

Our PR Programme

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Abstract

BWEA has a central role in the provision of public relations about the industry. This presentation examines our performance to date and outlines how PR activity will increase over the coming years as we work towards a larger wind presence, maximising the wind energy message on behalf of our members.

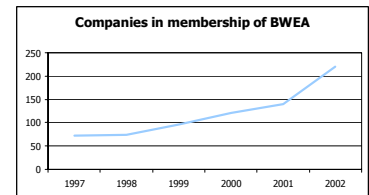
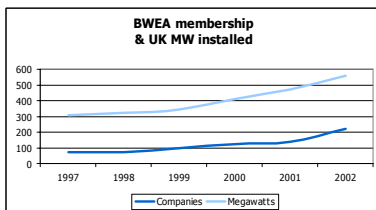
Introduction

I'm here today to talk about BWEA's PR programme. Let me start by saying that that's not what I'm going to talk about, because of course our PR programme is your PR programme. But that isn't entirely correct either, in that BWEA doesn't really have a PR programme; we have a work programme. Everything we do is effectively public relations for the UK wind industry.

So what or who is BWEA and what do we do?

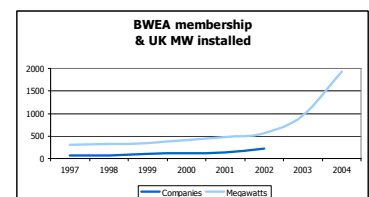
BWEA is the representative body for the UK wind industry. We represent the interests of companies involved in the UK wind sector, from the largest international corporations, to electricity suppliers and generators, wind farm developers down to the person who makes the nuts and bolts.

The UK wind business is booming and so is membership of the association; 50 new companies have joined in the last 12 months alone. That's a third as many as were members this time last year.



An interesting correlation can be drawn between membership of BWEA and numbers of megawatts installed; both are definitely on the rise! This year will see an increase in generation capacity of 20% to match the 30% increase in membership.

In the following years however, things will really take off. Just under 400MW have been confirmed for construction in 2003 – that's a 67% increase in generation and there's plenty more to come! One can only hope that membership doesn't grow at a similar rate as we'd need to exponentially hire staff to deal with the queries from our 1932 members!



So, back to BWEA, if it's anything to do with wind in the UK, then we'll know about it, if nothing else, because it's probably one of our member companies whose doing it!

The equation is simple: **UK + WIND ENERGY = BWEA**

What do we do?

Participate - 30+ meetings with Government and its agencies, including The Aviation Working Group, Future Offshore consultation and the Energy White Paper Team.

Respond - to more than a dozen formal consultations, including

- RD&D - towards a non-carbon future
- Energy Policy Review
- Scottish Grid Codes Review Panel Consultation SB/2002
- Grid Code Changes and Guide: 'Transmission Connection Requirements for Wind Farms'
- The Development of BETTA
- House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee
- Renewable Energy in Northern Ireland - realising the potential
- Embedded generation: price controls, incentives and connection charging
- Trade and Industry Committee - Security of Supply
- Renewables Obligation Statutory Consultation and the Scottish equivalent
- Planning Green Paper,
- revision of PPG22,
- regional planning guidance for the West Midlands and
- Planning: Delivering for Wales.

Speak - at more than 20 external conferences and seminars.

Brief - 40 one-to-one briefings to companies and other bodies.

Publish – Health and Safety Guidelines, Best practice guidelines for offshore consultation, the definitive wind farm planning database – UKWED, and of course, conference CDs - UK Offshore Wind 2002 and BWEA23.

Organise – conferences, such as this one, the biggest ever with 489 delegates at the last count, BWEA23 (427 participants), UK Offshore Wind (269 participants), Planning the keys to success (80 participants) and the largest presence at the first Global Wind Energy Conference with 18 UK companies represented, and a private dinner with Energy Minister Brian Wilson for a dozen members.

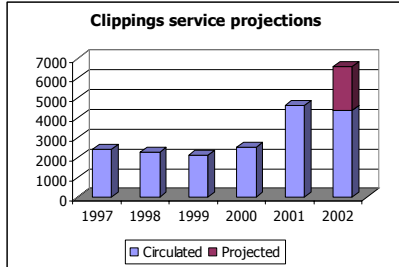
Recruit – more members; 50 in the last 12 months alone, and new staff to keep up with it all!

Represent wind energy – at the Liberal Democrat Councillors Annual Conference, The Local Government Association Annual Conference, the Labour Party – Nick spoke at the PRASEG fringe meeting yesterday, the Conservatives Tory Green Initiative including visit to wind farm and briefed Shadow Energy spokesmen.

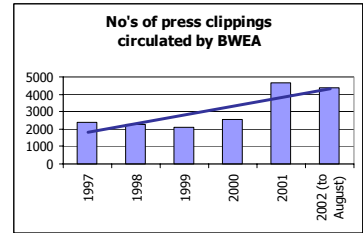
Provide information - 636 email bulletins were sent to member companies in the last 12 months. Externally through our websites we've provided information to the 261,749 visitors to bwea.com, an average of 717 every day, each looking at an average 4.46 pages. The online Company Directory is searched an average of 119 times a day and 1,600 people per month look at 'Wind Farms of the UK'. Our newest website deepgreenpower.org has already seen 6,000 visitors in the 3 months since it was created, and we'll be bringing another 11 domain names online in due course.

Media analysis

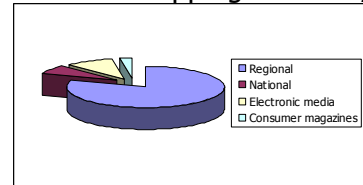
A vital part of BWEA's service to its members is the circulation and periodic analysis of wind energy in the news. The sheer volume of wind energy in the news has risen five-fold over the last six years.



If trends continue – and there is no reason to think that wind will be in the news any less in future! – we can expect a further 2000 clippings before the end of the year, including of course, coverage of this conference and the Minister's announcement. By 2003, we could see as much as 10,000 clippings coming through the office. Put in context, that's 192 clippings a week, every week, including holidays.



Where is this coverage taking place? Mainly in regional press; four-fifths of all wind coverage takes place at a local level.



Comparison of media coverage

The trend is broadly similar to the previous analysis of news, presented last year at BWEA23, which covered a five year period between 1997 and 2001.

	2002	5yrs
Regional	80%	88%
Electronic	10%	3%
National	7%	7%
Magazines	3%	1%

Nationals show exactly the same level of coverage at 7%. Interestingly, regional reporting has lost some coverage, which has been picked up mainly by electronic media and a slight increase in coverage in consumer magazines, ranging from the expected Organic Life and similar publications to articles in Focus and New Scientist which have larger readerships and ones which wouldn't normally look at the whole topic of wind energy.

Where exactly does wind hit the media?

Regional breakdown shows national reporting accounts for 20% of all clippings. Perhaps an unexpected amount in Scotland of 21% compared with Wales' 10%, but don't forget this is all media coverage, including news reporting, features and opinion pieces. The activities of the Scottish Executive in promoting renewable energy, together with the consultation on renewables and other activities such as the Highlands and Island and Western Isles councils will undoubtedly account for this higher level of coverage. Northern Ireland shows 4% and the English regions taken together 45%. Looking at English regions more closely, East Anglia has almost double the level of clippings of other regions, much no doubt prompted by the news on Scroby Sands, the Greenpeace Sea Wind East report and the work of organisations such as eeegr.

Letters to the editor

But, our traditional area of investigation is of course the letters pages. Here you can find out about feelings on the ground, as wind energy development is very local affair, and the letters pages of regional press function as the local fora. So let's take a look at what's been happening in the letters pages.

Letter writing by region

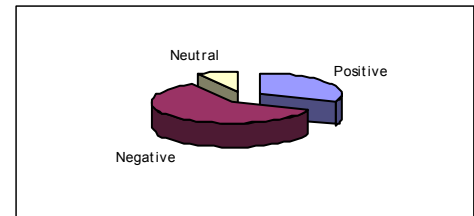
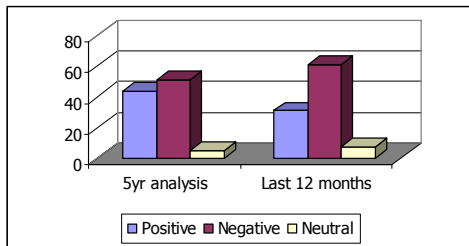
The first thing to notice is that the regional distribution of letter writing differs greatly from overall coverage by region, with Wales taking an obvious and disproportionate lead with 28% of all letter-writing! Scotland comes next with 22%, then the northern regions, which for the purposes of the clippings service covers both the North East and the North West, followed by the East of England.

Overall, 1190 letters were published between the 1st of August 2001 and the 31st July 2002.

What kind of letters were they?

Unfortunately, more were negative than positive:

365	727	98
Positive	Negative	Neutral



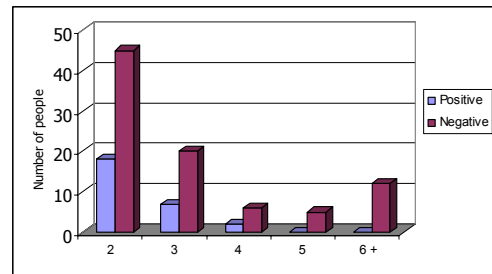
Comparing them with data from previous analysis, more worryingly the numbers of positive have fallen overall, from 44% to 31% while negative letter writing has risen, from just over half at 51% to now 61%. Interestingly, the percentage of neutral letters has risen from 5 to 8%.

On the surface, these would not appear to be good statistics. But taking a closer look, can any trends be identified in who is writing about wind energy – are there any 'ardent' letter writers out there, who might perhaps be slewing the results? The answer is yes. All three categories, positive, negative and neutral, show some multiple activity, but an amazing 42% of negative letters are from people writing two or more letters, including the usual suspects of local opposition groups where it appears traditional to come up with acronyms – various SOSs, including Save our Swans, Save our Skylines, Save our Sands and Stand on the Strand; TAG, DAG, MAIWAG, McWAG and newcomers the 'Group Against Windfarm Proliferation' whose acronym GAWP may reflect their feelings on seeing turbines despoiling their landscape, devaluing their property whilst magi-mixing birds!

On the positive side, just below 20% come from the usual suspects of BWEA and member companies, Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace and the Danish Government. Of 'real' people who write in support, it's interesting to note some of the signatures, 'concerned parent', 'teacher', and variously 'MP' and 'MEP'.

Not for a minute am I suggesting that serial letter writing is exclusive to opponents of wind energy, but as can clearly be seen in the table and chart below, they do significantly more of it! In fact, so ardent are some of them that I'm able to give an update on a factoid released at BWEA23 which attracted a lot of attention and which I'm sure some of you found useful, namely that 16 people are responsible for a quarter of all anti-wind letters published in the press, from regional to national newspapers and consumer magazines. Without naming names, I can say that a greater number of anti-wind letters are written by fewer of the same people: 27% by 12 people to be exact.

No of letters	Positive	Negative
2	18	45
3	7	20
4	2	6
5	0	5
6 +	0	12



'Ardent letter writer' is perhaps the best description of these people – although someone other than BWEA has come up with another TLA designation – ZIDs or Zealots in Disguise. So zealous are some of these people that not only do they write more frequently than the pro-lobby, they also write further a field. Not contenting themselves with their own region, where their opinion has legitimate weight as part of the community perspective, they have now taken to writing to regions far beyond their own back yards. In fact, some can now be called Nimbys of NOTE - or Not Over There Either (particularly if it's Scotland, and they live in Wales!).

Nimbyism, in all its forms, affects certain members of the population, who might better perhaps be described as FTAs or full-time antis. You will recognize these people by their emotive and often red-faced appearance when discussing wind energy, and their frequent recourse to discussions of chocolate teapots and bog brushes in the sky. By way of illustration, a selection of headlines accompanying these letters are:

- Thudding of turbines is as loud as pop music
- More wind in a tin of beans
- Rotating carbuncles

But don't forget that a relatively few people are claiming to represent the majority. A new aspect which is coming to light is that the majority don't always appreciate having words put in their mouths and so are no longer staying as silent as once they did, leading to the other end of the scale with the sometimes trite, but no less appreciated, headlines for letters of support of:

- Wind power's breath of fresh air on energy
- Delighted by soothing mills
- Blown out of all proportion

'Blown out of all proportion' is perhaps the message to take with us as we continue with our work programme, our pr programme. Quite often, issues and concerns about wind energy are blown out of all proportion. This occurs at many levels and on many issues; from birds and grid stability, to prices and potential capabilities. Meanwhile, the opportunities presented by renewables and wind in particular aren't always recognized. Negatives are often overplayed and positives underplayed.

BWEA's work programme

So what do we hope to achieve with our work programme. Who will we be working with and who will we be working on?

There are 3 key audiences:

Government: It is now largely accepted by many parties that there needs to be clear policy and guidance to work to, reiterated in BWEA's submission to the Energy Review, which includes a new projection of 8% for the likely wind contribution to the 2010 target. We need to continue to work with Government and key organizations to ensure that effective policy is put in place, and regularly reviewed, to be sure that goals are being reached.

Business: We need to clearly identify to business the opportunities that exist. In a recent survey of major energy users by London Electricity, 79% agreed that UK businesses need more guidance on green energy. BWEA will be taking direct action here, promoting green energy tariffs, both domestic and business, through our website with members such as unit[e]. From the simplest level of switching to an accredited green energy supplier, or perhaps greater activity, following examples already laid down by companies such as Sainsbury's and most recently Ford Dagenham, or more direct involvement through technology and skills transfer, opportunities need to be made clear. We'll be continuing our close co-ordination through Renewables UK, to address international markets, supply chain needs, and the anticipated shortage of skilled engineers.

Public: When it comes to public provision of information, the words of Bart Simpson come to mind; you're damned if you do and you're damned if you don't. Whatever the industry publishes, no matter how legitimate, it is at risk of being dismissed as propaganda: 'of course they would say that'. There needs to be provision of factually correct, publicly available, reliable and independent data to combat the well-organised opposition groups (apparently there are 32 of them – according to an opposition group!) spreading mis-information without reference. We need to work more closely with existing allies in organizations such as Friends of the Earth who have produced their own 'facts about wind power' leaflet, which will not feature the BWEA logo on the cover and may help mitigate some of the negative aspects of 'rubber-stamping' of publications.

Next steps – how can we most useful

What message should BWEA send? You, the members, control that message.

We now have the capabilities to initiate rather than respond. In response to the tourism survey commissioned by VisitScotland, we have commissioned our own survey. In an interesting twist, Sir Bernard Ingham was quoted as saying that this was an unnecessary and 'barmy' piece of research, while BWEA is on record as welcoming it, confident that the results will show that wind farms can be popular tourist attractions in their own right.

If there's a battle you want us to fight; if something comes to your attention; if you need help with whatever it is you're doing, get in touch. Remember BWEA's work programme is your PR programme. In short, we spread the wind energy message, wherever it needs to go.

We all, Government, industry and public, need to act together to ensure that the right message is sent ...

Three wind turbines will not save the planet

I don't think that anyone has seriously suggested that they would. But more people, in a variety of sectors, need to be aware of the need to fundamentally change the way we generate our electricity, and why three turbines do have a role to play.

Remember: think global, act local. After all, if you're not part of the solution, then you're part of the problem.