

WIND ENERGY DEVELOPMENTS POLICY



The Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland

APRS is the charity which promotes the care of ALL of Scotland's rural landscapes

We aim to:

- Protect and enhance Scotland's rural landscapes for future generations
- Promote effective planning and landscape protection systems in Scotland
- encourage genuinely sustainable development in rural Scotland
- Raise awareness of the importance of Scotland's landscapes to its people and economy
- Promote the activity of land managers who care for Scotland's landscapes



To achieve these aims we:

- Work in partnership with individuals, other charities, local authority, government and public bodies
- Take an active part in national policy development and advocacy
- Advise members of the public on how to respond to proposals which affect their local landscapes
- Publicise our work to our members and beyond through our website, quarterly newsletter *Rural Scotland* and regular email bulletins

Policy Summary

1. The UK Government should shift the current level of subsidies away from onshore wind energy into demand reduction, energy conservation and energy efficiency.
2. The Scottish Government should exclude all wind farms from our World Heritage Sites, National Parks, National Scenic Areas, Search Areas for Wild Land, historic battlefields, historic gardens and designed landscapes and their settings, plus substantial buffer zones.
3. The Scottish Government should introduce a strong presumption against wind farms in our Areas of Great Landscape Value, Local Landscape Areas, Special Landscape Areas, Regional Parks and Green Belts, plus substantial buffer zones — in order to protect views into and out of these protected areas.
4. The Scottish Government and planning authorities should prepare a national locational strategy which, by means of a thorough planning process, identifies a defined number of specific sites capable of accommodating the major visual impacts caused by the size of modern turbines.
5. Research and innovation in turbine and pylon design should continue, aimed at improving efficiency and reducing visual impact.



The Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland (APRS)

Scottish Charity No SC016139. A Scottish Charitable Company limited by guarantee Registered No 154563

Gladstone's Land 3rd Floor, 483 Lawnmarket, Edinburgh EH1 2NT

President : Jimmie Macgregor MBE DA FRZSS

Convenor : Charles Strang BArch (Hons) MSc ARIAS MRTPI IHBC FSA Scot Director : John Mayhew MA MSc DipTP MRTPI

Tel: 0131 225 7012 e-mail: info@ruralscotland.org web: www.ruralscotland.btck.co.uk

Landscape

The term 'landscape' addresses relationships between people and places. It is based on the appreciation of beautiful scenery, but covers all aspects of our experience of land, buildings, water, vegetation and culture. It includes both our personal memories and our shared experience, so it describes all that we value in our surroundings.

Our landscapes enhance our quality of life and well-being; they give us inspiration, refreshment and enjoyment. They contain the record of the achievements of those who went before us, form a key part of our national, regional and local identity and will be our legacy to future generations.

Scotland's natural and cultural landscapes are renowned throughout the world, and provide great opportunities for a wide variety of outdoor recreation. They are one of the main reasons why people are inspired to visit Scotland, and so are of vital importance to our prosperity. There are therefore powerful social and economic as well as environmental reasons to protect our landscapes against threats from development.



Scotland's Landscape Charter sets out a shared vision for Scotland's landscapes. It encourages local communities to promote wider understanding of their local landscape and to make their voice heard in guiding change. It encourages developers to seek views from the community on development proposals at an early stage and to look to incorporate their aspirations for their local landscape.

Energy

Scotland needs to generate less of its energy from fossil fuels (mainly coal, gas and oil), for two reasons:

- **To reduce carbon emissions and the resultant damaging climate change**
- **To reduce the rate of depletion of finite fossil fuel resources**

There are a number of ways in which this can be achieved effectively, including :

- Demand reduction – encouraging people to use less energy in the first place
- Energy conservation – particularly through insulating homes and businesses and promoting efficient appliances
- Energy efficiency – including combined heat and power
- Renewable micro-generation – from genuinely domestic-scale heat pumps, solar and hydro generation as well as wind, for both heat and electricity
- Small-scale community renewables, for both heat and electricity

To reduce emissions effectively more funding, policy support, research and development should go into reduction, conservation and efficiency.

Any public subsidy used to support policy change should benefit the environment and communities and should avoid damaging important environmental assets, particularly our highly-valued landscapes and seascapes.



Electricity is not the main medium by which we consume energy.

We currently use mostly:

- Gas to heat homes and commercial buildings – the heat sector
- Oil (petrol and diesel) to run cars, vans, buses, lorries, trains and planes – the transport sector
- Coal, nuclear, hydro and wind to generate electricity – the electricity sector

We need to use less energy, use it more efficiently and generate more of it from renewable sources in all three sectors.

Wind Energy Developments

APRS is a landscape protection organisation rather than an anti-development one, so is not opposed to wind turbines in principle. Nevertheless, the rapid unplanned expansion of large-scale wind farms is the greatest threat currently faced by Scotland's landscapes, resulting in:

- The industrialisation of many of our rural landscapes by tall white turbines and metal pylons, extensive concrete hardstandings and wide roads
- The major visual impact caused by the increasing size of modern wind turbines, many now over 100m tall, which can dominate most Scottish landscapes and be visible over extensive areas
- The erosion of our particularly precious resource of wild land
- The cumulative impact of large numbers of individual turbines, often excessively tall for their domestic context due to the current subsidy regime
- Bitter and unnecessary battles between communities, developers and planning authorities across Scotland, exacerbated by payments offered to some communities by developers
- Potential grid instability due to intermittency, need for back-up and mismatch between supply and demand

For a more detailed analysis of the issues generated by the current expansion of wind farms, APRS commends *Scotland's Beauty at Risk* by John Mackay (2011).

The extent of Scotland unaffected by visual impact from built development declined from 41% in 2002 to 28% by 2009 (data from Scottish Natural Heritage), largely due to wind farm and pylon development.

Large-scale wind farms are only one means to the real ends of tackling climate change and reducing use of finite resources; targets for renewable electricity are not the same as targets for reducing carbon emissions.

We share the Scottish Government's vision of a low-carbon future, but not that of installing an unlimited number of wind turbines and exporting surplus electricity to the UK and Europe, due to the landscape and other impacts of the turbines and pylons required. Any new long-distance high-capacity electricity transmission should be by subsea cable.

Public subsidy should be directed more towards emerging renewable technologies, such as tidal and wave power, with the potential to be more predictable and less obtrusive, whilst taking great care to minimise damage to our precious coastal and marine environment.

There may be some scope to expand genuinely offshore wind energy around Scotland, as long as this does not harm important marine habitats and species. However, some proposals are so close to the coast that their landscape impacts are as great as those of onshore developments and must therefore be subject to the same degree of scrutiny.

Development Planning and Management

APRS does not have the resources to comment in detail on many proposed developments, so we rarely get directly involved in casework. We have however produced Advice Notes for our members on The Planning System and on Wind Farms.

When we do get involved, we prioritise cases with genuinely national implications, those affecting designated areas and those where we can support APRS members in their local efforts. In such cases, we assess proposed developments against the following criteria:

- Consistency with the Development Plan
- Scale, form and design
- Relationship to landscape scale and character
- Associated roads, buildings and pylons as well as turbines
- Cumulative and sequential visual impact

All applications for wind farms should include details of grid connections as part of the same application. All developers should be required, as a planning condition, to lodge a substantial financial bond sufficient to ensure the removal of turbines and all other structures and the restoration of the ground when the development reaches the end of its life.



Further Information

APRS
3rd Floor, Gladstone's Land
483 Lawnmarket
EDINBURGH
EH1 2NT

0131 225 7012

info@ruralscotland.org

www.ruralscotland.btck.co.uk