

Policy 41

Id No Respondent

428 Campaign To Protect Rural England

Policy 41

CPRE North East supports this criteria-based approach to siting renewable energy developments.

We bitterly regret that the flood of applications particularly relating to windfarm developments has overwhelmed rural planning authorities before they have had an opportunity to develop these criteria-based policies adequately.

a) .. 'wider environmental .. benefits'

As the Council of European Energy Regulators (CEER) has pointed out (2004):

'The question of actual cost of wind and effects on carbon emissions (in the light of additional thermal generation needed for balancing and compensation) remains.'

It should therefore be reasonable to require that Environmental Impact Assessments should include estimates of the carbon dioxide emissions predicted for installation, decommissioning and operation (including the provision of any 'spinning reserves' required) of windfarms, otherwise the wider environmental benefit cannot be adequately assessed. This point should be brought out in the supporting text.

c) '.. sensitivity of the surrounding landscape.' This must still apply within the perceived coverage of a Strategic Wind Resource Area (SWRA). See also see comments re: Policy 42.

d) .. 'effect on .. or their settings'.

CPRE interpret this to mean visual impact as viewed from the designated site. Clarification might be needed in relation to PPS22's injunction against the creation of 'buffer zones'.

f) Amend:

'maintenance of the openness of landscape protected by Green Belt designation and other designations with a similar purpose, eg green wedge'

j) In CPRE's view, the whole SWRA-based approach is flawed because there is no limit on the total number of windfarms within a given area nor any agreed methodology for assessing cumulative effect. We recommend that the SNH methodology is adopted into the RSS.

123 Council for National Parks

CNP agrees that small scale renewable energy developments can be acceptable in the Northumberland National Park and that they should be encouraged. However CNP objects to the reference later in this paragraph to the scale of wind turbine that might be considered acceptable. CNP considers that an arbitrary turbine height introduces an unhelpful degree of prescription to questions of scale which does not give adequate consideration to landscape character. We therefore strongly encourage the panel to recommend that this reference be removed. This would accord with PPS22, which avoids defining a 'small scale'. PPS22, while encouraging small scale development in protected landscapes, an objective which the Council for National Parks strongly supports, leaves questions of scale to the body best placed to consider and define it - the local planning authority (in this case the National Park Authority). PPS22 states that 'care should be taken to identify the scale of renewable energy developments that may be acceptable in particular areas' and 'small scale developments should be permitted within areas such as National Parks provided there is no significant environmental detriment to the area concerned'.

Consideration of the landscape character of the recipient landscape and its capacity to absorb renewable energy development, both of which will be key factors when considering questions of scale.

CNP advises that the RSS should follow the advice of the National Park Authority in respect of this issue and delete the reference to a specific turbine height of 25m. -

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349 Defence Estates

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Planning for Renewables

Policy 41 sets out a number of criteria against which proposals for renewable energy development should be assessed. Ministry of Defence involvement in the assessment of the potential for renewable energy development is acknowledged in the supporting text to Policy 40 and Policy 42.

Defence Estates has highlighted (please note DE comments on Policies 40 and 42) the potential impact of renewable energy development on MOD operational requirements and the current consultation arrangements with the renewable energy industry.

DE object to Policy 41 and consider that an additional criterion should be included within the Policy, the suggested wording is as follows:

Acceptability of the location and scale of the proposed development in relation to MOD operational requirements.

DE consider that it would also be appropriate to make reference to MOD operational requirements in the supporting text to this policy.

202 Durham County Council

Para 3.137 - should be reworded to make it clearer that single turbines under 25m may be acceptable in designated areas. As it stands the paragraph reads "the development of one or more turbines...is unlikely to be acceptable". Suggest: "Developments involving more than one turbine, or a turbine with a hub height of more than 25m, are unlikely to be acceptable".

Policy 41 - support the recognition that sustainable energy policy must focus as much on energy consumption and demand management as on sustainable generation.

98 English Heritage

Object - Policy 41 does not make a distinction between designated and non-designated nature conservation assets. Nor should it make such a distinction in respect of the historic environment. Effects on tentative World Heritage sites need to be included in the policy, as does reference to 'other sites, building, areas or features of heritage importance, and their settings'.

95 English Nature,

Propose insert new paragraph at end of policy:

"Strategies, plans and programmes should facilitate a coordinated and strategic approach to encouraging renewable energy proposals close to urban areas as part of green infrastructure plans , by supporting sensitively designed biomass, solar and wind energy schemes in and around towns (e.g. multi functional woodlands managed for biofuels, biodiversity and recreation"

Reason: to integrate planning for renewables policy into green infrastructure planning

propose amend nomenclature on Environmental Map 1for onshore wind to: "broad areas of least constraint"

Reason: to be consistent with phrasing in the text - e.g. paras 3.135, Policy 42 etc which refer to "broad areas of least constraint"

200 Environment Agency

3.138

Biomass production could have a potential impact upon the aquatic environment (changing river flows dynamics etc) and could impact upon available water resources, both in the rivers, soil zone and groundwater. There needs to be consideration of the full environmental impact of such initiatives upon the local environment/habitats.

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Generally support, but use of 'should' weakens the policy.
Suggested change "b) anticipated affects resulting from development construction and operation such air quality, atmospheric emissions, noise, odour, water pollution, impact on local water resources ... and the disposal of waste".

163 Friends of the Earth North East

Friends of the Earth broadly supports this policy. However, in order to achieve the region's renewable energy targets and help tackle climate change, it is vital that there is a presumption in favour of renewable energy schemes. This is a highly emotive issue for some people, and there is a danger that the list of criteria to be considered when assessing proposals could be used to unreasonably reject schemes whose benefits far outweigh any negatives. This is especially true as no guidance is given on how to draw any conclusions from an assessment of those criteria. We would therefore like to see the following sentence added to the bottom of policy 41:

'There will be a presumption in favour of renewable energy schemes unless it can be demonstrated that they are inconsistent with sustainable development.'

329 Friends of the Earth South Tyneside

South Tyneside Friends of the Earth broadly supports this policy. However, in order to achieve the region's renewable energy targets and help tackle climate change, it is vital that there is a presumption in favour of renewable energy schemes. We would like to see the following sentence added to the bottom of policy 41:
'There will be a presumption in favour of renewable energy schemes unless it can be demonstrated that they are inconsistent with sustainable development.'

Air Quality

In pursuit of good local air quality for all, strategies, plans and programmes will include objectives, proposals and policies that seek to:

- Reverse the growth in road traffic in line with policy 49;
- Encourage infrastructure for cleaner transport fuels such as liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) and compressed natural gas (CNG), and promote their use wherever possible;
- Ensure that new development does not exacerbate air quality in areas where the number of days of air pollution being moderate or worse is at or above the national average;
- Reduce/mitigate poor air quality in areas where the number of days of air pollution being moderate or worse is at or above the national average, with particular priority on residential areas;
- Promote best practice in reducing the air quality impacts of commercial activities and transportation;
- Take a presumption against developments within 1km of human habitation which would have a significant adverse effect on air quality;
- Uphold the need to ensure good local air quality for all;
- Pay particular attention to possible effects on wildlife where potentially polluting development, increased motor traffic or intensive agricultural facilities are expected close to sensitive habitat sites such as SSSIs

215 Government Office For The North

Para 3.134 – 3.139 Little importance given to small scale renewables – other than to raise awareness. Should be strengthened – small scale wind, photovoltaic etc can have important localised effects.
Policy 41 Suggested word change from 'support and encourage' to 'require or positively promote'. Also, in the list of criteria to consider, no weighting is given to the individual components. Most in the list are constraints, only sub section 'a' wider environmental, economic and social benefit is a positive criterion. As written this is not tied into the overall aim of meeting central Government and Regional targets. Tying this

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in to the targets and giving it higher weighting would assist planners when considering all these criteria and would meet the aim of 'supporting and encouraging renewable energy proposals'. Also add a subsection about assisting the region to meet Government targets, to also back up the benefits of developments

The

Policy 41 The policy conflicts with PPS 22 in that 'significant weight' should be given to the wider environmental and economic benefits.

term 'significant weight' should be added to part 'a'. Part 'd' also conflicts with PPS22 (para 11 & 12) as it seeks to consider the impact upon the setting of National Parks and AONBs as well as the actual designations. Para 14 of PPS22 rules out the designation of 'buffer zones' as implied here.

Notwithstanding the above concerning Part 'd' - World Heritage sites are given undue emphasis - this part should highlight international and national designated historic, landscape and nature conservation sites.

164 Hallam Land Management Ltd

This policy is generally supported but the emphasis of the policy is placed on the consideration of potentially negative impacts. The policy should also make reference to the positive contributions that renewables can provide and the need to balance these positive elements when considering possible negative impacts.

160 Highways Agency

To support and encourage renewable energy proposals and identify renewable resource areas.

125 Lafarge Cement UK

Paragraph 20 of Planning Policy Statement 22: Renewable Energy (PPS 22) advises, 'Of all renewable technologies, wind turbines are likely to have the greatest visual and landscape effects. However, in assessing planning applications, local authorities should recognise that the impact of turbines on the landscape will vary according to the size and number of turbines and the type of landscape involved, and that these impacts may be temporary if conditions are attached to planning permissions which require the future decommissioning of turbines.'

The RSS does not reflect this view. Instead, paragraph 3.137 states, 'In the case of wind energy, the development of one or more turbines or a turbine with a ground to hub height of 25 metres or more is unlikely to be acceptable.'

No reason is given for adopting a region-wide approach to the appropriateness of multiple or tall wind turbines. Each planning application will be the subject of an Environmental Impact Assessment incorporating a Visual Impact Assessment and this will test the appropriateness of the proposal. It should be a matter for local planning authorities to determine in light of the full range of local circumstances.

The third sentence of paragraph 3.137 is unjustified and contrary to national policy. On this basis, it should be deleted from the RSS.

453 Member of Public

I support the view of the FoE on this policy

681 Member of Public

Support. More emphasis could be placed on balancing visual impact of developments with wider benefit

357 Member of Public

The criteria set out should be considerably strengthened – particularly in relation to onshore wind. There is no consideration given to people, their living and working environment, their businesses, the stresses and other adverse impacts which the development of onshore wind farms in particular may have on them.

Whilst the development of onshore wind farms will create some temporary employment opportunities during the construction phase, no account has been taken of the effect on local businesses eg. Tourism, equestrian activities etc.

The devaluation of local property prices is also a side effect of uncontrolled wind farm development and is a legitimate concern for many hardworking residents who have made considerable sacrifices in order to invest in their homes and businesses.

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Several studies have described the health problems encountered by people living near wind farms. Are we in the North East going to ignore these potential health risks now and pick up the pieces later in the same way that the country is now coming to terms with the effects of electricity pylons, mobile phone masts, waste incineration and nuclear & toxic waste disposal? All of these were heralded as safe at the time they were initiated. We now know different.

If we were talking about new motor ways, a new power station, a new airport or some other government inspired initiative then there would be consideration given to looking after local people and the effects of the development upon them. Why not with wind farms. Are we the acceptable casualties in the dash for wind power?

449 National Trust North East

The Trust supports this policy, but would ask that the wording in part d) be amended to read:

d) effect on the region's World Heritage Sites, the Northumberland National Park and other national and internationally designated sites, areas or their settings;

121 North Pennines AONB Partnership

Clarify words for Policy 41 which was explicit about the need to have full regard to the purpose of AONB / National Park designation in generating and planning for renewables. Maybe add word 'landscape' to bullet point 'd' alongside 'sites and areas'. Not clear from this reference whether it includes AONBs and National Parks.

The strategy states that small scale developments of renewable energy resources should be considered favourable in protected landscapes if they deliver significant community benefits and have minimal impact on the special qualities of the area. We would welcome a definition of what would constitute a 'community benefit' in this context which would outweigh considerations of the special qualities of AONBs and National Parks.

It is also stated that one or more turbines with a hub height of more than 25 metres is unlikely to be acceptable in protected areas. This figure is far in excess of the size of domestic turbines presently being constructed in the AONB and there appears to be no logical basis for such a figure. Instead, an assessment should be made on a site by site basis, rather than applying some arbitrary figure.

It is OFGEM has made provision for the undergrounding of cables in the 2004 Distribution Network Price Control Review and Distribution Network Organisations are currently working with protected landscape management bodies to deliver a programme of work in support of this. It would be counter-productive to add to the amount of overhead wires at a time when investment is beginning to be steered towards addressing the problem of their visual intrusion in protected landscapes. This issue requires clarification in the final version of the strategy. AONBs and National Parks require protection from further wirescape intrusion associated with renewable energy development.

The wording at end of Policy 41 'other areas will be judged subject to assessments of local impact'. This needs clarification as we assume that all sites listed will also be subject to rigorous assessment of their impact.

437 North West Regional Assembly

We note the proposal; for further work to examine the strategic scale wind development potential within Kielder forest that need to overcome MoD constraints (para 3.142). We reiterate need to have regard to the significant landscape designations that are in geographical proximity including the North Pennines AONB and RAMSAR site. To facilitate the protection of such landscapes and sites we would support the criteria set out in policy 41 of the RSS which state the impact of national and international designations need to be accounted for in any proposals for renewable energy

217 Northumberland & Newcastle Society

Please to see need to consider cumulative impact

Id No	Respondent	Policy 41
222	Northumberland County Council	The County Council supports the policy framework for onshore wind developments as being consistent with the adopted Northumberland Joint Structure Plan policy but expresses concern regarding the cumulative impacts of proposed developments in identified areas of least constraint for such developments
136	Northumberland National Park	<p data-bbox="649 271 2067 359">3.137 - The RSS also states that small scale developments of renewable energy resources should be considered favourably in protected landscapes if they deliver significant community benefits and have minimal impact on the special qualities of the area. Exactly what would constitute a 'community benefit' is not explained and further guidance for Local Development Frameworks is required.</p> <p data-bbox="649 383 2067 502">It is also stated that one or more turbines with a hub height of more than 25 metres is unlikely to be acceptable in protected areas. This figure is far in excess of the size of domestic turbines presently being erected in the Northumberland National Park and there appears to be no logical basis for such a figure. Instead, an assessment should be made on a site by site basis, rather than applying some arbitrary figure. The Panel should test whether the issue is rather one of whether the development is of a domestic or commercial scale.</p> <p data-bbox="649 526 2067 646">Nowhere in the report is the potential for large scale domestic schemes mentioned. A regional commitment to ensuring that a significant number of houses generate their own power (thorough solar, combined heat and power, or wind) and contribute the surplus to the national grid, could remove some of the need for large scale centralised energy generation facilities, such as wind farms, and reduce the impact on the regions protected landscapes. This is a significant omission, as the technology is now sufficiently advanced to deliver this objective.</p> <p data-bbox="649 702 2067 869">The RSS continues to harbour an aspiration for a strategic scale renewable energy development within the Kielder Forest, but acknowledges that further discussions are required with the MoD and National Park Authority. The RSS should acknowledge clearly that a strategic scale renewable energy development at Kielder Forest would have major implications for the special qualities of the Northumberland National Park, and the Regional Assembly must have regard to the purposes of designation of the National Park in carrying out their work, as set out in Section 62 of the Environment Act 1995, when developing such ideas. Additionally, any development that would have an adverse impact on the special qualities of National Park would require full justification.</p> <p data-bbox="649 893 2067 1069">A strategic renewable energy development at Kielder Forest could affect the special qualities of the National Park in a number of ways, both during construction and in the operational phase. Of particular concern is the affect of construction and operational noise and visual impact of the development on the tranquility of the area; the affect of construction traffic travelling through the National Park to the site and the impact of electricity transmission cables on the visual amenity and on tranquility. In the later case, the tests as set out in RSS Policy 30 would apply. Equally, a major development would cause demand for additional residential accommodation that is not available in the area with implications for reverse commuting.</p>
229	One North East	The RSS represents one of the best opportunities to influence all scales of physical development before they themselves become barriers in future. The design and location of physical development can reduce energy consumption. This will benefit the North East through general economic efficiencies and also meet a particular barrier to economic inclusion in the region, fuel poverty. RSS needs to put its policy toward the provision of energy generation and distribution infrastructure in the context of the economic importance of achieving security of supply in the region. Also, the plan should recognise the role of all methods of energy generation. The RSS needs to be flexible and supportive in allowing the region to develop a balanced portfolio of energy production to achieve maximum economic benefit for the region.
452	Shotley Low Quarter Parish Council	Kiln Pit Hill is not an area of least constraint because of the criteria set out in policy 41 for assessing renewable energy development
124	South Tyneside Council	Names of regional assets to be protected should be spelt out, so that this is made more relevant

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Also needs to cross-reference to other policies in all cases.

151 Sunderland ARC
105 Tynedale Council

Planning for Renewables is supported

Paragraph 3.135 and 3.141 These paragraphs both state that Environment Map 1 identifies broad areas with least constraint. It may be more accurate to say that the map identifies the broad locations around which a “least constraint” approach would apply. This would more accurately reflect the fact that symbols, rather than shading, are used on the map and would more clearly leave open the option for local authorities to employ a criteria-based approach that would take into account the positions of these symbols, rather than accurately defining the areas of least constraint.

254 UK Coal Mining Ltd

It is considered that a criteria based approach to assessing renewable proposals is appropriate and should consider to environmental acceptability of such proposals in the first instance and then if there is any identified unacceptable environmental impact then the benefits of the proposals should be taken into account.