

REF

RENEWABLE ENERGY FOUNDATION

Press Release

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REF COMMENTS ON PROPOSED WIND POWER REFORMS

Ahead of a Westminster Hall debate called by Andrea Leadsom MP to consider onshore wind policy, Mr Hendry, Minister of State for Energy, has today announced a variety of changes to onshore-wind power policy.

The Renewable Energy Foundation (REF) believes that while Mr Hendry's remarks appear to be well-intentioned, they contain a number of dangerous misconceptions.

1. Planning and Harm to Amenity

Contrary to Mr Hendry's statement, the planning system does not safeguard local communities from amenity damage resulting from unsustainable development. Instances of this failure are well known.

For example, the Cornwall Light and Power turbine at Whittlesey is within 200m of dwellings, and neighbours have been subjected to excessive noise as well as dangerous ice throw from the blades.

Furthermore, the Government wind farm noise guidance is nearly 15 years old and is widely known to be scientifically inaccurate.

Astonishingly, the guidance itself acknowledges that the recommended noise levels exceed the levels required to protect neighbours' amenity.

Government research has confirmed that the night time noise levels can result in wind farm neighbours having problems with sleep. In spite of this, it has been endorsed by the Coalition Government's draft of the new National Policy Statements.

Dr Lee Moroney, Planning Director for REF said: "Much local objection to wind power is quite correctly focused on the high likelihood of unacceptable noise from on-shore wind power applications too close to dwellings. The government could flush these unsustainable applications out of the system by revising the noise guidance to protect amenity."

2. Subsidy and Costs of Wind Power

Mr Hendry states that "wind energy's costs are in the construction and maintenance alone as the resource itself is free". This is misleading since it glosses over the costs of subsidizing wind power (The Renewables Obligation

currently costs the consumer £1.5bn a year, roughly half of which goes to wind). This figure is expected to rise to over £5bn a year in 2020.

It is quite misleading of Mr Hendry to write that without onshore wind our bills would have to be higher. Indeed, without the Renewables Obligation subsidy to on-shore wind all our bills, domestic and industrial, would be a lot lower and the prospects for economic recovery that much better.

Dr John Constable, REF's Director of Policy and Research said: "The government needs to face the facts: the Renewables Obligation is enormously costly to the consumer, and is delivering high profits to developers even for underperforming and environmentally damaging on-shore wind."

3. Subsidy Profit and Community Payments

In spite of public subsidies amounting to around £1.5 billion per annum, recipients such as wind farm operators are not required to divulge the costs involved in building a windfarm.

It is probable that the existing subsidies are resulting in some developers enjoying substantial profits in excess of need.

Government should not only review the levels of public subsidy but also make it mandatory that public subsidies are only paid if evidence of capital cost is provided and put into the public domain.

The lack of transparency about earnings and costs disadvantages local communities when developers offer financial inducements to encourage acceptance of a wind farm. Where local communities have accepted payments from wind farm generators, these payments have been small in comparison to profits and unlikely to compensate for loss of amenity, particularly for those neighbours closest to the wind farms.

Dr Lee Moroney, REF's Director of Planning said "There is nothing sustainable or localist about bribing local communities to accept significant amenity loss, and the fact that the bribes would be a tiny fraction of the total subsidy profits just adds insult to injury."

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For more information please email Margareta Stanley on press@ref.org.uk or telephone 020 79303636

Notes to Editors

- 1) The full statement by Mr Hendry can be found at http://www.decc.gov.uk/en/content/cms/news/hendry_onshore/hendry_onshore.aspx
- 2) The Renewable Energy Foundation is a registered charity promoting sustainable development for the benefit of the public by means of

energy conservation and the use of renewable energy. See www.ref.org.uk.

REF is supported by private donation and has no political affiliation or corporate membership. In pursuit of its principal goals REF highlights the need for an overall energy policy that is balanced, ecologically sensitive, and effective.

REF makes freely available the most comprehensive database of renewable energy generator performance in the United Kingdom: <http://www.ref.org.uk/roc-generators/>