

## **EASY AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**

**DEVELOPMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE : 1 AUGUST 2000**

### **DRAFT REVISION OF NPPG 6: RENEWABLE ENERGY**

#### **Report by Director of Development Services**

#### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.1 The Scottish Executive has forwarded to the Director of Development Services a copy of the consultative draft revision of the National Planning Policy Guideline (NPPG) 6: Renewable Energy. The purpose of this report is to advise the Committee of the contents of the Draft Revision of NPPG 6 : Renewable Energy, indicate the essential differences between the above revised document and the original NPPG 6 and set out the implications of the Draft revision for the general consideration of renewable energy proposals in the context of the East Ayrshire Finalised Local Plan.

1.2 As the Scottish Executive requires a formal response on the draft NPPG by 28 July 2000 the Head of Planning and Building Control has already sent a provisional reply to the Scottish Executive based on the contents of Sections 4 and 6 of this report to be amended as necessary in the light of this Committee's decision.

#### **2. BACKGROUND**

2.1 In August 1994 the Scottish Office published NPPG 6 : Renewable Energy which set out the Governments' policy on developing renewable energy sources against a background of established land use planning and environmental considerations.

2.2 The above NPPG supported the Government's drive towards sustainable development. In this context renewable energy was seen as potentially underpinning development and, as an unlimited resource, contributing to economic need without depleting non-renewable resources like fossil fuels.

2.3 In 1994 the Government introduced the Scottish Renewables Obligation which required Scottish Power and Hydro-Electric to meet target of 150 MW of new grid capacity from the following renewable energy sources by the year 2000:

- wind power
- hydro
- landfill gas from existing sites
- municipal and industrial waste
- energy crops/agricultural and forestry waste

The promotion of renewable sources of energy generation, lie at the heart of the Government's energy policy and have been identified as having a key role in

addressing the problem associated with Climate Change. As part of the Scottish Climate Change Programme, the Scottish Executive proposes to increase renewable energy generation from an expected figure of 12.5% by 2010 to 17.5%. It is proposed that this target will be achieved by the implementation of a new Renewables (Scotland) Obligation Order in relation to grid-linked renewable energy developments. The Government envisages that in the short term most of this additional capacity will be accommodated in the central belt and southern Scotland. In the longer term changes in grid capacity may make areas in the north and west of Scotland more attractive.

2.4 A number of renewable energy developments in Scotland have received planning approval. At December 1999 the most significant of these comprised wind power followed by landfill gas and hydro. 34 out of 40 (ie. 85%) renewable energy developments in Scotland for which planning permission has been sought have been approved, while for wind energy developments only 10 out of 15 proposals have been approved. The Scottish Executive advised that failure to obtain planning permission, particularly for wind farms, has been a contributing factor in limiting the expansion of renewable energy development in Scotland.

2.5 NPPG 6: Renewable Energy (Draft Revision June 2000) is being put forward by the Scottish Executive in accordance with its paper "Making it Work Together – A Programme for Government" (September 1999). This indicated that revised planning guidance on the location of renewable energy developments would be prepared which recognised the planning system's important role in providing a framework for promoting renewable energy development.

### **3. CONTENTS OF DRAFT REVISED NPPG**

3.1 In view of the above findings of the Scottish Executive the draft revised NPPG 6 sets out how the planning system should make a positive provision for renewable energy developments.

3.2 While the NPPG accepts that renewable energy proposals would have some environmental impact, particularly within the rural landscape, it is confident that such proposals could generally be accommodated, without significant adverse effects.

3.3 The NPPG also sees renewable energy developments as being of economic and land use benefit. Such developments could bring brownfield sites in urban and semi-rural areas into beneficial use and could have the potential to support the Scottish Executives' policy to encourage rural development, particularly manufacturing activity to sustain local employment.

In this regard renewable energy developments are not seen as being incompatible with tourism and recreational interests as they may be of tourism interest in their own right.

3.4 The NPPG identifies the individual characteristics of each significant type of renewable energy resource. This is essentially a summary of previous guidance on the planning issues relating to the potential development of these resources contained in NPPG 14: Planning and Natural Heritage, PAN 45: Renewable Energy and PAN 56: Planning and Noise.

3.5 The NPPG sets out what action planning authorities should take in supporting the UK Government's policy for the development of renewable energy. It states that development plans should set out a positive framework guiding developers to locations where renewable energy developments are likely to be permitted and set out criteria, including amenity and environmental standards, against which such proposals would be assessed.

#### **4. PLANNING IMPLICATIONS OF NPPG**

4.1 Annex 1 provides a summarised list of Structure & Local Plan Policies as they relate to renewable energy. Policies EN 10 and EN 11 of the approved Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan set out criteria that should be met by proposals for renewable energy developments. Although designed to conform to the original NPPG 6: Renewable Energy the criteria contained within the above policies also accord with the requirements of the revised document in this respect. The approved Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan takes the view that, in Ayrshire as a whole, the principle of supporting alternative energy supplies should be encouraged where there would be no loss of amenity.

4.2 The Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan and Transportation Committee has formally approved a report by their Manager regarding the draft revised NPPG stating that the Structure Plan is consistent with that document and that renewable energy proposals within Ayrshire would be monitored annually and reported to the above Committee.

4.3 Policies CS7 to CS12 inclusive of the East Ayrshire Finalised Local Plan set out planning provisions relating to renewable energy developments in general, and wind turbine/windfarm developments in particular and include detailed criteria for the assessment of such applications in accordance with the new draft NPPG and the Structure Plan.

4.4 The new draft NPPG gives a greater emphasis than previously on the benefits of stand-alone renewable energy developments particularly with regard to their smaller impact on the environment. This should be taken into account when consideration is being given to proposals of this type within East Ayrshire.

4.5 The reference by the NPPG (see section 3.3 above) of renewable energy developments being of economic and land use benefit may have implications for the possible use of miscellaneous development opportunity sites identified in paragraph 8.12 of the Local Plan as having potential for community facility developments, which could include renewable energy proposals. As these sites are within rural settlements of East Ayrshire such developments could clearly have a role in establishing new and safeguarding existing, local manufacturing activity while minimising environmental impacts through the use of brownfield sites.

4.6 The recognition in the revised NPPG of the potential of some form of renewable energy developments as tourist attractions is provided for in the Local Plan through the Council's support for the development of sustainable tourism in East Ayrshire – Policy TLR 1 – and presumption in favour of tourist related development subject to certain environmental and other criteria – Policy TLR 8.

## **5. LEGAL AND FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 None

## **6. CONCLUSIONS**

6.1 The revised draft NPPG 6 is very similar in content to the original NPPG 6; Renewable Energy of 1994. However, its general tone is that local authorities should be more positive in their consideration of renewable energy proposals with a view to the Scottish Executives' new targets for renewable energy generation set out in Section 2 above being met as part of the Scottish Climate Change Programme. The draft NPPG also places more emphasis on the potential role of renewable energy developments for economic regeneration.

6.2 The policies of the approved Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan and the East Ayrshire Finalised Local Plan accord with the provisions of the draft revised NPPG.

## **7. RECOMMENDATIONS**

7.1 It is recommended that the Committee,

- (i) note the contents of this report and
- (ii) authorise the Head of Planning and Building Control to respond to the Scottish Executive on the contents of the Draft Revised NPPG 6: Renewable Energy in the terms of Section 4 and 6 of this report.

**Stephen Chorley**  
**Director of Development Services**

### **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

1. **National Planning Policy Guidelines (NPPG 6); Renewable Energy (Draft Revision June 2000).**
2. **Report by Manager of Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan and Transportation Committee on NPPG 6 (Draft Revision June 2000) submitted to meeting of that Committee on 30 June 2000.**

JT/IMB  
 20 July 2000

**ANNEX 1****1. SUMMERISED STRUCTURE PLAN POLICIES RELATING TO RENEWABLE ENERGY****E10**

Proposals for renewable energy development shall conform to the structure plan where it can be demonstrated that certain stated criteria can be met.

**E11**

Proposals for wind turbine and windfarm development, including their construction, siting, access and transmission links to the grid shall conform to the structure plan where it can be demonstrated there is no significant adverse effect on certain stated criteria.

When assessing proposals, account will be taken of existing sites with planning permission and the cumulative impact of development proposals.

**2. SUMMARISED EAST AYRSHIRE LOCAL PLAN POLICIES RELATING TO RENEWABLE ENERGY****Policy CS7**

The Council will be supportive of Renewable Energy developments within the Local Plan area. Renewable Energy Projects will, however, only be permitted in Special Protection Areas (SPA's), Special Areas of Conservation, (SAC's), SSSI's and Environmentally Sensitive Areas in certain stated circumstances.

**Policy CS8**

The Council will require all applications for renewable energy developments that fall within the scope of the Environmental Assessment Regulations to be accompanied by an environmental assessment.

All wind farms, wind turbine and other renewable energy developments will be rigorously assessed against a set of defined criteria.

**Policy CS9**

Where a wind turbine is not in operation producing electricity for a continuous period of six months, it will be deemed to be surplus to requirements and must be removed, with the land restored to its original condition.

**Policy CS10**

Where a wind energy development is already operative or has received authorisation from the Council, the Council will presume against any other development in the vicinity of the site which would compromise or inhibit the efficient operation of the development itself.

**Policy CS11**

In determining any proposals for wind farm developments within close proximity to other Council areas, due regard will be taken of any other consents/proposals for similar developments in the neighbouring authority areas concerned. There will be a presumption against any such development which would be located in close proximity to similar development in an adjacent authority area if it would constitute an unacceptable visual intrusion when viewed in conjunction with that development.

**Policy CS12**

All renewable energy proposals other than wind energy developments will be considered on their own merits. All energy production will require to be generated either directly at, or in close proximity to, the source of materials used in the generation process and have minimal effect on the environment.

**Reason for Policies CS7 to 12**

- To ensure that renewable energy developments are sensitively located to have minimal effect on the environmental impact.

JL/IMB  
18 July 2000

NPPG6ANNEX1

**AGENDA**