



# Renewable Energy and Local Opportunities

A Guide for Local Authority Planners  
Includes case studies of wind, biomass and solar PV



Department  
of Energy &  
Climate Change



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## Message from Rt Hon Edward Davey Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change

The UK faces an unprecedented energy challenge. We need to move from finite, high-carbon fossil fuels that are driving dangerous climate change, to clean, secure and affordable energy. Local authorities are at the front line in delivering our vision and I believe it is crucial they have a positive strategy to promote the development of renewable energy, in the right places.

The Climate Change Act 2008 commits the UK to at least an 80% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, relative to 1990 levels, and the EU's Renewable Energy Directive requires us to meet 15% of our energy demand (which equates to roughly 30% of total electricity demand) from renewable sources by 2020.

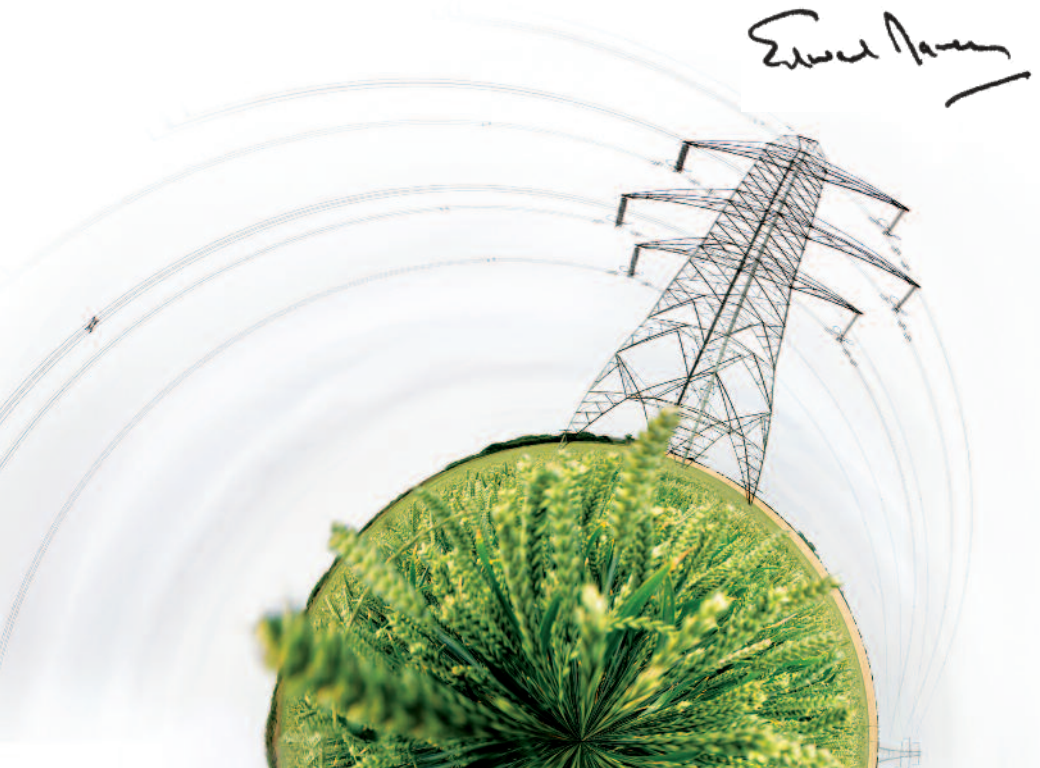
The UK is making good progress towards these targets, with greenhouse gas reductions of around 25% and renewables' share of electricity generation at over 13%. Government is reforming the UK electricity market through an ambitious package of measures to incentivise the investment needed to replace the UK's ageing electricity infrastructure. This will ensure the UK remains a leading destination for investment in low-carbon and renewable electricity.

But we know there are challenges to delivering this agenda, with competing pressures on land resource and genuine concerns in some communities about the siting of developments. That is why it's so important that local authorities have a clear understanding of the impacts and benefits of, and opportunities generated by, renewables - from carbon reduction to local ownership, job creation, tackling fuel poverty and boosting the local economy - and use their local strategic plans to identify areas that are suitable for renewables, as well as keeping an open mind about siting renewables in non-designated areas. We have a strong and up-to-date evidence base about the impact of renewables - including issues such as noise, health and the impact on wildlife - and it is crucial that public opinion, and decisions about the siting of renewables, is based on this evidence.

Local Authorities also have a key role to play in supporting, partnering and investing in community energy projects, including wholly owned and part-owned local renewable energy developments. That is why the Local Government Association and I wrote to local authorities earlier this year to highlight the launch of the UK's first Community Energy Strategy. This includes a new £10 million Urban Community Energy Fund (complementing the £15 million Rural Community Energy Fund launched in July) that provides 'at risk' finance for community energy projects, and a commitment to provide neighbourhood planning advice and support services on community energy. And to help move the country's heat supply onto a more efficient and sustainable footing, the Government's Heat Strategy set out how a new commercial delivery unit will distribute funding to local authorities to investigate heat networks.

The potential benefits for local areas from renewable energy are significant. Since 2010, there has been over 31 billion pounds of investment in large scale renewable energy in the UK with the potential to support around 35,000 jobs. Local authorities that host renewable energy developments keep 100% of the business rates that they generate and developers are increasingly providing innovative and substantial community benefits packages, now worth at least £5,000 per megawatt of installed capacity of onshore wind, per year, in England. This is being used to provide households with money off their energy bills, to pay for energy efficiency initiatives, establish local training projects or to provide communities with a real stake in, and share the profits of energy generation in their local area. We will shortly be publishing a register to showcase the range of benefits on offer to communities.

Your role is critical in helping the UK to move towards a secure, diverse, low carbon energy supply that will keep the lights on and ensure we are world leaders in attracting green jobs and investment. As this brochure shows, there are many fantastic examples of how local authorities are benefiting from having a positive vision and strategy for renewable energy.





Derby Homes solar PV on social housing

# Introduction

This document, produced by Climate UK, follows a series of events in summer 2013 on Renewable Energy and Local Opportunities run by Climate UK and the Department of Energy and Climate Change and supported by the Town and Country Planning Association, Renewable UK and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. The events took place in Chelmsford, Birmingham, Preston and York.

During these events, local authority planners told us the challenges they were facing and what they thought may help. The feedback we received has shaped the content of this short guide whilst also pointing to further information and sources of support.

## This guide briefly outlines:

- The opportunities for local authorities in promoting renewable energy
- Answers to common questions and barriers that local authorities face
- The local authority role with regard to plan making, community leadership and development management
- Local authority case studies from around the country on wind, biomass and solar PV
- Sources of further information and support which contains links to the documents, policies and organisations mentioned throughout this brochure.

# Opportunities

The promotion of renewable energy is not only a vital way of cutting carbon emissions, and ensuring we have a secure and home grown supply of energy, it is also a major opportunity for local authorities and communities to be entrepreneurs in energy generation. This can bring direct financial benefits to the community as well as supporting a strong local energy market in which profits do not 'leak out' to the major suppliers but are reinvested in a modern energy infrastructure. As well as direct financial benefits in terms of profits from supplying energy, there are wider economic gains in jobs and support services which means the delivery of renewable energy should be seen as a mainstream part of the economic future of any locality. Even without direct ownership many of these wider economic benefits will accrue through positive provision of renewables through the planning process.

Recent electricity market reforms will help to support up to £110bn of total investment between now and 2020 and we expect that there will be up to 200,000 jobs in renewable electricity by 2020.

Onshore wind is bringing substantial new economic benefits and job opportunities to the country as a whole and at a local level. Since 2010 DECC has recorded announced investments in onshore wind energy totalling over £3.4bn, with the potential to support around 5,400 jobs.

The development of renewables offers further opportunities for partnership working with neighbouring authorities and other bodies such as Local Enterprise Partnerships. If all of this seems far-fetched it is worth remembering that there is now concerted movement of local authorities in England exploring the re-municipalisation of energy (Association for Public Service Excellence - Energy). In Europe this idea is already main stream with cities such as Munich running their own energy companies which yield around €250 million profits while setting the city on course to be powered 100% from renewable energy sources. More detail on specific benefits for communities can be found in the DECC Community Energy Strategy.

# Key benefits

- ✓ Investment in local economy
- ✓ Community benefits
- ✓ Local projects supported
- ✓ Jobs created – directly and indirectly
- ✓ Demonstrates local leadership
- ✓ Skills development locally
- ✓ Energy security
- ✓ Business rate retention
- ✓ Carbon savings
- ✓ Shows area as forward thinking



Community owned wind turbine - Hockerton - Climate East Midlands

# Common Questions and Answers

The output of the seminar series run in the summer of 2013 identified a number of key concerns about the practical delivery of renewable technologies through planning. Underlying many of these issues were concerns about the diminishing resources in local authorities. This is undoubtedly a major challenge but renewable energy needs to be understood for its positive direct and indirect benefits to local authorities and communities. It can provide long term revenue streams to support service delivery, and is one of the few new revenue streams which local authorities can develop. There were a range of other specific concerns including:

## How can we develop a robust evidence base on renewable energy?

Some key resources already exist such as the renewable energy opportunity and constraint maps prepared for the now revoked Regional Strategies. These are still accessible and provide a useful starting point (Department of Energy and Climate Change, Renewable and Low-carbon Energy Capacity Methodology). Other resources, such as nationwide heat mapping, are available from the Department of Energy and Climate Change. More detailed evidence may be necessary for plan making but joint commissioning of such studies between local authorities can be cost saving and contribute to the evidence for fulfilling the Duty to Cooperate.

## Where can we find authoritative guidance on controversial issues and differing technologies?

There is a mass of information on efficiency and sustainability of different technologies as well as guidance on noise, health issues and other potential impacts such as those on birds. Information is available from trade associations such as RenewableUK and the Renewable Energy Association, but we suggest the best starting point is from Government and NGOs such as the Carbon Trust or the Centre for Sustainable Energy. See the last page of this guide for sources of further information.



## How do we assess technical information on grid connection?

Basic information on grid connection is a vital piece of evidence in plan making because it can represent a major cost constraint on future development. National Grid is the key starting point. They deal with the strategic grid down to substation level.

## How do we gain community and political support?

Gaining support for renewables, particularly for onshore wind, can be challenging. Changing attitudes is partly about an effective communication strategy which can provide evidence to address genuine concerns and challenge the kinds of myths about impacts, costs and efficiency of renewable technologies which have built up in the media. The Department of Energy and Climate Change is developing an 'evidence toolkit' to be published later this year to provide access to robust, up-to-date and accessible evidence on the effects of onshore wind, to aid communities and local decision makers. Ultimately community control of energy is a key way to unlock this debate by showing the kinds of benefits which energy income streams can bring, in support of the kinds of local service people care about (see the Department of Energy and Climate Change Community Energy Strategy).

## How do we navigate the complex changes to planning policy?

There is no doubt that policy for renewable energy in planning is quite complex. It is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework and supplemented by new Planning Practice Guidance for Renewable and Low Carbon Energy. National Policy Statements on renewable energy for energy schemes above 50 megawatts are also relevant, as are EU directives, including the Renewable Energy Directive, which sets targets for renewables deployment. Government is clear in its commitment to the deployment of renewable energy but is also clear that it must be "appropriately sited". Footnote 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework is particularly useful in making clear that planning decisions must be in line with the objectives of the Climate Change Act 2008. This means decisions must reflect the Climate Change Act target of an 80% reduction in carbon emissions by 2050.

# The Local Authority Role

Local authorities have multiple roles in relation to the deployment of renewable energy from procurement to community leadership, to establishing Energy Service Companies. In relation to their planning function there are three important areas:

## Plan making

The development of local plans and supplementary planning guidance provides an arena to ensure the opportunities for renewable energy are maximised, while important environmental assets are protected. Such plans create the opportunity to express a strategic vision for the future of renewable energy, creating greater certainty for communities and investors. This requires us to think about energy as a vital aspect of spatial planning and integrate our knowledge of energy technology with more traditional planning issues. More detail on the development of energy planning can be found in the Planning and Climate Change Coalition Guide (Planning for climate change: guidance for local authorities). It is important to have robust evidence on energy capacity and constraints from the outset of the plan making process, and to ensure policy is aligned with the National Planning Policy Framework. It is also worth reflecting that there is a statutory duty in the 2004 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act for plans to contribute to the mitigation and adaptation of climate change.

The neighbourhood planning system introduced in the Localism Act also offers significant opportunities for local communities to influence the planning and development of their area and such plans could help promote community renewables. Neighbourhood plans will need to meet a number of requirements, including on general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the area and consistency with national policy.

New planning practice guidance for renewable energy, published in July 2013, provides advice on the planning issues associated with the development of renewable energy in England and should be read alongside National Planning Policy Framework.

## Community leadership

The planning process provides a chance to engage communities about the opportunities and impacts of renewable technologies, providing objective information to help inform things like Neighbourhood Plans and Local Plan policy on community renewable schemes. Early positive engagement is vital for building trust, allowing the public to see the opportunities and raise concerns before plan policy is finalised.

## Development management

Individual planning applications, in particular for large scale commercial renewable schemes, can be controversial. Developers have an obligation to ensure they undertake early and meaningful engagement with the community but planning authorities should play a key role in facilitating dialogue and explaining planning policy. Defining a meaningful package of community benefits is key. For example, the onshore wind industry has implemented a new community benefits protocol that will see a fivefold increase in the amount that developers pay to communities. It will mean that, in England, community benefits packages should be worth at least £5,000 per megawatt of installed capacity for communities every year. Ultimately decisions are in the hands of elected members but such decisions must be in line with national and local policy and be based on clear evidence as to the nature of the impact.

## Case studies



# Case Study: Penny Hill Wind Farm

## Key Facts

- 6 Turbines, 132m Tip Height, total capacity 20.4MW
- Location - Near Ulley and the M1
- Local planning authority - Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council
- Developer - Banks Renewables
- Operational since March 2013 with 25 year lifetime plus 2 years for decommissioning
- Provides energy for 12,000 households per annum
- Strong community engagement by developer through the Penny Hill Liaison Committee
- Avoids the release of over 15,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide per year
- Over 500 metres of new hedgerows and new trees planted to enhance local wildlife habitats
- Community development fund in place at a rate of £1000 per MW - generating over £20,000 per year for local projects
- The scheme has also released £50,000 to pump-prime a Warm Zone to tackle fuel poverty across Rotherham.

## Further information

Lewis Stokes, Development Relations Coordinator, Banks Renewables

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Telephone: 0191 378 6100



# Case Study:

## Solar PV at Peterborough City Council

### Key Facts

- Solar PV installed – 2MW on council buildings, 600kW on 12 schools
- Solar PV planned – 1.2MW across 32 schools and 6 additional buildings
- Local authority – Peterborough City Council
- Framework partner – Mears
- Generates long term revenue streams for the council
- Reduces energy consumption by up to 20%
- The PV on Peterborough's own estate avoids the release of over 1,500 tonnes of carbon dioxide per annum
- Creates an OJEU compliant framework that other Local Authorities can access which is cost neutral and includes an insurance backed guarantee
- There is a current pipeline of projects of circa 50MW
- Challenges overcome through the project include mobilising council resources for ongoing monitoring of plant and income collection
- The project contributes to Peterborough's ambitions of being the "Environment Capital"
- Provides long term certainty on energy spend
- The installed portfolio of PV assets could be sold if capital needs to be recycled
- Allows the cross selling of other council initiatives such as energy efficiency and collective switching
- The initiative aligns well with the direction of policy at a national level. In its recently published Solar PV Strategy, DECC announced an initiative to deploy up to 1GW of solar PV across the Government and public sector estates. Alongside this was a further initiative to promote the deployment of solar PV on schools.



### Further information

Charlotte Palmer, Climate Change Manager at Peterborough City Council  
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Telephone: 01733 453538

# Case Study:

## Biomass at Staffordshire County Council

### Key Facts

- Installation of Biomass heating at council owned properties as well as four schools, an outdoor education centre and Cannock Chase Visitor Centre
- Over £200,000 savings for the County Council each year through reduced heating bills and payments through the Renewable Heat Incentive for every kWh used for eligible purposes
- Investments will pay back in eight to ten years
- A reduction of council emissions by 1,100 tonnes per year
- Sustainably sourced wood from Wood Fuel Trading and Consulting – a traded company within Staffordshire County Council
- Support to local supply chain
- Recycles finances within the confines of the county
- Educational value.



*"Biomass heating systems can deliver real carbon savings above other sources of power like oil. We're driving efficiencies, we want to give value for money for the people of Staffordshire. This is an ideal way to practice that. We're saving money for the schools, which means more money for teachers, for books, for things that children need. We are using it in our buildings in a big way, but you know it's a relatively new concept but it's one that we're embracing wholeheartedly and we want to roll it out as quickly as we can."*

Gill Heath, Cabinet Support Member for Environment and Rural Affairs, Staffordshire County Council

### Further information

Email: [climatechange@staffordshire.gov.uk](mailto:climatechange@staffordshire.gov.uk)  
Telephone: 01785 277267



# Case Study: Preston Civic Wind Scheme

## Key Facts

- Proposal for three-turbine wind project
- On Preston City Council land near the Riversway docklands development and the River Ribble
- Consultancy – Hyder Consulting (UK) Ltd
- £12 million proposal
- Potential to generate electricity for 4500 homes
- Wind monitoring currently in progress with 80 metre wind test mast
- In February 2015 wind data will be analysed and if appropriate a full planning application will be submitted
- Public consultation planned including how the sale of energy could be used to help support the local community
- Demonstrates that Preston is committed to renewable energy, reducing carbon emissions, generating jobs and investing in the local community.

*“Moving towards green, renewable energy has to be the way forward and we are pleased to be leading the way and exploring renewable energy options for the benefit of Preston and society as a whole.”*

Robert Boswell, Cabinet Member for Environment and Sustainability, Preston City Council

## Further information

Steve Parkinson, Head of Communications at Preston City Council

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Picture courtesy of the Lancashire Evening Post

# Case Study:

## Keadby Wind Farm

### Key Facts

- 34 turbines, total capacity 68MW
- Location West of Scunthorpe, North Lincolnshire
- Local authority – North Lincolnshire Council
- Developer – Acquired by SSE Renewables in 2001
- Project completion date – Summer 2014
- Largest onshore wind farm in England
- Electricity supply for approximately 57,000 homes
- SSE announced a three fold increase in community benefits package now at £5,000 per MW per year – or £8.6 million over the lifetime of the project – in line with Government’s recent announcement on onshore wind community benefits
- Community fund of £340,000 annually split between the SSE Keadby Wind Farm Community Fund and a new regional fund – the SSE Sustainable Development Fund (North Lincolnshire)
- Local job creation during construction and maintenance phases
- Business rate retention for local authority
- Enhanced habitat for marsh harriers and water voles as part of the site wide conservation management plan.

*“As local Councillors, my colleagues and I have been working hard to ensure that communities affected by the construction of the wind farm are fully aware of the community fund. The fact that SSE has now increased the value of the fund and introduced an element of support for the wider region brings even better news and future benefits for the area and its residents. SSE’s wind farm community fund has the potential to make significant and long-lasting benefits to the people of North Axholme and beyond.”*

Councillor John Briggs, Deputy Leader of North Lincolnshire Council and Ward Member for Axholme North, commented:



*"In June, we announced a package of measures to ensure communities have a greater say and increased benefit from hosting onshore wind. This included a five-fold increase in benefits paid by developers to local people. This increase will come into force towards the end of the year. I'm delighted that SSE has decided to introduce this for the largest onshore wind farm in England, even before the new agreement is officially put in place. Onshore wind will be a key part of our low-carbon energy mix – and this is a really important step in making sure that local communities will actually see and feel the benefits."*

Rt Hon Michael Fallon MP  
Minister of State for Business and Energy and Minister of State for Energy



### **Further information**

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## Summary

This document was produced by Sustainability East on behalf of Climate UK with support from the TCPA.

Climate UK is a not-for-profit Community of Interest Company working with Climate Change Partnerships across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland to help the UK limit climate change and be resilient to its effects. By bringing together local knowledge and technical expertise from a range of sectors we aim to investigate, inform and advise on risks and opportunities presented by climate change and coordinate and support integrated, sustainable and effective responses.

For more information on this publication or if you require the document in an alternative format, please contact Carly Leonard on 01223 781185 or [carlyleonard@sustainabilityeast.org.uk](mailto:carlyleonard@sustainabilityeast.org.uk).

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## Further information and support

Climate Change Act 2008 -  
[www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/27/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/27/contents)

EU Renewable Energy Directive -  
[europa.eu/legislation\\_summaries/energy/renewable\\_energy/en0009\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/energy/renewable_energy/en0009_en.htm)

Department of Energy and Climate Change -  
[www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-of-energy-climate-change](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-of-energy-climate-change)

Heat mapping -  
[www.gov.uk/government/policies/increasing-the-use-of-low-carbon-technologies/supporting-pages/heat-networks](http://www.gov.uk/government/policies/increasing-the-use-of-low-carbon-technologies/supporting-pages/heat-networks)

Community Energy Strategy -  
[www.gov.uk/government/publications/community-energy-strategy](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/community-energy-strategy)

Heat Networks - DECC funding for local authorities -  
[www.gov.uk/government/publications/heat-networks-funding-stream-application-and-guidance-pack](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/heat-networks-funding-stream-application-and-guidance-pack)

National Policy Statements -  
[www.gov.uk/consents-and-planning-applications-for-national-energy-infrastructure-projects](http://www.gov.uk/consents-and-planning-applications-for-national-energy-infrastructure-projects)

Renewable and Low-carbon Energy Capacity Methodology -  
[www.gov.uk/government/news/decc-publishes-methodology-for-renewable-and-low-carbon-capacity-assessment](http://www.gov.uk/government/news/decc-publishes-methodology-for-renewable-and-low-carbon-capacity-assessment)

Department for Communities and Local Government -  
[www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-communities-and-local-government](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-communities-and-local-government)

National Planning Policy Framework -  
[www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework-2](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework-2)

Planning practice guidance for renewable and low carbon energy -  
[www.gov.uk/government/publications/planning-practice-guidance-for-renewable-energy](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/planning-practice-guidance-for-renewable-energy)

Building Research Establishment -  
[www.bre.co.uk](http://www.bre.co.uk)

Carbon Trust -  
[www.carbontrust.com](http://www.carbontrust.com)

Centre for Sustainable Energy -  
[www.cse.org.uk/pages/information/local-authorities](http://www.cse.org.uk/pages/information/local-authorities)

Climate UK -  
[climateuk.net](http://climateuk.net)

Combined Heat and Power Association -  
[www.chpa.co.uk](http://www.chpa.co.uk)

Local Government Association - Climate Local -  
[www.local.gov.uk/the-lga-and-climate-change/-/journal\\_content/56/10180/3574359/ARTICLE](http://www.local.gov.uk/the-lga-and-climate-change/-/journal_content/56/10180/3574359/ARTICLE)

National Grid -  
[www2.nationalgrid.com](http://www2.nationalgrid.com)

Renewable Energy Association -  
[www.r-e-a.net](http://www.r-e-a.net)

RenewableUK -  
[www.renewableuk.com](http://www.renewableuk.com)

Town and Country Planning Association - Planning for climate change: guidance for local authorities  
[www.tcpa.org.uk/pages/planning-for-climate-change-guidance-for-local-authorities-2012.html](http://www.tcpa.org.uk/pages/planning-for-climate-change-guidance-for-local-authorities-2012.html)

Centre for Sustainability Energy -  
[www.cse.org.uk/advice/renewable-energy](http://www.cse.org.uk/advice/renewable-energy)  
[www.cse.org.uk/pdf/common\\_concerns\\_about\\_wind\\_power.pdf](http://www.cse.org.uk/pdf/common_concerns_about_wind_power.pdf)



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Published in May 2014