
CONSULTATION RESPONSE ON ONSHORE WIND POLICY STATEMENT UPDATE

Report by Director - Infrastructure & Environment

Scottish Borders Council

27 January 2022

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report seeks endorsement of the response set out in Appendix 1 to the Scottish Government consultation relating to the on-shore wind policy statement update.**
- 1.2 The consultation, which opened on 28 October, had an initial deadline for response by 21 January 2022 and it had been thought necessary that, in the limited time available to assess the proposed changes, Officers would have to lodge a provisional holding response to the consultation. However, in recent discussion with Scottish Government officials, the timescale has been extended to 31 January to accommodate Committee consideration of the consultation response. This report seeks agreement of this response, which is set out in Appendix 1.
- 1.3 The consultation highlights the significant role Scottish Government sees being played by On-Shore wind in the delivery of its net zero and climate change targets for 2030. The Scottish Government is considering ways it can strengthen its support for Onshore Wind deployment in Scotland, and are specifically consulting on the ambition for an additional 8-12 Gigawatts to be installed by 2030, how to tackle the barriers to deployment, and how to secure maximum economic benefit from these developments.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 I recommend that the Committee approve the consultation response set out in Appendix 1.**

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The report seeks views on an update to the Onshore Wind Policy Statement, which was originally approved in 2017. The consultation looks to obtain the views of as many organisations, groups and individuals as possible to help inform and shape Scottish Government policy for onshore wind.
- 3.2 The statement sets out a new target for delivery of installed on shore wind capacity in Scotland. It highlights that the UK has 14.1 GW of installed onshore wind capacity of which 8.4GW is in Scotland. Scotland has a further 9.7GW of capacity approved, under construction or in planning. However, with the increasing future demands for green energy resulting from the electrification of transport, industrial processes and heating of homes and buildings means that we will need a substantial increase in installed capacity across all renewable technologies year on year.
- 3.3 The consultation notes many existing windfarms will be nearing the end of their operation life and decisions will be needed between repowering, life extension or decommissioning. The Scottish Government strongly supports repowering in principle but accepts that not all developments will be considered appropriate for repowering. It is also notes that repowering alone won't meet the capacity needed and that significant volumes of new development will also be required.
- 3.4 The consultation seeks views on the ambition for an additional **8-12GW** of onshore wind be installed in Scotland **by 2030**.
- 3.5 The Borders has already made a significant contribution through the approval and development of windfarms and turbines in the past 15-20 years. However, it is clear there is an expectation that the region will deliver further capacity through repowering and new windfarm site development to contribute to meeting this new objective. The challenge is the many of the best sites have been developed and there are landscape capacity concerns about larger turbines sizes and developing into previously undeveloped and more sensitive and populated parts of the Borders.
- 3.6 The consultation touches on the potential for onshore wind farms to support the development of hydrogen production infrastructure. This could be an opportunity the Borders to exploit windfarm development by requiring that windfarm developments be developed as energy hubs where hydrogen production capacity is an established part of the energy proposal. This could be supported by analysis to established demand and markets for local and national provision which would help decarbonise transport/fleet/freight.
- 3.7 The consultation continues to highlight the importance of communities in the development of projects and promotes the best practice guide in respect of community benefit (£5k per installed MW per year) turbine and the potential for local generation and shared ownership. This is far from straight forward and there will need to be enhanced support for communities to develop capacity, skills and knowledge and the means to de-risk their involvement such projects.

- 3.8 In Chapter 3, the consultation focusses on the technical and reserved matters barriers to deployment including Eskdalemuir Seismic Array and aviation operations. It asks for views on the creation of an Aviation and Renewables Collaboration Board, aviation lighting, grid networks, how to align policy and regulation, dealing with network charging, network investment and planning, security of supply and storage potential.
- 3.9 Chapter 4 focusses on what is describes as environmental barriers to deployment regarding noise, net zero and other land uses (land use, peatland and carbon rich soils, forestry), Biodiversity, landscape and visual impacts.
- 3.10 Chapter 5 focusses on the Economic opportunities related to supply chain, Contracts for Difference (CfD) and Supply Chain Plans, benefits to Scotland, Refurbishment and Recycling, skills, Promoting a Diverse, Inclusive Industry: Equality and Onshore Wind, Tourism and Cultural Economics.
- 3.11 There are also 4 annexes that relate to Eskdalemuir, the creation of an Aviation and Renewables Collaboration Board, Community Benefits Case Studies and information on how to respond to the consultation.
- 3.12 The issues posed by these matters – and the recommended feedback on them – are set out in further detail in the consultation response in Appendix 1.

4 IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Financial

There are no costs attached to any of the recommendations contained in this report.

4.2 Risk and Mitigations

The approval of the consultation response will not have any immediate implications for the Council in terms of risk.

4.3 Integrated Impact Assessment

There are no direct adverse equality implications arising from this report.

4.4 Sustainable Development Goals

The UN SDGs comprise 17 interlinked goals. UN SDG 13: 'Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts' is clearly the most relevant to the proposals contained in the consultation.

However, it will also support delivery against other UN SDG through pursuit of a 'Just Transition', namely: Goal 1 – to end poverty, 7- Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all, 8 Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all and 9 Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

4.5 **Climate Change**

The purpose of this report is to provide feedback and advice to Scottish Government on its proposals to deliver a significant increase in onshore wind development to assist in meeting its climate change targets for 2030. The Council is supportive of the drive towards development of energy from non -carbon sources, such as on-shore wind, and its response seeks to encourage appropriate development in the Borders (the right turbine in the right location) but also take advantage of the potential economic and community benefit from such develop and seek alignment with the Council's own aspiration in delivering its on Climate Change Route Map.

4.6 **Rural Proofing**

Not required.

4.7 **Data Protection Impact Statement**

There are no personal data implications arising from the proposals contained in this report.

4.8 **Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation**

There are no changes required to the Council's Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation as a result of this report.

5 **CONSULTATION**

- 5.1 The Director (Finance & Corporate Governance), the Monitoring Officer/Chief Legal Officer, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Director (People Performance & Change), the Clerk to the Council and Corporate Communications have been consulted on this report and comments received have been incorporated into the final report

Approved by

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Background Papers:

Previous Minute Reference:

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