

## HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

### Decision Report

<b>Decision Maker:</b>	Executive Member for Policy and Resources
<b>Date:</b>	24 January 2013
<b>Title:</b>	Policy on large wind turbines and wind farms on County Council Land
<b>Decision Reference:</b>	4407
<b>Report From:</b>	Director of Economy, Transport and Environment Director of Culture, Communities and Business Services

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#### 1. Summary

1.1. The purpose of this report is to agree a position statement on large wind turbine and wind farms on Hampshire County Council owned land. It is recommended that Hampshire County Council adopt a position statement which states that whilst the potential benefits of wind power in providing renewable clean energy are recognised, large wind turbines and wind farms would have an adverse impact on the special qualities and character of Hampshire's landscapes. The County Council considers that in Hampshire the benefits at present do not outweigh these adverse impacts and consequently does not support such developments on its rural landholdings.

#### 2. Position statement on large turbines and wind farms on County Council land

- 2.1. Hampshire County Council is a substantial rural landowner, in respect of the county farm estate, country parks and other land. Consequently there is the potential for use of its landholdings for large wind turbines and wind farms.
- 2.2. The County Council is not the Local Planning Authority for this type of development and has no responsibility for making planning policy in relation to wind turbines or wind farms, nor responsibility for deciding planning applications for wind turbines or wind farms. Therefore this position statement is solely in relation to the County Council's role as a landowner. It is recognised that, as a public body, the County Council holds land in relation to its statutory powers. The County Council would see this position statement as being overall for the benefit of its area.

- 2.3. The County Council recognises the importance and benefits of secure, affordable, and/or low carbon energy. The aim of the Energy Strategy, which was approved by Cabinet in October 2012, is to increase the County Council's and the community's resilience to the risks of energy security, affordability and carbon emissions and contribute to the creation of a sustainable and low carbon economy in Hampshire. The County Council recognises that wind energy can provide additional land based, renewable energy, and as such has a role in meeting government targets for secure renewable energy. However large wind turbines and wind farms are major developments which have a significant visual impact in the countryside.
- 2.4. Hampshire County Council's Corporate Strategy has three priorities. One of these, "Enhancing our quality of place" is all about making the county a good place to be by protecting local distinctiveness and diversity; ensuring excellent facilities; respecting Hampshire's heritage, as well as planning proactively for the future.
- 2.5. This priority reflects the fact that the rural landscape and environment of Hampshire is of a very high quality. It is characterised by a broad band of chalk downland across the centre of the County, with the lower lying land of the Thames Basin to the north and the Hampshire Basin to the south. Almost half of the area of the County is covered by designations due to its national importance for landscape, comprising the New Forest National Park, the South Downs National Park, the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB and Chichester Harbour AONB. These landscapes have an increased level of protection from development due to their designation.
- 2.6. Outside of these protected areas the landscapes of Hampshire are still highly sensitive to the development of large wind turbines and wind farms, due either to their open and undeveloped character and extent of visibility or their significance as small-scale, ancient landscapes with a tranquil character. The management of the County Council's rural estate contributes to the character of these high quality rural landscapes.
- 2.7. The introduction of large wind turbines and wind farms within rural Hampshire will have very significant impacts in terms of visual intrusion and damage to historic character and to tranquillity. This conflicts with the corporate priority to protect local distinctiveness and respecting Hampshire's heritage.
- 2.8. Wind turbines and wind farms vary in size and scale, details on typical sizes, land requirements and other technical details can be found in Appendix 1.
- 2.9. There is a clear conflict between the potential benefits of wind power in providing renewable clean energy and the adverse impact on the special qualities and character of Hampshire's landscapes of large wind turbine and wind farm developments. In the future it is possible that improvements will be made to the design, efficiency, operation and cost of wind turbines, which will add to the attractiveness of onshore wind energy. But at this time, it is considered that for Hampshire the benefits do not outweigh the adverse impacts and consequently the County Council should not support at present such developments on its rural landholdings. The County Council would see

this approach as being consistent with the purposes for which the land is held, and overall for the benefit of its area,

- 2.10. Any potential proposals for large wind turbines and wind farms will be considered against this position statement and any statutory requirements and national policy guidance prevailing at the time. The County Council will also consider this position statement in the context of its statutory duty to co-operate with other Local Authorities in the local planning process and the development of planning documents.
- 2.11. The proposed decision has prompted some correspondence from members of the public and organisations. A summary of this is available in Appendix 2. Copies of the correspondence are also available.

### **3. Finance**

- 3.1. It is considered that any financial benefits to the County Council would be outweighed by the adverse impacts.

### **4. Recommendation**

- 4.1. That a policy should be adopted which states that Hampshire County Council will not support large wind turbine or wind farm developments on County Council rural landholdings at present.

**CORPORATE OR LEGAL INFORMATION:****Links to the Corporate Strategy**

<b>Hampshire safer and more secure for all:</b>	no
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
<b>Maximising well-being:</b>	yes
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
<b>Enhancing our quality of place:</b>	yes
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	

**Other Significant Links**

<b>Links to previous Member decisions:</b>		
<u>Title</u>	<u>Reference</u>	<u>Date</u>
Policy on large wind turbines and wind farms on County Council land	4205	06.11.2012
Hampshire County Council Energy Strategy	4202	29.10.2012
<b>Direct links to specific legislation or Government Directives</b>		
<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>	

**Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents**

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

<u>Document</u>	<u>Location</u>
None	

## **IMPACT ASSESSMENTS:**

### **1. Equalities Impact Assessment:**

- 1.1. The proposals in this report have been developed with due regard to the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, including the Public Sector Equality Duty and the Council's equality objectives. The assessment of the impacts for the Ensuring that Hampshire is Energy and Climate Change Resilient service area can be found at:

<http://www3.hants.gov.uk/equality/equality-impact-assessments/cx-pu-eqimpact-envi.htm>

- 1.2. It is considered that the issues covered by this report will not have impacts requiring further specific actions by the Council above those already established in its existing policies and working procedures.

### **2. Impact on Crime and Disorder:**

- 2.1. It is not considered that the wind farm position statement will have any adverse crime and disorder impacts.

### **3. Climate Change:**

- 3.1. It is not considered that the wind farm position statement will have any adverse impacts on climate change when considered alongside the County Council's Energy Strategy.

## Appendix 1 - Size and Scale of Wind Turbines and Wind Farms

1. This appendix sets out some of the current facts and figures on wind turbines and wind farms, it draws from evidence already in the public domain.
2. Wind farms and wind turbines sizes are generally referenced as their total potential electrical output. The area of a wind farm, numbers of turbines, and individual size of turbines, will all vary depending on multiple factors, including wind speed, available land size and other issues. Technology changes and improvements will also have an impact.
3. In the UK the current average consented size of an onshore wind farm is 15.5MW<sup>1</sup>; with the largest<sup>2</sup> being the Clyde wind farm at 350MW, which has 152 turbines. By the end of 2013 the wind sector as a whole will be generating 10% of UK electricity needs.
4. An average 2.5MW turbine generates 6.5 million units of electricity per annum. Wind is a variable resource and modern turbines generate for 70-85% of the time<sup>3</sup>, and will generate approximately 30% of their theoretical maximum output per year. (Conventional power stations generate about 50% of their theoretical maximum output per year).
5. Currently wind farm developments on average use turbines of between 2 and 3 MW capacity. This is expected to increase with changes in technology and materials.
6. When placing 2MW turbines (tower height 60m, blade length 40m, total height 100m) they should have a 5 blade diameter (450 metres) between each turbine<sup>4</sup>.
7. Taking all the above into consideration using the average for an onshore wind farm consisting of eight 2MW turbines this will take up 160 hectares (395 acres) of land which is equivalent to approximately 220 football pitches.

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<sup>1</sup> Department for Energy and Climate Change

<sup>2</sup> Business Green, September 2012.

<sup>3</sup> Renewable UK

<sup>4</sup> Wind Prospect - Renewable energy development for landowners

## Appendix 2 – Summary of Responses

As of 29 November 2012, there have been a total of thirty-seven responses directly to the County Council in response to this proposal. These can be broken down as follows:

	Against	In Support	Neutral
<b>Total Number of responses</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>From Individuals</b>	29	7	1
<b>From or on behalf of Organisations</b>	3	0	0

In addition there has been media coverage in local papers, local and national television and via social media.

There has been one Freedom of Information Act request, which is not included in the above numbers. This was requesting further information only, and not indicating support or opposition to the policy proposals.

As indicated above the majority of responses have been from individual members of the public, organisations who have responded are:

Winchester Action on Climate Change;

Winchester Green Party;

Friends of the Earth.

### Summary of key issues raised.

Many of the respondents covered similar areas in their correspondence. The points below highlight the main issues raised. A full set of correspondence is available as part of the consideration of this paper.

#### Against

- Concerns over the continued reliance on fossil fuels and not introducing renewables into the energy mix to improve medium and longer term energy security.
- That the County Council does not support any form of renewable energy.
- Disagreements that wind turbines have an adverse impact on the landscape, and that some people find them aesthetically pleasing.
- Comparison to other opportunities and successful deployment of wind turbines in other countries and other areas of the UK.
- Concern that the County Council is not demonstrating leadership in the area of generating energy from renewable sources.
- Comments over the perceived autocratic process in reaching the policy and the lack of a wider public debate or Council debate.
- Requests for further information used to support the decision e.g. engineering, environmental and accounting reports. Impact assessments and cost-benefit analysis.

In support

- Agreement with the landscape impacts
- That there are better forms of low-carbon energy e.g. nuclear.
- Power generated is always overstated by developers i.e. maximum potential figures given rather than actual