



CPRE Sussex Policy Position Statement

ONSHORE WIND TURBINES

Section 1

The scope of the problem/issue

There is now an urgent need to reduce the upward trend in greenhouse gas emissions globally, nationally and locally. No longer can we afford to follow “wait and see” policies for tackling climate change instead we must make “**no regrets**” the chosen option.

The Government has included the expansion of wind energy in their renewable energy strategy – currently only 0.5% of our electricity is generated from the wind. The UK is well placed for such development since we naturally possess 40% of Europe’s total wind energy – still largely untapped. Developers are keen to increase their own wind energy capacity. They have been given government subsidies £45.50 per megawatt hour under the Renewables Obligation, providing wind farms with 60-70% of their income. It is therefore not surprising that the number of wind farms in the UK is steadily increasing, often being located in inappropriate sites. However this growth is controversial and several plans for onshore wind farms have faced considerable opposition and have been subject to public enquiries. To date there has been a radical difference between planning approval rates between countries in the UK and within England. This has led to uncertainty for developers and poses a threat to the Government’s renewable energy targets. Scotland has a 90% approval rate compared to an average of 50% in England.

Section 2

Central and Local Government Planning Policy.

“The consequences for the planet of inaction (in terms of climate change) are literally disastrous” Tony Blair

The Government has stated *the UK would lead international responses to tackle climate change*. The Climate Bill established an independent Carbon Committee to work with the Government to reduce emissions over time and across the economy.

PPS 22 – “Renewable Energy” was published in 2004 and its aim was to expand appropriate renewable energy developments in England. PPS 22 outlines *key principles, renewable energy targets, policy development requirements and more specifically, locational considerations, for renewable energy developments*.

PPS 22 directs **Local Authorities to produce plans containing criteria designed to promote and encourage** rather than restrict the development of renewable energy. **Targets** produced should be the **minimum to be achieved**. The wider environment and economic benefits should be given significant weight in determining the granting of planning permission. This “Green Challenge” gave the opportunity to introduce new technology including wind farms.

The UK Government is tied to the Europe wide emissions reduction target of 30% by 2020. Hence the introduction of primary legislation published in the Energy White Paper 2003 – “The Renewables Obligation” – ensures that 10% of the UK energy will come from renewable energy by 2010; 15% by 2015 and 20% by 2020.

PPG 22 states that in rural areas renewable energy projects have the potential to play an increasingly important role in the diversification of the rural economy. The location for renewable energy projects must be able to address the environmental impacts satisfactorily – careful consideration must be made of location, scale and design.

Landscape and visual effects should be assessed on a case by case basis. The intrinsic qualities of each landscape character should be considered. It is also recognized that small scale projects can make a valuable contribution to saving energy.

In terms of public opinion, PP22 states that it is important to have **full consultation**. Planning applications for renewable energy projects should be assessed against specific criteria set out in the regional spatial strategies and Local Development Frameworks. **Any projects likely to have an adverse effect on SPA's, Ramsar and World Heritage Sites should only be granted once an assessment has shown that the integrity of the site would not be adversely affected.**

The recently published Tomlinson report has stated that 2007 is the critical year for UK renewable energy – “if onshore wind capacity so urgently needed is not consented within a year then the UK's 2010 renewable energy target will unlikely be met.” **The Government has the view that wind energy has an essential role to play in meeting the UK's renewable energy requirement for large scale clean green energy** and that it must positively encourage projects through the planning process without delay. It fully endorses the requirement for planning authorities and industry to work together.

Section 3 CPRE Sussex Policy Statement.

CPRE Sussex believes that onshore wind farms can have a role to play in reducing greenhouse gases but fundamentally supports the notion that any scheme should not come at the expense of the countryside. Such schemes should be underpinned by a greater focus on energy efficiency measures.

All too easily wind farms can become a blot on the landscape, ruining the landscape amenity. Turbines generally have to be placed on hill tops in order to get maximum wind benefits but this places a greater threat to the landscape. Migrating birds are also at risk from the turbines which reach to a height of 70 metres. Noise, threats to aircraft and telecommunication masts and the impacts of increase traffic are additional considerations.

Specific objectives:

- Each wind power proposal should be assessed for its **potential impact** on the **landscape**. A **case by case** approach must be adopted.
- Their **location and extent** need to be **carefully monitored**.
- The search for suitable sites for onshore wind turbines should be guided by **criteria** that ensures the protection of the **character** of the countryside, its **landscape tranquility, ecology, heritage and amenity**.
- Regard must be given to their **cumulative impact** on the countryside.
- In areas of **international and national designation** developers must demonstrate that there are **overriding social, economic or environmental reasons** for development, which are over and above any potential adverse effect on the integrity of such sites. These sites are unlikely to be acceptable to CPRE Sussex.
- CPRE Sussex will **vigorouslly oppose** proposals for wind turbines in **AONB's and National Parks** where they would have a detrimental effect on the landscape.
- A **sequential approach** should be adopted that steers wind developments towards the **least sensitive areas** and encourages the development on **brownfield** sites.
- A **strategic environmental assessment**, using the Countryside Agency's "Countryside Methodology," should take place to ensure that all relevant environmental issues are considered.
- **Planning authorities** should introduce **criteria based policies** which set out the circumstances in which particular types and sizes of renewable energy developments will be acceptable in nationally designated areas. Projects in Green Belt areas will also have to be carefully considered.
- **Licences** for wind turbines should be issued which are **"time-limited"** to prevent obsolete equipment lying dormant in the landscape.
- **Developers** should, prior to an application, **engage fully in the democratic process** to help alleviate potential areas of conflict.

CPRE Sussex will resist all those schemes which damage the beauty, tranquility and amenity of the countryside.

Section 4

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Section 5

“What can you do?”

- Make sure that your local planning authority assesses the potential impacts of wind developments on the character of the countryside.
- Object to your local planning authority if you are concerned about a particular proposal's impact on the landscape – or if a development has been promoted sensitively, send a letter of support.
- When a wind development is under consideration, demand that the planning permission includes a legal agreement and conditions to minimize its adverse impacts and sets out when and how the turbines will be removed when it is time for decommissioning.
- Ask your local MP for their views on wind energy or on a particular scheme.
- Scrutinise the policies in the LDF for your area to ensure they maximize the opportunity for energy conservation.
- Contact your CPRE Sussex branch office.

Reading

Campaigning for Countryside Character –
CPRE Briefing 2003
Renewable Energy Campaign booklet - CPRE
2003
Responding to Planning applications – CPRE
2001
Planning Policy Strategy 22 “Renewable
Energy” - Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
2004
CPRE Sussex reports /guidance notes on the
proposed Wind Turbine at Glyndebourne

www.bwea.com (British Wind Energy
Association)
www.sd-commission.org.uk (Sustainable
Development Commission)
www.westsussex.gov.uk
www.eastsussex.gov.uk