

# Supporting Renewable Energy Projects:

## Summary of the key steps

September 2011



**Friends of  
the Earth**

### Key steps for supporting a planning application:

1. Assemble sufficient information to assess whether you support the project
2. Reach a decision
3. Get involved in the planning process – start by submitting a letter/statement of support
4. Work to generate broader support in your community – the sky's the limit here on the amount of lobbying and media work you could engage in

### Factors in favour of supporting a proposal:

- ✓ Leads to significant savings in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions when substituted for using fossil fuels
- ✓ Environmental impacts well understood, mostly small scale/local in scope, reversible
- ✓ Careful and transparent approach by developers to community involvement and appraisal of the scheme

### Additional factors which may lead you to support a project:

- ✓ Demonstrable local social/economic benefits (e.g. jobs, use of otherwise redundant sites or buildings, diversification of local economy, support for local supply chains)
- ✓ Project represents a significant step forward in the market or in the technical maturity of the technology
- ✓ Establishes legal or planning precedent
- ✓ Opponents using inaccurate arguments against the project, or clear evidence of obstructive behaviour

#### **Factors against supporting a proposal:**

- ✘ Significant threat to the status of a nationally or internationally designated site or protected species
- ✘ Clear evidence of abuse of planning or legal process by developers
- ✘ Notable failure by developers to involve or show respect for local communities
- ✘ Significant environmental risks, understated or not properly understood, with potential for large-scale, irreversible or unpredictable impacts
- ✘ Risk of the project being a 'Trojan horse' for another form of development that you would not support, e.g. an incinerator
- ✘ Emission savings strongly undercut by other factors (e.g. high transport intensity)

#### **The following factors also deserve consideration but by no means rule out a project:**

- ❖ Proposal would have an impact on a landscape of recognised recreational or amenity value
- ❖ Disruption to other local economic activities
- ❖ Proposal requires ancillary developments, (e.g. strengthening power lines, onshore facilities associated with a marine project, growing energy crops)
- ❖ Potential for cumulative impact, with other renewable projects existing or planned in the area
- ❖ Proposal is at variance with development plan policies for the area

#### **Factors to consider when making your decision:**

- **Conservation and Wildlife:** what does RSPB or the local Wildlife Trust think of the project? Is the development on or near an SSSI site?
- **Landscape and visual impact:** Is the project planned for an Area of Outstanding National Beauty or National Park? What other developments are there in the area?
- **Other issues:** consider construction traffic, noise and aviation, among others.
- **Community benefit:** will there be benefits to local residents?
- Make sure you **visit the site!**

## Supporting a renewable energy project in your area:

- **Submit a statement of support** to the Planning Officer.
- **Lobby local councillors** on the planning committee: write to them and visit them at their surgeries.
- If possible, **speak at the Planning Committee decision meeting**.
- **Build support in the wider community:** letters and petitions.
- **Work with local allies:** other green organisations such as Greenpeace, Wildlife Trust, local businesses.
- **Media work:** press releases to local media, and letters to local newspapers.
- **Public meetings:** attend meetings arranged by the developer to show your support for the project. Consider arranging your own meeting to help widen the level of public support.

### Key resources

Friends of the Earth guide to Supporting Renewable Energy Projects:

[www.foe.co.uk/resource/briefings/supporting\\_renewables.pdf](http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/briefings/supporting_renewables.pdf)

A database of existing and proposed windfarms in the UK: [www.bwea.com/ukwed/index.asp](http://www.bwea.com/ukwed/index.asp)

An interactive map of proposed windfarms: [www.yes2wind.com/locator](http://www.yes2wind.com/locator)

UK-wide planning database: [www.ukplanning.com/ukp/index.htm](http://www.ukplanning.com/ukp/index.htm)

RenewableUK's Action for Renewables Campaign: [www.actionforrenewables.org](http://www.actionforrenewables.org)

"Common concerns about wind power" – a guide produced by the Centre for Sustainable Energy which deals with many of the myths around wind energy:

[www.cse.org.uk/downloads/file/common\\_concerns\\_about\\_wind\\_power.pdf](http://www.cse.org.uk/downloads/file/common_concerns_about_wind_power.pdf)

Planning for Renewable Energy: Practical guide on the implementation of planning policy, produced by the Department for Communities and Local Government:

[www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/planningrenewable](http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/planningrenewable)

A guide to supporting all renewable technologies produced by Yes2Wind:

[www.yes2wind.com/explore/planning-process/](http://www.yes2wind.com/explore/planning-process/)

Various planning tools, produced by the Centre for Sustainable Energy:

[www.planningrenewables.org.uk](http://www.planningrenewables.org.uk)

## Case Study:

### The Pro-Wind Alliance's successful campaign in support of Swinford Windfarm

The Pro-Wind Alliance is a network of individuals and sustainability groups that campaigns in support of wind, specifically windfarm applications in the East Midlands. They count local Transition Town and Friends of the Earth groups among their affiliates. The group has an impressive record of supporting windfarm applications. Of the planning applications that have had final decisions that the Pro-Wind Alliance have supported, 75% have been successful.



#### **Why the Pro-Wind Alliance decided to support this application**

Firstly the site was deemed appropriate, having a viable wind resource. A full environmental impact assessment was prepared, which showed that there were no significant impacts on birds, bats or other wildlife. The group did not believe that the windfarm would be intrusive on the local landscape, as the view of nearby villages was limited by terrain and trees. The site was also located north of the M1 and east of the A14, both of which are busy and noisy roads. The developers also agreed to provide a community fund, so that local residents benefit from having the windfarm in their area.

#### **Supporting the application**

The group produced and distributed a leaflet about the windfarm, as well as putting an appeal for support in the local paper in order to gather support. Local councillors were contacted. A day of action was held and Friends of the Earth put up an online action on the website to help gather support, and emailed supporters in the vicinity.



#### **During the planning process**

The network sent letters in support of the planning application, and also encouraged other people to send in letters, either based on a template they produced or writing their own letter based on the leaflet content. When the time came, representatives from the group attended the planning meeting.



#### **Countering the arguments of the anti**

There was a vocal group of people opposed to the Swinford windfarm; however ProWA managed to successfully counter their arguments. Firstly, the anti-group kept spreading myths which antagonised local residents, and ProWA successfully refuted these through debate and discussion. The network also served as a base for local people who were supportive of the campaign. The anti-group also complained to the Advertising Standards Authority about ProWA – but the complaint was not upheld, gaining ProWA further support.

#### **Media Work**

The group had lots of good coverage in local media, mainly through letters to the local paper. Leading members of the network were also interviewed by local media.