

# Consultation on National Policy Statements

# Renewable Energy Generation



## What is Planning Aid?

Planning Aid offers people the opportunity to get involved in the development of their local areas. We provide free and independent professional planning advice to community groups and individuals who cannot afford to pay professional fees. We work with communities to help them understand and play a role in the planning process. We are an independent source of advice and information on planning issues, not part of central or local government.

### The new planning process for nationally significant infrastructure

The 2008 Planning Act introduced a new planning system for applications to build nationally significant infrastructure facilities in England and Wales. The new system covers applications for major energy generation, railways, ports, major roads, airports and water and waste infrastructure. Under the new system, national policy on infrastructure will be set out in a series of new National Policy Statements (NPS) which can be reviewed by the Secretary of State if there is a change in circumstances. A new independent body, the Infrastructure Planning Commission (IPC), will examine and decide applications for new infrastructure development, using the criteria on national need, benefits and impacts set out in the NPS, and consideration of evidence put forward on potential local effects.

### Why should I get involved in the debate on National Policy Statements?

In autumn 2009 the Government published the first set of draft National Policy Statements (NPS) for public consultation. It is important to make your views known because once finalised the NPS will provide the framework for future decisions by the IPC on individual applications. Issues relating to the need for a specific type of infrastructure will not be debated again. Each NPS will be accompanied by an Appraisal of Sustainability on which comments are also invited. Except for the NPS on nuclear power stations and airports, specific locations for infrastructure are not identified although criteria may guide developers to appropriate types of area.

## Renewable Energy Generation

This NPS covers large energy generation from on shore wind, biomass and waste plants (over 50MW generating capacity) and off shore wind (over 100 MW generating capacity). It does not cover wave and tidal energy.

The Overarching Energy Infrastructure Policy NPS (see separate leaflet) sets out the national need for the different types of energy infrastructure required over the next 10 – 15 years if the nation is to be able to reduce emissions, ensure security of energy supply, expand grid capacity, keep costs

down and contribute to sustainable development. By 2020 the government estimate that around 30% of electricity generation will be from renewable sources. This will primarily be from wind generation (on shore and off shore) with smaller amounts of 'bioenergy', although more of the latter is seen as both desirable and possible.

It also sets out five key principles which will guide the IPC when deciding applications, these are:

- If the development contributes to meeting the need and is in accordance with the NPS, then consent should be given;
- Regard should had to local impact reports (produced by

local authorities) and other matters considered relevant and important;

- National, regional and local benefits (environmental, social and economic) should be taken account of;
- Adverse impacts should be considered, longer term and cumulative impacts and proposed mitigation; and
- If the IPC considers that the adverse impacts (after mitigation) outweigh the benefits, then consent should be refused.

In the event of a conflict with existing planning policy, the NPS will be followed. The Overarching Energy Policy NPS must be read together with this technology specific NPS.

A small number of offshore wind farm applications in Wales may be decided by the Welsh Assembly Government (see NPS for details). In reaching a decision, the relevant renewable energy guidance and targets in regional spatial strategies (England) and planning policy and advice (Wales) should be taken into account, however the NPS notes that compliance is not itself a reason for approval / refusal.

The IPC is required to be flexible in relation to scheme details and where these are not known, should assess the maximum impact. The NPS sets out some specific technology criteria for the IPC to consider including:

- Climate Change Adaptation – resilience measures eg flooding for sub stations;
- Good design principles.

**Biomass and Waste Combustion** – biomass (material from plants or other biodegradable waste) and waste (which can include both renewable and non-renewable waste) which would otherwise go to landfill can be used to generate energy through combustion. Transport movements will be high and good connections (by road, rail or water) required.

**Onshore wind** – turbines usually generate between 2 - 3.5MW and have a limited lifespan. IPC advised to limit consent to 25 years and require removal thereafter. Key considerations include proximity of dwellings (visual amenity and noise),

connection to the electricity network and access and impacts on national designations and Green Belts.

**Offshore Wind** – many offshore wind farms will be some distance from the coast and as a result significant onshore infrastructure will be needed to bring electricity onshore, including very large sub stations and possibly new overhead lines. These should form part of the application to the IPC.

The table below summarises the range of impacts which the IPC will consider when deciding applications for the different types of renewable energy generation infrastructure.

Biomass/Waste	Offshore Wind	Onshore Wind
Air quality and emissions	Biodiversity	Biodiversity and geological conservation
Landscape and visual	Fish	Historic environment
Local & regional waste management	Intertidal zone	Landscape and visual
Residue management	Marine mammals	Noise
	Ornithology	Shadow flicker
	Sub-tidal zone	Traffic & transport
	Commercial fisheries and fishing	
	Historic environment	
	Navigation & shipping*	
	Oil, Gas & other offshore infrastructure	
	Physical environment**	
	Seascape and visual effects	

\* IPC must not grant consent if it interferes with recognised sea lanes, but can extinguish some rights of navigation \*\* Includes water quality, waves & tides, scour effect, sediment transport and suspended solids

Further information on the consultation process, the questions on which comments are sought, related events, the draft NPS and the supporting documentation is available on the Department for Energy and Climate Change website [www.energy-nps-consultation.decc.gov.uk](http://www.energy-nps-consultation.decc.gov.uk). Welsh language, Braille and large print copies are available on request. Responses can be submitted online, by letter, fax or email. The consultation will close on 22 February 2010.



### Contact Details

You can call the Planning Aid NPS advice line for independent advice. Initially advice will be given to all. If your enquiry is more complex and meets our eligibility criteria, you will be assisted by a qualified planning advisor or volunteer. If you can afford to pay, you will be referred to a planning consultant.

**Planning Aid** on 0121 214 2915 or [www.planningaid.rtpi.org.uk](http://www.planningaid.rtpi.org.uk)

**Planning Aid for London** on 020 7247 4900 or [www.planningaidforlondon.org.uk](http://www.planningaidforlondon.org.uk)

**Planning Aid for Wales** on 02920 485765 or [www.planningaidwales.org.uk](http://www.planningaidwales.org.uk)

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