

**CUMBRIA WIND ENERGY SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL**

**EXECUTIVE MEMBER:** Cllr Geoff Blackwell

**LEAD OFFICER:** Mike Tichford

**REPORT AUTHOR:** Vikki Gregg

**Summary:** The Cumbria County Council, in association with most other Cumbrian local planning authorities has proposed a draft SPD on Wind Energy. The document is designed to help planning authorities deal with this type of development particularly in relation to recent government and regional policy requirements. It is intended to consult widely on the document as a joint authority exercise and to report back with any proposed changes to Full Council for adoption.

<b>Recommendation:</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. That Members agree to the draft document being released for consultation purposes.</li><li>2. That before the Supplementary Planning Document is finished the Landscape Assessment Team be requested to look again at the area in North Copeland indicated as having moderate to high landscape capacity (to absorb wind energy development) given a high proportion is already designated as a Landscape of County Importance.</li></ol>
------------------------	--

**Impact on delivering the Corporate Plan:** The production of the Supplementary Planning Document assists spatial policy development with the aim of improving quality of life by protecting and caring for the environment.

**Impact on other statutory objectives (e.g. crime & disorder, LA21):** The Supplementary Planning Document is in line with national policy (Planning Policy Statement 22: Renewable Energy).

**Financial and human resource implications:** The work has been produced by a joint officer working group of Cumbrian Local Authorities and only staff time is expected to be required to assist the process to adoption.

**Project & Risk Management:** A timetable has been produced for the preparation of the SPD. The joint working group approach reduces the element of risk associated with non-production of the document.

## Key Decision Status

- **Financial:** N/A
- **Ward:** N/A

**Other Ward Implications:** None

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The consultation draft 'Cumbria Wind Energy Supplementary Planning Document' has been produced jointly by the Cumbrian Local Planning Authorities (except Barrow Borough Council and Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority) and seeks to replace the existing guidance 'Wind Energy in Cumbria, A Statement of Supplementary Planning Guidance', produced in 1997.
- 1.2 There have been a number of changes that have prompted the need to review the existing guidance. These include:
  - New provisions in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act.
  - Changes in national and regional energy policy and guidance.
  - Increases in the scale of wind energy development.
  - Increases in the size and capacity of individual turbines.
  - Increasing Public concern about the potential scale of development.
  - A new Cumbria and Lake District Joint Structure Plan and Copeland Local Plan.
- 1.3 The principal policy change has been prompted by the publication of Planning Policy Statement 22 (PPS22), Renewable Energy at the end of 2004. Extracts from this government policy statement are attached to this report as Appendix 1. It is a clear instruction to local planning authorities to "promote and encourage rather than restrict the development of renewable energy resources". The government requires that if local planning policies seek to introduce any kind of constraint on such development they must be backed by robust justification.
- 1.4 The PPS also introduces a requirement for regional targets to be set for different forms of renewable energy generation, these are based on an assessment of each region's resource potential and the draft Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for the North West, due for public examination in October, includes target figures for Cumbria of 219.4MW wind energy by 2010 and 257.7MW wind energy by 2015 (Appendix 2).
- 1.5 Policies in the Copeland Local Plan and Cumbria Joint Structure Plan were modified as a result of these changes of national and regional levels in the Modified versions are set out in Appendix 3. These seek to ensure that renewable energy schemes do not cause significant harm and effects on landscape character and visual impact are the two principal criteria applied but there are other environmental, economic and social effects to be considered. The Supplementary Planning Document is a guide for

developers in putting together their proposals for wind energy development, which are usually the most contentious of renewable energy schemes. It looks at all the criteria but particularly on landscape and visual impact issues because these tend to be important in all areas of the County, are often the most controversial aspects of wind energy proposals and can be difficult to mitigate.

- 1.6 There was an option to form a Joint Planning Committee to agree and adopt joint supplementary planning documents but this has not been supported by all the local planning authorities it will not be set up for this purpose. Instead all local planning authorities have agreed to continue joint working between the Districts at Officer level and the County Council. As part of the joint working agreement, it is a statutory requirement that the content of the Draft Supplementary Planning Document and Sustainability Appraisal needs to be endorsed by the relevant committee from each local planning authority for public consultation purposes.

## **2 THE SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT**

- 2.1 Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) provide advice and add greater detail to existing policies.
- 2.2 The Cumbria Wind Energy Supplementary Planning Document aims to provide detailed guidance on landscape and visual impacts, the landscape's capacity to accommodate wind energy development and design considerations. It will not replace the need for each application to be supported by a full Environmental Impact Assessment (required in cases where a scheme is for 2 turbines or more with a hub height of over 15m).
- 2.3 The Cumbria Wind Energy SPD is set out in three parts:
  - Part 1 – guidance on addressing landscape, visual and other environmental and social effects when preparing wind energy proposals
  - Part 2 – contains the landscape character assessment with maps
  - Part 3 – guidance on landscape and visual impact assessment
- 2.4 The Landscape Capacity Assessment is based on the County's 13 landscape character types (excluding the Lake District National Park), as classified in the Cumbria Landscape Classification 1996. Work is being carried out in 2006 to classify the landscape character types for the Lake District National Park as well. The Supplementary Planning Document will take this into account when it is available. The Landscape Capacity Assessment systematically assesses the sensitivity and value of each landscape type and sets out its potential capacity to accommodate wind energy development, along with the scale of development likely to be appropriate. This is contained in Part 2 of the Supplementary Planning Document.
- 2.5 The SPDs Landscape Character Map shows the majority of the Copeland area as having a low/moderate and moderate capacity with an area of moorland valleys and ridges east of Moresby Mosses and around Arlecdon/Frizington having a moderate/high capacity. It should be emphasised however the maps do not show all

policy constraints on development of wind energy schemes, therefore whilst the landscape character assessment may show areas to have capacity, other constraints may prohibit them from being developed. The policies in the Copeland Local Plan 2001 – 2016 will ensure that other constraints are taken into account when considering planning applications.

- 2.6 However, quite a high proportion of this area is actually designated as a Landscape of County Importance. It would therefore be appropriate to request the team responsible for the capacity assessments to look again at this area before the SPD is finalised and put forward for adoption.

### **3.0 SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL**

- 3.1 When preparing supplementary planning documents local planning authorities must have regard to environmental, social and economic considerations. Sustainability Appraisals are required as part of the process of producing a supplementary planning document, and are used to help demonstrate how environmental, social and economic considerations are being addressed. A Sustainability Appraisal has been carried out to accord with current regulations and incorporates a Strategic Environmental Assessment. This has assessed how the Supplementary Planning Document can assist in improving sustainability within the County.

### **4.0 CONSULTATION**

- 4.1 Public consultation is programmed to take place in autumn 2006. It is important that a consistent approach is taken to enable public consultation to be carried out in the autumn. Changes to this programme could cause local planning authorities to lose revenue through a reduction in the Planning Delivery Grant. Under the joint working arrangements it is proposed to present each committee with the same recommendations. These seek to ensure the documents are endorsed for public consultation unchanged to fit the agreed programme, and importantly, they seek to provide the flexibility to accommodate any changes to the documents that might be put forward by each local planning authority. It is suggested that any comments on the detail of the document should be recorded by each committee and be addressed jointly following the formal public consultation process. Committee recommendations on the detail of the documents would be analysed and amendments made as appropriate. At the same time other comments arising from the public consultation process would be analysed and a joint view would be taken on how best to accommodate them in the documents. These will be considered by each committee and a joint statement would be published on how the comments have been dealt with. Following this the amended Supplementary Planning Document will be agreed jointly by each local planning authority for adoption. The adoption of the Supplementary Planning Document is programmed for April 2007.

### **5.0 CONCLUSIONS**

- 5.1 In considering proposals for wind energy development in Cumbria, the local planning authorities need to take proper account of national and regional renewable energy policy and targets. However, a balance needs to be struck with protecting and

maintaining the County's high quality environment and landscapes. The Supplementary Planning Document aims to provide detailed advice and guidance on the landscape and visual impacts of wind energy schemes.

- 5.2 The Supplementary Planning Document would provide a framework for considering planning applications that is supported by a landscape capacity assessment. This provides a systematic approach to assessing the sensitivity and quality of the 13 different landscape types found across the County to wind energy development. From this assessment, the potential capacity of each landscape character has been determined, along with the scale of development that might be appropriate. This would provide clear guidance to developers on the landscape capacity to accommodate wind energy schemes and the potential scale that would be appropriate.
- 5.3 A Sustainability Appraisal has been carried out to accord with legislation and this has informed the final scope of the draft Supplementary Planning Document for public consultation purposes.
- 5.4 Subject to approval, the next stage is to publish the draft Cumbria Wind Energy Supplementary Planning Document for public consultation

### **List of Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Extract from Planning Policy Statement 22, Renewable Energy  
Appendix 2 – Extract from draft Regional Spatial Strategy for the North West  
Appendix 3 – Extract from Copeland Local Plan

List of Background Documents: Available to view in Members Room – Consultation draft Cumbria Wind Energy Supplementary Planning Document August 2006; Sustainability Appraisal: Cumbria Wind Energy Supplementary Planning Document August 2006

**List of Consultees:**  
John Hughes  
Tony Pomfret