

A renewable energy policy for the RA (England)

April 2005

The RA recognises the need and supports action to reduce carbon emissions associated with climate change. This includes managing energy demand, increasing measures for energy conservation and increasing the contribution to overall energy supply by renewable energy technologies. We support planning policies which reduce energy demand and which encourage renewable energy development in the right places. We believe that the current financial incentives need change, so that support is moved away from large, on-shore, wind developments to small scale projects.

1. **At locations throughout England where renewable energy technology is viable and the environmental and other impacts can be addressed satisfactorily, such development should be accommodated.**
2. **Environmental safeguards** should:
 - include restrictions on renewable energy development that adversely affects internationally and nationally designated sites or Green Belt. Full consideration must be given to the purposes behind the designation of site, for example the high landscape quality of a national park.
 - seek to reduce the cumulative impacts of renewable energy and include measures to reduce any effects a development might have on a location;
 - recognise the value of the countryside for its own sake.
3. **In determining whether a planning application is reasonable, objective consideration should be given to the benefits of the development and the potential adverse impacts.** Benefits include the reduction in carbon emissions, educational benefits and economic benefits. Potential adverse impacts include damage to the landscape, biodiversity and quiet enjoyment of the countryside.
4. **Planning authorities should set criteria to be applied in assessing applications for planning permission for renewable energy projects.** Planning policies should not rule out or place constraints on particular renewable energy technologies but be based on consideration of the scale of development, its design, setting and any proposed landscaping. .
5. **Community involvement in renewable energy projects** is crucial and opportunities for public discussion of a project should occur before planning applications are submitted.
6. **Development proposals should demonstrate any environmental, economic and social benefits as well as how any environmental and social impacts have been minimised through careful consideration of location, scale, design and other measures.** Proposals will often require an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) the scoping of which should be discussed between developers and local authorities.
7. **Energy generation should be localised as much as possible, including by making the best use of brownfield and industrial sites for renewable energy generation.** This is to improve the efficiency of transmission and reliability of services, and reduce the need for transmission over large distances. Community-based and small-scale development should be actively promoted.
8. **If localised energy generation does not meet demand, the RA supports moves to increase power generated by offshore renewable technologies subject to Environmental Impact Assessment.** As with onshore technologies, measures should be taken to reduce and mitigate the impact of offshore development on the marine environment, seascapes and wildlife, such as birds.
9. **Extensions to the national grid should be through buried networks and there should be a presumption against new overhead powerlines.**