

CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Title: SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT INQUIRY INTO RENEWABLE ENERGY IN SCOTLAND.

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Purpose

This aim of this paper is to formulate the CNPA's response to an open call for evidence for a future inquiry into renewable energy in Scotland, via the Scottish Parliament's Enterprise and Culture Committee. The following page shows their press release.

This response has been formulated as relating principally to the CNP, rather than addressing the national and global situation.

In 2000 the UK Government established a policy objective to have 10% of UK electricity requirements supplied by renewables by 2010, a target which will almost certainly rise beyond that timescale. The Utilities Act 2000 gave the Scottish Ministers power to set a separate renewables obligation for Scotland; in 2002, 11% of Scotland's electricity was already generated by hydro schemes alone, with new renewable projects making up another 2%. A further increase of 5% is proposed under the Renewables Obligation (Scotland) which will take the Scottish target to 18% by 2015; the EU target is 12%.

Recommendations

The Committee supports the report as the CNPA response to the Scottish Parliament's Enterprise and Culture Committee pre-inquiry consultation on renewable energy in Scotland.

Executive Summary

While the Scottish target level is certainly commendable, there has been something of a blind rush to develop schemes all over the country, with a possible lack of centralised control and co-ordination. This has resulted in large tracts of the Scottish landscape being affected, sometimes adversely, by large renewable schemes ~ most commonly by wind farms. The only detailed national guidance on this topic comes from SNH, with their policy on renewable energy and guidance for onshore wind farms. It is our view that the setting of targets should be more closely linked to minimising the environmental and landscape impacts from new developments, with some level of national co-ordination and strategy.

The CNP is a landscape designated for its national importance, an area of unique habitats and scenery, and as such we are developing policies to protect it from major renewable developments. Schemes outwith but close to the boundary will also have to be carefully assessed for their impact on the Park; small-scale renewable developments for direct community or domestic benefit, may be encouraged within the park but will still be carefully assessed for their environmental impact.

SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT PRESS RELEASE:

ENTERPRISE COMMITTEE LAUNCHES INQUIRY
INTO RENEWABLE ENERGY IN SCOTLAND

The Enterprise and Culture Committee today announced an open call for evidence for its forthcoming inquiry into renewable energy in Scotland.

Public interest to date has focused around the development of wind farms. While this inquiry will allow the Committee to take evidence from a number of public petitioners about wind farms, members also want to have a broad debate about all forms of renewable energy.

Committee Convener Alasdair Morgan said:

“The development, testing and manufacture of renewable energy technologies have the potential to be a key growth area for Scotland. We have research and development expertise, combined with years of experience of manufacturing and some of the best natural resources in the world. We need to ensure that we are capitalising on that competitive advantage to the benefit of the whole country.

“Members of the Committee have been receiving large amounts of mail on this subject, and we are aware of the strength of feeling across the country. That is why it is important that we hold a full inquiry which will enable us to scrutinise the evidence before we reach conclusions.”

The remit of the inquiry is:

To inquire into the development of renewable energy in Scotland.

Specifically, the Committee will wish to ask the following questions, which are intended to be illustrative rather than prescriptive:

• **Will the Executive targets be met, under current circumstances, and are they appropriate?**

- how were they arrived at by the Executive?
- what is the relationship with UK targets?
- have assumptions been made about the contributions of different sectors?
- what are the opportunities and implications for the economy in achieving the targets?
- what are the implications if the executive's targets are not met?

• **If not, why not? (What are the current barriers, and what action needs to be taken to ensure that the targets are met?)**

global issues

- the Renewables Obligation (Scotland) and the UK energy legislative framework
- the electricity market
- the transmission network (including the Scottish national grid)

local issues

• **What opportunities are there/should there be for local community involvement in, and economic benefit from, renewable energy schemes?**

examination by sector

- onshore wind (inc. planning issues, community development); - offshore wind (inc. UK strategy, role for energy ITI?); - wave/tidal (inc. technology issues, job potential); - hydroelectric; - biomass; - other/longer-term (e.g. emerging technology, non-electricity)

• **Are there implications for the reliability of supply if the Executive's aspirational target is met?"**

Interested individuals and organisations are invited to submit written evidence to the Committee. Submissions should not be more than 6 sides of A4. The closing date for evidence is Monday 26 January 2004. Wherever possible, please e-mail submissions to: scottish.renewables@scottish.parliament.uk

An online forum which relates specifically to wind farms is available via the Scottish Parliament Live website, at:

<http://www.communitypeople.net/interactive/wind.asp>

Cairngorms National Park Context

1. Since the CNP was set-up on the 1st September 2003 we have had over 9 inquiries for large-scale renewable schemes in and around the park (1 hydro, 1 biomass & 7 wind).
2. While the CNPA must follow national planning guidance, and existing development plans, central to our own policies and decision-making will be the four aims of the National Park:
 - a) to conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage of the area;
 - b) to promote sustainable use of the natural resources of the area;
 - c) to promote understanding and enjoyment (including enjoyment in the form of recreation) of the special qualities of the area by the public; and
 - d) to promote sustainable economic and social development of the area's communities.

Where these aims are in conflict, greater weight shall be given to the first aim.

Consultation Questions

3. • **Will the Executive targets be met, under current circumstances, and are they appropriate?**
4. While we find the high level of Scottish targets commendable, relative to their English & Welsh and European counterparts, we do feel that there needs to be a more balanced and co-ordinated approach across the country as to how these targets are met. These high targets must be balanced with responsible guidance and strategy for minimising landscape and environmental impacts; there should also be a willingness to revise/re-assess these targets in the light of environmental assessments.
5. Within the Cairngorms National Park we have taken the viewpoint that the Park landscape should be protected from major renewable developments, and have formulated policies to that end, which are currently out for consultation. We will however be actively supportive of small scale schemes which are for direct community/domestic benefit, subject to a detailed environmental assessment. Developments outwith but close to the boundary may also have an adverse effect on the landscape and setting of the Park, and as such will have to be carefully designed and sited to minimise such.
6. • **If not, why not? (What are the current barriers, and what action needs to be taken to ensure that the targets are met?)**
7. One barrier to Scotland developing such high levels of renewable power is the upgrading of the national grid; the connection of Orkney & Shetland to the grid would in itself open up a huge resource. The downside of grid upgrading is more/bigger pylons scarring the landscape, which is not an issue that can just be ignored/accepted as unavoidable. This is relevant to the CNP because the Beaully-Denny main grid line will shortly be updated, almost doubling the pylon size from 25 to 45m high. These pylons will cross the SW corner of the CNP then continue down the A9, and will completely ruin the most used 'entrance gateway' to the National Park.
8. We need to be extremely careful that the focus on meeting high targets does not ignore the impact that renewable energy developments (and their infrastructure/ancillary

developments) have on the landscape and environment of Scotland. A careful balance obviously needs to be struck, and further research could be done on what SNH have classed as the least sensitive landscapes for siting wind farms.

9. • **What opportunities are there/should there be for local community involvement in, and economic benefit from, renewable energy schemes?**
10. Local communities get little direct benefit from most renewable schemes, unless they actually own the land they are built on. Within the Park we will be actively encouraging local communities to develop their own small-scale schemes, rather than the current situation where multi-nationals are developing major schemes to sell directly to the grid. This small-scale localised approach should really be a major part of the Scottish Parliament's drive towards achieving renewable targets.
11. • **Are there implications for the reliability of supply if the Executive's aspirational target is met?**
12. With the exception of tidal power, and to some extent hydro power, all renewable schemes will suffer from some degree of unpredictability/ unreliability of resource, which could undermine the whole programme to some extent. This is one of the great dangers of pushing ahead with such an ambitious target, and highlights the need for a more co-ordinated and balanced approach. More research and funding for tidal generation schemes will surely pay dividends in the long term, in terms of energy production and impacts; as may smaller scale community schemes.

Conclusions

13. While the CNPA supports the Scottish Parliament's high renewable energy target, we do feel that this needs to be balanced with a greater degree of environmental and landscape consideration, with some level of national strategy to co-ordinate and balance the meeting of these targets in a rational and controlled manner.
14. Onshore wind farms in particular need to be developed within landscapes that are not of a national value which will be compromised; offshore wind farms, tidal energy and smaller-scale community schemes should be encouraged more actively. The landscape and nature of Scotland needs to be more carefully considered, thinking in the longer term for sustainable development that has minimal impacts. We should also remember that we are already exceeding UK and EU targets, and should take more time to thoroughly consider our options.

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