



RePLAN

A newsletter for local councillors and planning officers in England and Wales



From the Editor

Chris Tomlinson
BWEA Director of
Programme Strategy

Welcome to the first edition of RePLAN, a quarterly newsletter for local councillors and planning officers in England and Wales from BWEA. We have launched this new publication in response to demand from local authorities for concise and up-to-date information about the development of wind energy.

It is clear that local authorities will play a crucial role in the development of wind power over the coming years and we hope that RePLAN will become an invaluable resource for all those involved.

In this issue, we take a look at the opening of Europe's largest wind farm (p.4), provide an overview of the UK wind industry (p.2) and examine the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds conclusions on the impact of wind farms on wildlife (p.2).

We also cover BWEA's unique planning conferences (right), consider why councillors are the key to Britain's clean energy future (p.4), and hear how the leader of Kettering Borough Council would improve the planning process (p.3).

We hope that you find RePLAN useful and would be delighted to hear any feedback and suggestions you have for how we can improve the next edition. Please send any comments to me at: c.tomlinson@bwea.com



Chris Tomlinson
BWEA Director of Programme Strategy

BWEA Planning conference: at a wind farm near you

More than 1,000 local councillors and planning officers benefited from a series of free, unique conferences at nine wind farms across the UK last year.

Run by the British Wind Energy Association, the lively events gave delegates an opportunity to find out about the latest developments in policy at the national, regional and local levels, provided opportunities for sharing experiences with others in the development process, and improved delegates' knowledge and awareness of the issues and processes that affect them.

All of the events were held at working wind farms across the UK, giving participants an invaluable behind-the-scenes look at how they operate. Feedback from all the events was excellent.

"All of the events were held at working wind farms"

A new series of planning conferences has started this year, with events held in the East of England, the North West, Yorkshire & Humber, Northern Ireland and the South East.

Three more events – covering Scotland, the South West, and the East Midlands will be held in the next four months.

This year's events will look at the potential of wind energy in the UK, examine national and regional planning policy, and discuss both

environmental and technical issues relating to wind farms. Speakers include policy makers, civil servants, councillors and developers. Accurate and up-to date-information will be provided through both presentations and question-and-answer sessions.

"Councillors and officers will leave the events with increased knowledge of planning for wind energy"

Councillors and officers will leave the events with increased knowledge of planning for wind energy and the implications of both EU and national targets. The programme has been designed to improve participants' awareness of the nature of wind energy technology, and better enable them to make decisions.

All of the events are free and representatives from all local authorities are invited to attend.

For further information visit:
www.bwea.com/planningconferences




RePLAN is published by BWEA
Greencoat House, Francis Street,
London, SW1P 1DH
Phone: 020-7901-3032
Fax: 020-7901-3001
info@bwea.com | www.bwea.com



Turbines no threat to wildlife, says RSPB

A new report from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds has delivered the ultimate rebuttal to those citing impact on wildlife as a reason to oppose wind farms.

This meticulously researched document, offering pages of references in academic studies and expert reports, concludes that “evidence from several European countries including parts of the UK, shows that it is possible to plan onshore wind farms, without significant and unnecessary damage to wildlife.”

The report also finds that “appropriately located and designed wind farms are a largely environmentally benign form of energy generation” and that “onshore wind is also a mature and cost competitive source of renewable electricity.”

The findings have left many who oppose wind energy on environmental grounds lost for words. The strength of this report is that it gives weight to research and evidence that has been in the public domain all along.

It also brings together the divergent environmental, conservationist and socio-economic strands of public debate.

There is little available evidence that wind turbines endanger bird species or bird populations. In fact, the independent Strategic Environmental Assessments, completed as part of wind farm planning submissions, consistently show that wind farms have a neutral effect on bird habitats. Perhaps birds don't fly into wind turbines for the same reason they don't fly into lamp posts or walls – and compared to moving vehicles, air traffic and pollution such as oil leaks, it's clear that wind farms are safe for both bird and man.

The report also looks at the question of location. Environmental groups have generally argued for an explicit approach that sets out where wind

farms can or cannot be developed. By contrast, many wind industry representatives say that this approach is overly restrictive and would slow the planning process.

This is clearly an area where wind industry and environmental organisations need to work together, and on this issue the report is short on blunt prescriptions. However, it is a valuable contribution to the debate.

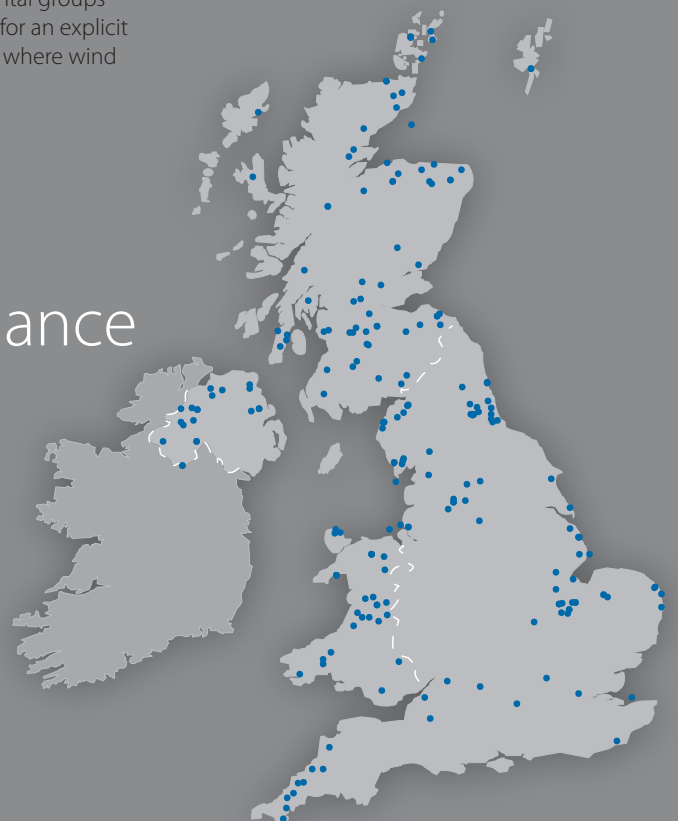
Positive planning for onshore wind: Expanding onshore wind energy capacity while conserving nature can be found at www.rspb.org.uk/ourwork/library

UK wind industry at a glance

Some 2,540 wind turbines are currently operational across the UK, generating enough power for 2,063,981 homes – and many more are still in the pipeline.

The information on this up-to-date map is based on the UK Wind Energy Database (UKWED), the most definitive source of facts and figures about wind energy projects in the UK. Covering both onshore and offshore wind farms, the database tracks projects from submission through to operation, and offers a range of up-to-date statistical information, tables and maps.

BWEA hopes that you find this free facility useful. It can be found at www.bwea.com/ukwed





Councillor Profile

Councillor Jim Hakewill,
Leader, Kettering Borough Council

Do you think 14 GW of onshore wind can be delivered by 2020?

Developments have to be based on the suitability of the locations and not an overarching target driven objective. This will be a very hard target to reach given the funding required and the halting of infrastructure investment globally.

What would you do to speed up the planning process for wind energy developments?

Increase the knowledge base of all those involved. Developers have an enormous responsibility to explain their proposals. Councillors and officers need to properly understand all the implications particularly when the first such proposal arrives in the council's area.

Name a renewable energy project that you supported and say why?

Burton Wold wind farm, Kettering Borough, Northampton-shire. Well publicised and communicated application; strong buy-in and involvement from the land-owner, the local community and the development company. The location was not of significant landscape quality and is close to roads and industry.

Name a renewable energy project that you have not supported and say why?

Loddington wind farm, Kettering Borough, Northampton-shire. The landscape did not lend itself to the development, being too close to Loddington. The nearby new village of Mawsley needed time to settle. The site was too complex to allow easy location of turbines.

How do you think community benefit could be improved for wind energy development?

It is essential to get the buy-in of local people to green projects including educational initiatives. Properly explain that community benefit/S106 is not a bribe but a measure to mitigate the impact. Ensure appropriate and proportionate financial contributions.

How would you balance national against local needs in relation to wind energy projects?

It's hard to demonstrate local benefit in relation to electricity supplied from wind generation. National needs are the primary driver for large scale farms and local people will always find it hard to see a connection to their individual energy needs.

What are the lessons you learned by going through the planning process of a renewable energy project?

The planning system needs clear explanation so that people coming into contact with the process for the first time understand when and how they can make their views known. Politeness and respect for opinions are important for everyone involved.

What advice would you give to other Councillors who will assess a planning application for wind energy projects?

Facilitate and communicate the issues involved in the clearest possible way. To articulate local views and come to a decision based on all the material facts. To ensure that local representations are taken into account. Visit a wind farm!

The expansion in offshore wind, wave and tidal stream energy projects will require more cable landings and onshore substation approvals. Can councillors aid this expansion?

Work hard to find the least damaging options for the environment using their, and local residents' knowledge. Support strong and rewarding community benefit funding negotiations, which improve the well-being of local people, in advance of the final decision.

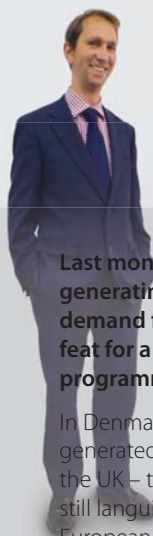
Government response to the Killian-Pretty Review

On March 5 the Government published its response to the Killian-Pretty Review of the planning applications process.

The Killian-Pretty Review evaluated the planning process at Local Authority level aiming to eliminate red tape and make the planning application process more 'user-friendly'.

The Government response proposes a programme of action in reply to the various recommendations made in the Review's final report.

You can view the response at www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/killianprettyresponse



Councillors key role to deliver wind energy benefit

Last month Spain set a new record, generating 40% of one day's electricity demand from wind – an impressive feat for a country that started its programme just nine years ago.

In Denmark, 20% of electricity is now generated by onshore wind power. But the UK – the windiest country in Europe – still languishes second from bottom in the European league table. What's more, over the next ten years, a quarter of the UK's current energy generating capacity, from nuclear, coal and oil fired power stations, will be retired, leaving us with a serious energy gap.

The Renewable Energy Strategy released last month committed the Government to meeting 15% of the UK's energy needs from renewables by 2020. This translates into a requirement for 30% of our electricity to be generated from renewable energy sources by 2020. Based on the figures in last year's draft strategy this implies 20-22% of all electricity will come from offshore and onshore wind and another 2% from marine technologies.

Emerging technologies such as wave, tidal and micro-generation simply cannot scale



up to deliver significant contributions in time to meet this target, and although offshore wind will play a major role, we will not be able to meet our targets without onshore wind.

The Government's consultation on its Renewable Energy Strategy suggest that meeting the 2020 target will involve a total of approximately 14GW of onshore wind, equating to around 4,000 new turbines – compared to around 2,000 turbines currently installed onshore in the UK. The majority of these projects will go through the local planning system.

"Across local authorities in England and Wales there are currently 87 applications,

representing 1324MW of clean power, held up in the planning system."

Every region will have to raise its renewable energy targets for 2020 and councillors clearly have a central role to play in ensuring they are met. Most importantly, prompt decisions need to be made at planning committees that are consistent with national, regional and local planning policy.

Jan Matthiesen
BWEA Head of Onshore

UK celebrates opening of Europe's largest wind farm

The largest onshore wind farm in Europe has just opened in Scotland – and is set to expand again by more than a third.

The £300m Whitelee wind farm was officially opened at the end of May and now produces 322 megawatts (MW) – enough to power 180,000 homes, or a city the size of Glasgow. The opening celebration was enhanced by the news that the Scottish Government has approved a further expansion. This will raise the wind farm's capacity to 452MW – enough to power 70,000 more homes – and create 300 much-needed green jobs in construction.

In addition, Scottish Power, which owns the wind farm, is carrying out scoping work on a potential second extension, which could add a further 140MW. A planning application will be submitted for this later in the summer. This would bring the farm's total capacity to almost 600 MW.

A £2m state-of-the-art visitor centre is also about to be completed at Whitelee. The visitor centre will be the first of its kind in the UK and will include an exhibition area explaining how the windfarm was constructed, and a renewable energy education centre.

Scottish Power's Chairman Ignacio Galán said: "Whitelee is a milestone in the history of Scotland, not only representing the largest wind farm in Europe but also one of the largest in the world."

Scotland's First Minister Alex Salmond MSP said: "Our potential for electricity generation from renewables is up to 60GW – more than ten times our peak demand. The planned extension will enable the windfarm to harness its comparative and competitive advantage in wind generated energy within Europe."