

# Renewable Energy for Protected Landscapes and Historic Buildings Conference

## 1 March 2007

### Feedback from Discussion Groups

#### MORNING SESSION

##### Group 1

Question: *Should we oppose, in principle, those technologies which have an adverse impact on the landscape but encourage less intrusive alternative? Eg oppose wind and solar in favour of biomass, super insulation, sustainable design? How far should we compromise?*

Discussion:

- Yorkshire Microgeneration put forward the view that Climate Change will have a dramatic impact on our protected landscapes, far more damaging than wind turbines. They argued that not encouraging the large scale uptake of micro renewables would worsen the impact of climate change on our landscapes.
- The group discussed the potential for a 'sequential approach' to renewable proposals based on the impact they would have – applicants for wind turbines would need to demonstrate that they have first considered/implemented less intrusive technologies eg. super-insulation, ground mounted PV/solar etc. Some felt this approach would be too punitive. Others felt that applicants should prove how effective in energy generation terms their wind turbine will be before compromising the landscape.
- The group consensus was that we should not oppose, in principle, any renewable technology but need to consider each case on its merits – making a judgement on its impact.
- The group also felt that National Park Authorities and AONBs should adopt a 'vision' to encourage renewables and manage change to our landscapes.

##### Group 2

Question: *Should we oppose, in principle, those technologies which have an adverse impact on historic buildings and their setting, but encourage less intrusive alternatives? Eg oppose wind and solar in favour of biomass? How far should we compromise? Do you agree with the approach taken at Gibson Mill?*

Discussion:

- Provisional 'Yes' in principle to the approach taken at Gibson Mill
- Sequential approach – rather than jumping to the wind turbine/off the shelf approach

- Need to back up planning applications with energy & carbon saving data
- New technologies with old buildings need to be considered on an individual basis – difficult to set a precedent
- Reversibility very important in the historic building context
- Pre-application stage – more discussion and advice required
- Legal requirement to consider the impact on character of building – scale!
- Wasted opportunities around modern farm buildings
- We need to continually apply pressure to the Renewable Energy industry to drive the design and technology forward

### Group 3

Question: *Should we encourage collective renewable energy projects and oppose smaller scale projects? Should we compromise in favour of a few large scale developments to avoid the cumulative impact of many small scale (domestic) developments? Eg village or estate wind turbines rather than a cluster of many small turbines?*

Discussion:

- It was felt both community and individual projects should be encouraged although community projects offered better opportunities for adopting a wider range of technologies and generated economies of scale.
- Much will depend on review of GPDO and forthcoming legislation as to the future.
- Community projects are good educators – some disagreement – individual ones can be as good.
- Technology adopted has to be appropriate to the location, in scale and quality etc - there has been too much emphasis in wind and solar to the detriment of other technologies.
- Could consider linking individual planning permissions to overall energy usage within a community, ie introduce policies that restrict individual installations but encourage larger community projects?
- Need to look at specific renewable energy plans for groups of villages/parishes. (Renewable energy not always a solution for some communities, but they can still make a difference through better insulation and energy saving measures).

### Group 4

Question: *Should we accept/encourage more micro renewable schemes in order to strengthen our position on macro schemes (wind farms) on our borders?*

Discussion

- Section 62 places an obligation on neighbouring authorities to have regard to National Park purposes. Development of wind farms on the edge of a designated landscape is therefore a legitimate issue of concern to NPAs and AONB authorities. However a flexible approach should be taken having regard to actual landscape impact of peripheral areas (some won't have any)

- Our consultation response to peripheral development should be limited to our statutory purposes. It is not our job to weigh these against Co2 reductions.
- We should understand the political and tactical benefits of promoting micro renewables within designated landscapes
- There is however a distinction between *accepting* development and *encouraging* development
- The issue comes down to protection of the wider landscape (by opposing large schemes) or more localised harm to built heritage and conservation areas (by encouraging small scale schemes)
- However, some roofs are more adaptable for solar and micro wind than others. Its horses for courses at the moment
- A plea for consistency. Hopefully the review of the 'General Permitted Development Order' should help provide clarification
- The question was raised (though not really answered) 'What is necessarily wrong with macro schemes in protected landscapes ?'
- General conclusion that we should all take responsibility for this issue

## **AFTERNOON SESSION**

### **Group 1**

Question: Group 1

Question: *Which technologies are suitable for sensitive landscapes and historic buildings? What design solutions are available and how can the impact of intrusive technologies be mitigated? Eg should turbines be freestanding or mounted on buildings? Should we resist solar panels on prominent roof slopes in favour of ground mounted systems?*

- Can't rule out any technology in a sweeping statement - develop bespoke solutions
- Effectiveness of technology is affected by positioning – so by compromising on positioning to achieve visual integrity, you compromise the optimum energy output of the scheme
- Wind turbines aren't as effective when mounted on buildings, as free standing models
- Applications should go through building regulations first, then planning
- Better education for planners on design and technology; will help them to develop confidence in reaching solutions
- More informed pre-application
- Need to look wider than the UK for technical solutions

### **Group 2**

Question: *Can the innovative designs, technologies and materials used in landmark 'eco buildings' be adapted for use in traditional vernacular or historic buildings?*

Discussion:

- The general consensus of the group was that innovative designs and technologies can be transferred to traditional vernacular and historic buildings but only where they are appropriate in terms of their siting, design, scale and massing.

The group felt that there is considerable scope for:

Ground mounted PV and Solar

Non-reflective roof mounted PV (flush with the roof material)

Sustainable materials – timber, structural glass, etc

Design and materials that maximise the benefit from natural light

- The group agreed that planners, builders and designers needed to improve their knowledge of the available technologies and how they can be used.

### Group 3

Question: *How can we proactively encourage the community to take up renewable energy technologies whilst delivering the message that the special qualities of the landscape and historic buildings should be protected?*

Discussion:

- If continuation funding is forthcoming, the NYMNP Community Energy Project will offer a model for community projects in protected areas,
- Community engagement in renewable energy needs to be a higher priority for NPs/AONBs/LAs– see companion guide to PPG22 but this has implications for funding, officer time etc
- Community Renewable Energy projects can hit other targets in relation to economic regeneration eg skills, employment.
- We need to encourage *community* energy projects rather than simply *renewable* energy projects – need to put emphasis on reducing energy consumption and better insulation as well as renewable energy technologies.
- Need to influence Authority Members to agree an approach to climate change and renewable energy and for them to act as champions in the community.
- Need better communication of policies and a community 'vision'
- Additional resources are required if NPAs and AONBs are to encourage community renewable projects.

## Group 4

Question: *What tools and resources do we need to enable us to ensure that renewable energy developments do not harm protected landscapes and historic buildings?*

### Discussion

- One tool that may be useful in designated landscapes would be a household energy and renewable technology audit. This could be a requirement of planning application registration
- However can we ask for this at present ? Perhaps we should trust applicants and assume they have audited their property before considering a renewables scheme?
- Background studies of what's best in particular areas have mainly been completed by now
- PPG22 Companion Guide Annex provides details about each technology
- Each Authority needs to understand its resources and adapt its policies accordingly
- **Q.** Is there an issue regarding speed of change in technologies? **A.** No
- Web based advice about each technology would be useful
- Whose job is it to assess technical viability - the planner or the consultant employed by applicant?