

A Newsletter for Local
Councillors and Planning
Officers in the UK

RePlan

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From the Editor

Gemma Grimes
Head of Onshore Renewables
RenewableUK

Welcome to the summer 2011 edition of **RePlan**. This issue leads with the employment benefits of the UK's wind industry, and the role that onshore wind has to play in driving forward growth in the UK economy and in delivering the Coalition Government's ambitions to become the greenest government ever.

We have an update on recent and forthcoming changes to the planning system, hearing from Indre Vaizgelaite on the subject of forthcoming permitted development rights for microgeneration in England and from Rosie Vetter on planning in Scotland, as the 2006 Planning Act continues to bed in.

Early community engagement in the project development process is a key aspect of the new planning system in Scotland, and of the Coalition's proposed planning reforms in England. Adrian Lea of Cornwall Council emphasises the value of early discussions with all parties, ideally before any plans are formally submitted. This is a principle that the industry is keen to encourage and RenewableUK has published a Community Benefits Protocol designed to further facilitate engagement.

RenewableUK will be looking at this issue further in subsequent editions, as the Localism Bill and National Planning Policy Framework for England gain pace. For more information on any of the topics discussed, don't hesitate to contact RenewableUK.



Gemma Grimes
Head of Onshore Renewables, RenewableUK

Renewable Energy Delivers Jobs Bonanza

 by Lewis Smith

The wind industry has bucked the national trend by almost doubling its full-time workforce in just three years, according to an authoritative study by The Institute for Employment Research. The huge increase in the number of full-time workers in large-scale wind projects (from 4,800 in 2007 to 9,200 in 2010) took place at a time when many other sectors of the economy were in recession.

Once small-scale wind and the emerging wave and tidal sectors are included, the number of full-time workers rises to 10,800 across 500 companies. As the industry has expanded, wind has more than doubled its contribution to the UK's electricity supply since 2008.

Many long-term jobs have been created in the operation and maintenance of turbines and in the UK's developing supply chain. But the speed of expansion has left the industry a victim of its own success, with the report identifying hard-to-fill vacancies as a key issue needing to be addressed.

The problem deepened last year with 26 per cent of employers saying they had hard-to-fill vacancies, compared to 3 per cent in 2009. The issue is exacerbated because a high proportion of the industry's workforce require a degree or the equivalent – 59 per cent compared to the national average of 40 per cent.

Research into employment within the wind and marine energy sector shows that 56 per cent of the jobs are generated by the onshore wind industry, with 29 per cent coming from offshore projects. The expanding small-scale wind industry, which produces turbines for houses, factories, offices and farms, accounts for 7 per cent, whilst wave and tidal have an 8 per cent share of the market.



Photo: Mabey Bridge

Of the 10,800 full-time jobs created by the sector, at least 1,850 are to operate and maintain turbines over decades. Onshore wind now boasts 6,000 full-time workers, with almost half of them – 2,900 – being involved in the planning and development of projects. Offshore wind has 3,100 full-time workers, fewer than onshore, but the sector is forecast to grow dramatically over the next decade. The UK already has the biggest offshore wind sector in the world.

Many other issues remain to be resolved. The industry is now looking to Government and other stakeholders to ensure fully fit-for-purpose regimes for consenting, grid connection and financial support are in place. This is the only way that developments can be swiftly turned into completed projects.

Maria McCaffery, Chief Executive of RenewableUK, said: "Creating a policy framework that ensures that our wind, wave and tidal resources are fully utilised will create jobs and stimulate economic activity at a time when we need it most."

New Planning System for Household Wind Turbines Eagerly Awaited

by **Indre Vaizgelaite, Small Wind Systems Manager, RenewableUK**

Installing a small wind turbine to generate clean electricity in households or businesses may soon become a much simpler matter. Last year the Government proposed further extensions of permitted development rights to include small wind systems and air-source heat pumps. This would allow homeowners in England to install small wind turbines without needing to obtain planning consent.

In recent years, people have become increasingly interested in environmental issues. Rising awareness of carbon emissions and a desire to do their bit for the environment has been inspiring households and communities to take action and replace conventional electricity generation with renewable energy sources. Now, with the Government's feed-in tariff scheme, taking pro-environmental action makes economic sense as well. Clean energy generators are now paid for every unit of energy they generate, as well as reducing their own electricity bills.

As a result, an increasing number of individuals, communities, organisations and small businesses have been expressing interest in utilising the UK's vast wind resources and generating their own clean energy. The proposed planning reforms would remove the requirement to obtain planning permission for those eager to install a micro turbine on domestic premises. However, the streamlined planning policy will be subject to certain limitations and conditions, such as a maximum noise level and the requirement for wind turbines to be installed and certified through the Microgeneration Certification Scheme. The permitted development rights would only be granted for certified wind turbines, installed by an approved installer to ensure they are sited safely.

At the time of writing, a decision on the noise limit enshrined in the permitted development policy is due to be announced. Potential clean energy generators are anxious about the level at which the noise limit will be set, as it will determine the distance at which a turbine can be installed from a neighbouring property. Even the slightest change from the currently proposed noise limit of 45dB

would have a significant impact on the number of sites that would benefit from a streamlined planning policy. By lowering the noise threshold by a few decibels, the turbine would need to be installed further away from the neighbouring property, which in turn would make many sites unviable. With the appropriate noise level, the general permitted development rights would enable people to take advantage of micro wind turbines and facilitate wider uptake of wind technology, in a similar way to other microgeneration technologies that do not require planning permission.

The current proposals apply only in domestic settings, and set the size limits in a way that would only benefit those installing very small turbines up to 1.5kW. So general permitted development rights on non-domestic premises would be very welcome, as they would permit a wind turbine of 6kW to be installed without planning permission. This would allow small businesses and organisations to reduce their carbon emissions and contribute to the Government's low-carbon agenda.

Introducing permitted development rights for air-source heat pumps and wind turbines in both domestic and non-domestic settings would complete the picture for householders, as permitted development rights for other technologies, such as solar panels, were introduced in April 2008. The reform would also greatly assist in reducing the pressure on local planning authorities dealing with an increasing number of applications.

The date when general permitted development for wind will come into effect remains unclear at the time of writing. However, once in place, it will enable more people to help the UK achieve its targets for reducing carbon emissions.



“... an increasing number of individuals, communities, organisations and small businesses have been expressing interest in utilising the UK's vast wind resources and generating their own clean energy”.



Photo: The Palmer Family / ScottishPower Renewables

Planning Onshore Wind

by Rosie Vetter, Policy Manager, Onshore Wind and Planning, Scottish Renewables

As we know, Scotland's planning system is undergoing the most significant modernisation in over sixty years. With the implementation changes introduced by the Planning Act currently underway and the Scottish Government's aim to deliver a planning system that is efficient, inclusive, fit for purpose and sustainable, there has never been a more important time for planning.

There is a huge amount of potential to develop renewable energy in Scotland. To realise this we need to ensure that the regulatory and planning regimes work together to minimise delays, reduce costs and ensure applications are dealt with as efficiently as possible.

At the time of writing there were just over 3.5GW of renewable energy projects awaiting planning determination in Scotland, with onshore wind accounting for over half of this potential capacity. With around 10GW of offshore wind and 1.6GW of wave and tidal projects in the early stages of scoping, the size of development off our shores is due to increase massively over the next decade and beyond.

In the lead up to the election, Scottish Renewables published a series of policy papers outlining the key asks and support needed to drive the renewables sector and realise Scotland's ambitious renewable energy targets. The fifth paper of the series focuses on the role of planning.

If we are going to achieve our low-carbon ambitions it is important that the support that is clearly present at a national level is properly reflected at a local level. A more proactive system of planning for renewable energy will have to rely upon a broader acceptance by the public and decision makers that we must change the

way in which we use and supply energy over the coming decade.

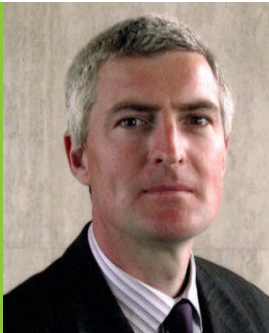
The starkness of future energy choices and the speed at which we deploy renewable energy must be clearly understood by all. Planning must be made a more effective tool to facilitate renewable energy development in Scotland.

This requires commitment by policy makers and an effort to win public support, along with effective policy measures promoting renewable development, and investment in the sector. On this foundation, Scottish Renewables is encouraging developers to ensure they bring forward appropriately sited and well-conceived applications for development with strong community engagement.

The renewables industry prides itself on maintaining a responsible reputation and this is why a robust and transparent planning system is so important for the growth of the industry. We are pleased to see a drive from the Scottish Government towards a speedy, efficient and inclusive planning system, which has undoubtedly assisted many projects to gain consent. The consolidation of policy into the streamlined Scottish Planning Policy has generally been successful and resulted in a useful document.

"...we need to ensure that the regulatory and planning regimes work together to minimise delays, reduce costs and ensure applications are dealt with as efficiently as possible".

Planner Profile



Adrian Lea – Manager, Natural Resources Planning Team, Cornwall Council.

Q1 Do you think 14GW of onshore wind can be delivered by 2020?

Yes. Given our existing installed capacity and those wind farms currently being constructed, the sites with planning permission, the planning applications awaiting determination, a drive and enthusiasm to succeed, I am hopeful that we can achieve this target.

Q2 What would you do to speed up the planning process for wind energy developments?

Increase education, awareness and understanding.

Q3 Name a renewable energy project that you recommended and explain why.

South West Water submitted a planning application for a 50-100kW wind turbine at their Crowdy Water Treatment Works site with the aim of increasing the sustainability of this remote treatment facility. Although this was a relatively minor planning application (30m hub, 41m blade tip), it generated a whole host of issues. We liaised with the applicant to overcome these issues, permission was granted and the development will hopefully demonstrate how such remote facilities can reduce their energy needs.

Q4 How do you think local communities can most effectively engage in the planning process for wind energy developments?

Local communities need to be involved at an early stage and ensure that developers, landowners and elected members are aware of their views, ideally before any plans are formally submitted.

Q5 How would you balance national needs against local needs in relation to wind energy projects?

If local communities are expected to bear the burden of a national need I would hope that such communities are, in some way remunerated.

“Local communities need to be involved at an early stage and ensure that developers, landowners and elected members are aware of their views, ideally before any plans are formally submitted.”

Q6 What are the lessons you learned by going through the planning process of a renewable energy project?

Early discussions and dialogue with all parties are essential. Many issues, such as ecology or aircraft safety, are far easier to resolve at the pre-application stage rather than trying to address such issues when a formal planning application has been submitted.

Q7 What advice would you give to other planners who will assess a planning application for wind energy projects?

Ensure members of the Planning Committee, including substitutes, are properly trained and that a record is kept of the training given, and the attendance.

Q8 The expansion in offshore wind, wave and tidal stream energy projects will require more cable landings and onshore substation approvals. How can planners most effectively address this need?

By working with the industry to identify, and possibly safeguard, appropriate sites.

Community Benefits Protocol

by Ian Brenkley

RenewableUK has developed a new certification protocol, which will recognise the commitment made by a company to deliver tangible benefits to neighbouring communities.



Committed to your Community

Why?

Community benefits schemes are a well-established and integral part of onshore wind energy developments, and representative of the positive relationship between a developer and the local community. In direct recognition of local communities' commitment to accommodating onshore wind farms the industry is committed to ensuring that a proportion of the financial benefits delivered by these projects is realised within the communities that live near them.

What?

The Protocol applies to all projects of 5MW and above. It specifies the criteria with which all participating RenewableUK members agree to comply. It sets out a minimum value of benefit to be provided, the means by which communities with an interest in the wind farm are identified, and the period of provision of community benefits. In doing so, it establishes

a formalised, clear and transparent framework within which project applicants, Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) and communities can openly discuss the potential benefits from having wind farms developed in their areas. The Protocol specifies a £1,000 minimum payment per megawatt installed per year for the lifetime of a wind farm.

When?

The Protocol was officially launched by RenewableUK Chief Executive Maria McCaffery and Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change, Chris Huhne MP on 16 February 2011. It applies to all qualifying projects submitted to planning on or after 16 May 2011.

Where?

The Protocol applies to qualifying onshore wind projects in England only.



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