

REF

RENEWABLE ENERGY FOUNDATION

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Press Release

In Spite of Opposition, 70% of Onshore Wind Farm Applications are Approved

In an address to a Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI East Anglia) conference in Ipswich on Friday the 10th of February,[1] Dr John Constable, Director of Renewable Energy Foundation (REF, a UK charity publishing data on the energy sector [2]) told attendees that analysis of the government's own data[3] showed that contrary to widespread belief, the wind industry was not being significantly obstructed by planning objections.

Dr Constable showed that for every 1 MW (megawatt) of onshore wind capacity that is rejected by the planning system, 2 MWs were approved, and that 70% of applications for onshore wind receive consent.

In total, 10 GWs of onshore wind capacity (approximately 5,000 wind turbines) has already been approved by the system, and only 5 GWs rejected.

However, Dr Constable noted that of the 10 GWs of onshore wind that had been consented, only 4 GWs had actually been built, suggesting that the industry was facing other obstacles than planning, such as grid connection, radar, and, most importantly, finance.

A further 7 GWs of onshore wind is currently in the planning system. If current approval rates continue, and all that is currently consented is actually built, the UK would have 14 GW of onshore wind (approximately 7,000 wind turbines), which is as much as is currently contemplated by government for 2020.

Dr John Constable, Director of REF, said:

"The government's own data shows that in spite of unpopularity and known problems, such as noise, the wind industry is in fact having an easy time in planning, with the vast majority of schemes being forced on unwilling local populations."

Dr Constable continued:

"Very high subsidy levels have resulted in an overheated market and a rush of development that is inappropriate and environmentally damaging, as well as being extremely expensive for the consumer. Unfortunately, by putting targets before people, government is creating a powerful backlash against renewable energy. No wonder that last week over 100 MPs wrote to the Prime Minister to ask that these subsidies be reduced, and environmental protection in the planning system strengthened so that communities can defend themselves against predatory renewables development."

For further information contact 020 7930 3636; or 07867 592 085; or email research@ref.org.uk

Notes for Editors

[1] Further information, and a copy of Dr Constable's slides, can be found at: <http://www.rtpi.org.uk/item/5066/23/5/3>

[2] The Renewable Energy Foundation is a registered charity (1107360) promoting sustainable development for the benefit of the public by means of energy conservation and the use of renewable energy. REF is supported by private donation and has no political affiliation or corporate membership. For more information see: www.ref.org.uk

[3] REF's analysis is based on raw data from the Department of Energy and Climate Change's REStats database: <https://restats.decc.gov.uk/cms/planning-database>

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