

The Government's Objectives

The Government's energy policy, including its policy on renewable energy, is set out in the Energy White Paper². This aims to put the UK on a path to cut its carbon dioxide emissions by some 60% by 2050, with real progress by 2020, and to maintain reliable and competitive energy supplies.

The development of renewable energy, alongside improvements in energy efficiency and the development of combined heat and power, will make a vital contribution to these aims. The Government has already set a target to generate 10% of UK electricity from renewable energy sources by 2010. The White Paper set out the Government's aspiration to double that figure to 20% by 2020, and suggests that still more renewable energy will be needed beyond that date. The White Paper sets out policies to stimulate the development of new technologies to provide the basis for continuing growth of renewables in the longer term, to assist the UK renewables industry to become competitive in home and export markets and in doing so, provide employment.

Increased development of renewable energy resources is vital to facilitating the delivery of the Government's commitments on both climate change and renewable energy. Positive planning which facilitates renewable energy developments can contribute to all four elements of the Government's sustainable development strategy:

- social progress which recognises the needs of everyone – by contributing to the nation's energy needs, ensuring all homes are adequately and affordably heated; and providing new sources of energy in remote areas;
- effective protection of the environment – by reductions in emissions of greenhouse gases and thereby reducing the potential for the environment to be affected by climate change;
- prudent use of natural resources – by reducing the nation's reliance on ever-diminishing supplies of fossil fuels; and,
- maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment – through the creation of jobs directly related to renewable energy developments, but also in the development of new technologies. In rural areas, renewable energy projects have the potential to play an increasingly important role in the diversification of rural economies.

² "Our energy future – creating a low carbon economy", CM5761, February 2003.

National Planning Policies

KEY PRINCIPLES

1. Regional planning bodies and local planning authorities should adhere to the following key principles in their approach to planning for renewable energy:
 - (i) Renewable energy developments should be capable of being accommodated throughout England in locations where the technology is viable and environmental, economic, and social impacts can be addressed satisfactorily.
 - (ii) Regional spatial strategies and local development documents should contain policies designed to promote and encourage, rather than restrict, the development of renewable energy resources. Regional planning bodies and local planning authorities should recognise the full range of renewable energy sources, their differing characteristics, locational requirements and the potential for exploiting them subject to appropriate environmental safeguards.
 - (iii) At the local level, planning authorities should set out the criteria that will be applied in assessing applications for planning permission for renewable energy projects. Planning policies that rule out or place constraints on the development of all, or specific types of, renewable energy technologies should not be included in regional spatial strategies or local development documents without sufficient reasoned justification. The Government may intervene in the plan making process where it considers that the constraints being proposed by local authorities are too great or have been poorly justified.
 - (iv) The wider environmental and economic benefits of all proposals for renewable energy projects, whatever their scale, are material considerations that should be given significant weight in determining whether proposals should be granted planning permission.
 - (v) Regional planning bodies and local planning authorities should not make assumptions about the technical and commercial feasibility of renewable energy projects (e.g. identifying generalised locations for development based on mean wind speeds). Technological change can mean that sites currently excluded as locations for particular types of renewable energy development may in future be suitable.

- (vi) Small-scale projects can provide a limited but valuable contribution to overall outputs of renewable energy and to meeting energy needs both locally and nationally. Planning authorities should not therefore reject planning applications simply because the level of output is small.
- (vii) Local planning authorities, regional stakeholders and Local Strategic Partnerships should foster community involvement in renewable energy projects³ and seek to promote knowledge of and greater acceptance by the public of prospective renewable energy developments that are appropriately located. Developers of renewable energy projects should engage in active consultation and discussion with local communities at an early stage in the planning process, and before any planning application is formally submitted.
- (viii) Development proposals should demonstrate any environmental, economic and social benefits as well as how any environmental and social impacts have been minimised through careful consideration of location, scale, design and other measures.

REGIONAL TARGETS

2. The Energy White Paper indicated that the Government would be looking to work with regional and local bodies to deliver the Government's objectives, including establishing regional targets for renewable energy generation. The Regional Spatial Strategy should include the target for renewable energy capacity in the region, derived from assessments of the region's renewable energy resource potential, and taking into account the regional environmental, economic and social impacts (either positive or negative) that may result from exploitation of that resource potential.
3. Targets should be expressed as the minimum amount of installed capacity for renewable energy in the region, expressed in megawatts, and may also be expressed in terms of the percentage of electricity consumed or supplied. Targets should be set for achievement by 2010 and by 2020.⁴ Progress towards achieving these targets should be monitored by regional planning bodies. Targets should be reviewed on a regular basis and revised upwards (if they are met) subject to the region's renewable energy resource potential and the capacity of the environment in the region for further renewable energy developments. The fact that a target has been reached should not be used in itself as a reason for refusing planning permission for further renewable energy projects.

³ The companion guide to this PPS will provide more guidance on these issues.

⁴ The technologies covered should be those eligible for the Renewables Obligation (see the consultation paper on the Renewables Obligation Order 2002 at <http://www.dti.gov.uk/renew/ropc.pdf>) and the draft Renewables Obligation (Amendment) Order 2003 at <http://www.dti.gov.uk/energy/renewables/policy/roorderamend2003.pdf>

4. Offshore renewable generation projects (such as offshore wind, offshore wave and tidal stream), are not covered by the land-use planning system. Regional spatial strategies should contain an indication of the output that might be expected to be achieved from offshore renewables, based on where the electricity comes ashore. The potential to generate substantial amounts of renewable energy from offshore projects should not be used as a justification to set lower targets for onshore projects.
5. Where appropriate, targets in regional spatial strategies may be disaggregated into sub-regional targets. It may also be appropriate to give a broad indication of how different technologies could contribute towards regional targets. But fixed targets for specific technologies should not be set given that rapid technological change may mean that new sources of renewable energy may be developed in the longer term.

POLICIES IN REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGIES AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT DOCUMENTS

6. Local planning authorities should only allocate specific sites for renewable energy in plans where a developer has already indicated an interest in the site, has confirmed that the site is viable, and that it will be brought forward during the plan period. Planning applications for renewable energy projects should be assessed against specific criteria set out in regional spatial strategies and local development documents. Regional planning bodies and local planning authorities should ensure that such criteria-based policies are consistent with, or reinforced by, policies in plans on other issues against which renewable energy applications could be assessed.
7. Criteria based policies should be set out in regional spatial strategies where these can be applied across a region, or across clearly identified sub-regional areas. These criteria should then be used to identify broad areas at the regional/sub-regional level where development of particular types of renewable energy may be considered appropriate. Other criteria based policies to reflect local circumstances should be set out by local planning authorities in their local development documents. Local planning authorities should, however, only focus on the key criteria that will be used to judge applications. More detailed issues may be appropriate to supplementary planning documents.

8. Local planning authorities may include policies in local development documents that require a percentage of the energy to be used in new residential, commercial or industrial developments to come from on-site renewable energy developments. Such policies:
 - (i) should ensure that requirement to generate on-site renewable energy is only applied to developments where the installation of renewable energy generation equipment is viable given the type of development proposed, its location, and design;
 - (ii) should not be framed in such a way as to place an undue burden on developers, for example, by specifying that all energy to be used in a development should come from on-site renewable generation.

Further guidance on the framing of such policies, together with good practice examples of the development of on-site renewable energy generation, are included in the companion guide to PPS22.