

## **WIND FARM ACTION PLAN SUMMARY**

### **Background to the Action Plan**

The Wilderness Foundation UK believes that effective steps are urgently needed to mitigate climate change.

Wind energy offers one alternative to fossil fuels. However, with hundreds of onshore planning applications now in the pipeline throughout Britain, there is an absence of both location policy and overall energy strategy.

Under such circumstances, wind farms constitute a very significant threat to the landscapes of Scotland, Wales and England. Inappropriate development of this form of renewable energy also threatens to undermine the credibility of valid alternatives in the renewable energy sector.

In addressing this issue, the conservation sector is split in its views between those who argue the need for combating climate change with little consideration of the impact of wind farms, and those who point to the technical inefficiency of wind turbines, their negligible impact on reduction of carbon emissions and the very substantial damage they will cause to scenery, livelihoods and wildlife.

Two key issues are involved here:

#### **1. Location of Wind Farms**

At present there are few if any guidelines on location, with applications being arbitrarily submitted across the country. The position of the Wilderness Foundation is that wind farms, bringing an infrastructure of approach roads, service buildings and transmission lines, constitute an industrial development and should be confined to areas of established built development or located offshore where there is no visual impingement on unspoilt coastline.

Individual campaigns are being fought against location decisions by local communities, but all too often these are being over-ridden by a wind industry that is well funded by consumer levies and thus able to provide short term subsidy to local landholding interests.

## **2. Sustainable Energy Strategy**

Wind farm establishment is only one aspect of a sustainable energy strategy. *There are many other approaches not being adequately pursued where comparable investment could have greater impact on greenhouse gas emissions with far less collateral damage to landscapes and livelihoods.*

These include alternative sources of renewable generation such as small-scale wind turbine, tidal, biomass and solar power. Coherent programmes are also required for energy saving and pollution control. A more effective range of supportive instruments is needed, including stronger fiscal and subsidy incentives, industry codes of practice (building regulations, gas emissions) and legislative backing.

Little coordination has so far been achieved among interested parties. There is an urgent need to develop and promote an effective cooperative front on this issue, while there is still time.

With all renewables set to provide a maximum of only 10% of energy generation by 2010, it would be totally unacceptable to ruin very extensive areas of un-spoilt countryside merely to gain a couple of extra percentage points of generation capacity with negligible impact on emission reductions – and with wholly inadequate consideration of the remaining 90% of output.

### **Action Plan – Key Elements**

The Foundation has drafted an Action Plan to address this issue, key aspects of which are as follows:

#### **1. Develop a Location Policy**

Agree a joint wind farm location policy among concerned organizations that takes full account of landscape, wildlife, livelihood and property value issues.

This will require different approaches in Scotland, Wales and England, but should occur within the context of a national energy strategy.

#### **2. Develop a Representation Programme**

2.1 Devise and represent a coherent promotion plan on wind farm policy to government, the wind farm industry, media and appropriate institutions – including conservation NGOs. Ensure relevant organizations are fully appraised of the position regarding the efficiency of wind power, and the relative cost:benefit of alternative measures to combat climate change.

- 2.2 Assess opportunity for implementing a Parliamentary Hearing on the relative cost:benefit of wind power in reducing carbon emissions within an overall energy strategy to tackle climate change.
- 2.3 Work to ensure agreement and implementation of an appropriate location policy
- 2.4 Support the organization of national conferences on wind farms, their impact and cost, in Scotland, Wales and England with a view to informing key decision takers and providing a collective instrument to influence policy development.
- 2.5 Promote the organization of a national petition in coordination with other organizations and media.
- 2.6 Devise and promote appropriate promotion measures, including articulation of key sound bite phrases and data, joint representations, letter writing to ministers, publicity exercises.
- 2.7 Produce booklet titled "Climate Change – your Questions Answered" placing wind power in its proper perspective as a small part of a more effective programme. This will be targeted at key decision-takers from central government in Whitehall, Edinburgh and Cardiff, local planning departments, media.

### **3. Promote Organizational Infrastructure**

- 3.1 Catalyze a broader network of action among organizations: e.g. with establishment of Wind Farm Forums in England and Wales.
- 3.2 Ensure coordination of a united position between these Forums and the Scotland Forum, and endeavour to support the effectiveness of the latter.
- 3.3 Develop a network of contacts through a web-based system for information exchange and campaign.
- 3.4 Coordinate with related organizations: e.g. LINK (all three countries), appropriate NGOs, the Forum on Renewable Energy, and the Project Group on Climate Change.

### **4. Practical Research Programme**

- 4.1 Ensure appropriate dissemination of information on wind farms, their impact on electrical generation and gas emission, their full cost (direct,

environmental, impact on local livelihoods), actions being taken on location policy, cost benefit of alternatives to wind farms (insulation, energy saving, pollution control, other sources including renewables).

- 4.2 Coordinate to ensure development of a coherent measure of the economic, social and environmental value of wildlands and landscape (reference proposals by the "Wild Scotland" "Wild Wales" and "Wild England" initiatives).
- 4.3 Develop maps of existing and prospective wildland. It should be feasible to devise an alternative location strategy that can be effectively represented on commercial as well as more traditional grounds.
- 4.4 Promote research into the visual impact of wind farms via assessment of "viewing shed" projections. Correlate the results with wildland and scenic mapping and ensure an appropriate location policy which obviates damage to scenic quality or other harmful consequences.
- 4.5 Promote research into the cost benefit of wind farm energy as against investment in other means of addressing climate change – including: alternative renewable sources, energy savings, emission control etc.