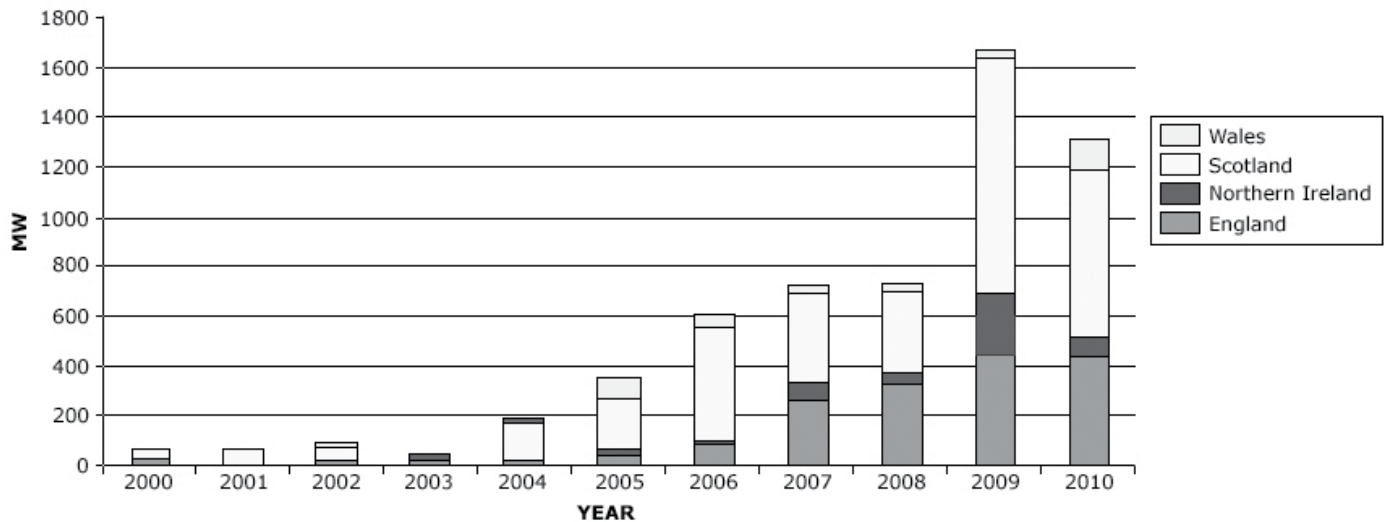
2006 has been a successful year for the deployment and commissioning of new onshore wind farms, but 2007 is **the** pivotal year. Government must now deliver Section 36 decisions and increase the level of awareness of decision makers to reflect the call for urgent action on tackling climate change. With 5 refusals from the most recent 5 decisions, one can easily imagine the Stern and Barker Reviews are but a dream. □

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UK Cumulative MW capacity submitted, decided and consented 2000 - 2006



Year on year existing and forecast build onshore to 2010, by country



Source: Onshore Wind: Powering Ahead - www.bwea.com/energyreview

BWEA Onshore Wind Achievements 2006

• Development Plan Submissions

Abigail Dodds, BWEA's planning advisor continues respond to a surge in development plan consultations across the UK that have significant implications on the way wind energy developments are assessed and ultimately determined by local planning authorities. The breakdown of submissions in 2006 to date is as follows: England: 71 Local Development Frameworks and 4 Regional Spatial Strategies; Scotland: 7 Local Plans and 3 Structure Plans; Wales: 3 Supplementary Planning Guidance and the Energy Route Map.

• Cumulative effect model policy

BWEA established a working group and brought together partners and stakeholders to inform the production of a project brief. DTI have recently announced that the project brief has been accepted for funding and the cumulative effect modelling work is going out to tender before at the turn of the year.

• Northern Ireland PPS18

BWEA has actively engaged with the Planning Service during the preparation of the first national planning policy statement for renewables in Northern Ireland. A number of papers have been submitted to advise on the merits of the criteria based policy approach, which has been so successful in England and Scotland - guiding renewable energy developments in land use planning terms without sterilising swathes of land from wind farm developments. A good relationship has developed between BWEA and the Planning Service, but there remains industry concern at the focus on a map-based approach that remains inflexible, can add delays in policy implementation and sterilise potential wind energy projects. This will challenge the ability to meet renewable energy targets in Northern Ireland at a time when climate change and energy security has reached the top of the political agenda. BWEA continues to work closely with the Planning Service and other stakeholders to ensure a positive and robust planning policy statement for renewable energy can be developed.

• Energy Review submission - Onshore Wind: Powering Ahead

BWEA devised and produced the most comprehensive analysis ever undertaken on the potential of onshore wind delivery to 2010. Forming a key element of the Energy Review submission, BWEA found that at least 6GW of onshore wind energy capacity would be operational by 2010. However, this was based on maintaining the same decision making performance at local level as had been achieved on average between 2000 and 2005, and depends on decisions for projects over 50MW being determined under Section 36 of the Electricity Act within 3 years of submission at a 50% approval rate.

• SPP6 consultation response

BWEA worked closely with the Scottish Renewables Forum (SRF) Planning Group to assist with a consultation response to draft SPP6, and BWEA also prepared an individual response to the SPP6 formal consultation which was submitted to the Scottish Executive.

BWEA Onshore Wind Achievements 2006 - continued

• Climate Clinic

To top the bill for the Party Political Conference season, BWEA joined forces with 16 other organisations who share the common priority of having climate change at the top of their agenda. Managed by Greenpeace, the first Climate Clinic entailed securing a venue from which to host a number of fringe events with associated high profile press coverage in the Independent, Climate Clinic's media partner. BWEA's event was sponsored by Gamesa Energy UK, npower renewables and Ecotricity and focused on the issue of planning delays. The event began with a presentation from Chris Tomlinson with statistical information outlining the problem which was followed by an informed debate from a high profile panel of MP's and senior executives from industry and the planning profession.

• BWEA Tourism Briefing Sheet

BWEA have produced a summary of tourism information, surveys and evidence to date, which was used during the presentation to the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Tourism.

• BWEA Wales

Following the adoption of TAN8, the national planning policy statement for renewable energy in Wales, BWEA recognised the importance of working closely with the Welsh Assembly Government and stakeholders to enable the timely delivery of the 800MW wind energy target. BWEA brought together all the developers with an interest in the Wales market and established the Wales Steering Committee in January. This was swiftly followed by the appointment of a Wales Officer who works to the Committee and the BWEA Board and has made swift progress on driving forward the industry agenda in Wales (Alison – include "see page X" to refer to Llew's key achievements 2006 but make sure Llew's key achievements do not include the establishment of the Steering Committee and appointment of the Wales Officer – his should be what has progressed since)

• Aviation

There is a great deal of 'work in progress' as a number of studies reach their conclusion. The research investigates options for mitigating wind turbine interference on a range of different aviation radars. While some developers are already taking the technology further on a case by case basis, most of the studies have yet to be published and BWEA are increasing the pressure for urgent release of the reports before assessing next steps.

• Analysis of Decision Making

BWEA is about to publish results of a detailed analysis of decision making which investigates the performance of different local planning authorities and how this relates to the political party in control. The statistics also highlight the most common reasons for refusal and reassess planning delays. Look out for the launch of this analysis in the New Year.

Are tourists put off by wind farms?

The results of Wind Weekend when 12,500 visitors visited flagship wind farms around the country over the August Bank Holiday and posed for pictures beside turbines would suggest otherwise.

Similarly BWEA's compilation of research into the impact of wind farms on tourism shows that the effect is negligible at worst, with many respondents taking a positive view of wind farms and saying that it would not affect their likelihood of returning to an area. See www.bwea.com/ref/tourism.html

Look out for a new series of myth busters from BWEA in 2007,

