

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by Director of Housing, Regeneration and Environmental Services

Planning Committee: 6 September 2006

Subject: Consultation on Draft Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) 6: Renewable Energy.

1. Purpose

- 1.1** To inform the Committee of the publication of SPP 6: Renewable Energy (Consultative Draft) by the Scottish Executive setting out the policy on renewable energy and the implications for the Planning System, and to recommend an appropriate response.

2. Background

- 2.1** Scottish Ministers have set a target of generating 40% of Scotland's electricity from renewable sources by 2020. This SPP sets out how the planning system should manage the process of encouraging, approving and implementing renewable energy proposals when preparing development plans and determining planning applications.

3. Main Issues

- 3.1** Scottish Ministers are fully committed to increasing the amount of electricity generated from renewable energy sources. In 2005, the Scottish Ministers re-confirmed the 2020 target, quantifying it as 6 Gigawatts (GW) of installed renewable capacity, and confirmed that this figure should not be regarded as a cap on development.

- 3.2** The Scottish Ministers expect planning authorities to make positive provision for renewable energy developments by:-

- supporting a diverse range of renewable energy technologies including encouraging the development of growing and new technologies;
- recognising the importance of fully engaging with local communities at all stages of the planning process;
- guiding development to appropriate sites; and
- ensuring that environmental, economic and social benefits are fully exploited.

At the same time, there is a need to:-

- meet international and national statutory obligations to protect designated areas, species and habitats of natural heritage interest and the historic environment from inappropriate forms of development; and
- minimise impacts on local natural heritage, communities, tourism, recreation and aviation interests.

3.3 The Development Plan is the vehicle for the delivery of renewable energy and should identify areas of search for onshore wind farm developments as well as identifying areas where onshore windfarm development would be inappropriate.

3.4 The role of the Development Plan process should be to ensure that an area's renewable energy potential is realised in the context of a long-term and inclusive vision for the future and that proposals are guided to appropriate locations, taking account of other planning priorities. The Development Plan should be used to guide developers to broad areas of search where windfarms are likely to be considered appropriate.

3.5 The Glasgow & the Clyde Valley Joint Structure Plan 2006, and the West Dunbartonshire Local Plan, have developed renewable energy policies in such a manner and therefore are unlikely to require substantial changes as a result of SPP 6. The Kilpatrick Hills are not included within the "areas of search" for windfarms identified in the Structure Plan submitted for approval to Scottish Ministers earlier this year. The West Dunbartonshire Local Plan will be amended to reflect this.

3.6 The Scottish Executive has posed two consultation questions within the draft SPP on which views are sought. The first relates to zones around communities:-

"The Scottish Executive is minded to specify in the finalised policy that "large-scale wind farms" in this context are all wind farm developments over 20 megawatts. Views are sought on whether this is the most appropriate level and what distance from communities would be acceptable for special policies in development plans".

The second relates to micro-renewables:-

"The Scottish Executive is minded to require planning authorities to ensure that certain new developments include on-site renewable energy equipment which will reduce predicted annual CO2 emissions by a given percentage. We would welcome views on adopting 10% as a minimum policy standard; on the developments it should apply to; and the manner of its implementation".

3.7 In relation to the first question, Scottish Ministers would support a separation distance of 3.0km between the edge of a settlement and a large scale wind farm development to take account of noise and visual impact. This distance would appear to be reasonable. Of greater concern would be describing the scale of wind farms in megawatts. A commercial wind turbine used in wind farms is currently in the region of 100m tall. The scale of an individual tower is large. It would therefore be more appropriate to describe the scale of a windfarm in terms of the size of the turbine used and the mass of the development in terms of the number of turbines rather than by megawatts as this would then give a clearer understanding of the size and extent of large scale windfarms.

3.8 The second question relates to integrating micro-renewables into new development. This could include solar panels or photovoltaic panels, micro wind turbines and ground source heat pumps, to generate a renewable source of heat and electricity. The 10% figure is probably low however the principle of integrating micro-renewables into new development would be positive as it would ensure that all new developments contribute to carbon reduction. This would be operated through the Development Management or Building Standards system and be supported by the Development Plan.

4. Personnel Issues

4.1 There are no personnel issues.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 There are no financial implications.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) 6 promotes renewable technologies to achieve carbon reduction and identifies the Council's Development Plan as the mode of delivery. It reinforces the importance placed on the Development Plan by Scottish Ministers as the key method of delivering a transparent strategy for development. The draft SPP supports the approach taken by the Council in preparing its Structure and Local Plans relating to renewable energy.

7. Recommendation

7.1 The Committee is invited to:-

- (a) note the content of this report; and**
- (b) agree that the details set out in paragraphs 3.7 and 3.8 of this report form the basis of this Council's response to the draft SSP.**

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Date: 25 August 2006

Wards Affected: All

Appendix: None

Background Papers: Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) 6 Renewable Energy: Consultation Draft.

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