•EDINBVRGH•
THE CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL

Item no 12
Report no PC/049/06-07/CD

Consultation on Draft Scottish Planning Policy 6: Renewable Energy

Planning Committee
5 October 2006

1 Purpose of report

1.1 Central to the Council's vision for this city region is the principle of sustainable development. The Scottish Executive sees the planning process as having a critical role in achieving this and has published a draft SPP on renewable energy.

1.2 The purpose of this report is to allow the Committee to consider Scottish Planning Policy 6 Renewable Energy: Consultation Draft, and to agree the Council's response to the Scottish Executive.

2 Summary

2.1 The Scottish Executive has invited views on a new draft national planning policy on renewable energy, which when finalised will replace the policy on renewable energies contained in NPPG 6 – Renewable Energy Developments. The summary of draft SPP6 is provided as an appendix.

2.2 Much of draft SPP6 is concerned with the achievement of national 2020 targets for renewable energy electricity generation (40%), for which a major contribution will be provided in the short term by wind farms.

2.3 This report summarises the key changes to national policy regarding renewable energy development in relation to the impact on this Council's area.

3 Main report

Background

3.1 SPP6 – Renewable Energy: Consultation Draft was published on 10 July 2006 and comments are invited by 6 October 2006. The Scottish Executive has agreed a short extension of the deadline to enable the Council's response to be considered on this agenda. Once finalised, SPP6 will replace National Planning Policy Guidance 6: Renewable Energy Developments.

3.2 The Scottish Executive continues to expect local authorities to contribute to the aim of realising Scotland's very large renewable energy potential while safeguarding the environment and engaging with communities. Scotland's national priorities are to generate 18% of electricity from renewable sources by 2010 and 40% by 2020. Currently, the consented capacity of renewable energy developments is enough to meet the 2010 target. This SPP is intended to facilitate the achievement of the 2020 target. In the short term, a major contributor to this target will be wind farms. Scottish Ministers are also keen to see a major increase in the production of heat and electricity from small scale domestic developments (micro wind turbines, woodchip boilers, heat pumps, and solar heating) and small to medium scale biomass plants for businesses, public buildings and community/housing schemes.

Locational Considerations for Wind Farms

3.3 This SPP is for the main part concerned with the siting of wind farm developments. It indicates that these developments will not be considered acceptable 1.5km from the edge of towns or villages or where they would have an unacceptable impact on any environmentally sensitive designation (including Green Belt, Area of Great Landscape Value, Pentlands Regional Park, Countryside Areas, and the site of and setting of Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas). In effect, this excludes wind farms from this Council's area. As a result, much of the SPP is not relevant to the Council. However, there may be scope for wind farm development in adjoining Council Areas.

Local Contributions

3.4 SPP6 introduces a requirement to identify 'local contributions'. Planning Authorities should use the development plan to asses the potential development opportunities for renewable energy, including wind farms, energy from waste and offshore resources (wind, wave or tidal) when they come onshore, but exclude micro-renewables. This potential 'local contribution' should be quantified in mega watts.

3.5 In the Council area, it is unlikely that any local contribution can be calculated for wind farms or offshore resources. However, in the future there may be the potential for energy from waste or pyrolysis. The National Waste Plan 2003 indicates the need for a review of the Lothian and Borders Area Waste Plan by 2007. This review will consider energy from waste as part of the Best Practicable Environmental Option (BPEO). If agreed, this would give rise to the need for sites for development as 'energy from waste' power stations. Land at Seafield has been identified in the Leith Docks Development Framework as an option to be evaluated for this, due to its rail access, location in an established industrial area, and proximity to major development which allows the possibility of combined heat and power. The Scottish Executive is also consulting on draft SPP10 – Planning for Waste Management, where energy from waste is discussed in paragraphs 34-36. A report on draft SPP10 can be found elsewhere on this agenda.

Micro-renewables

3.6 Draft SPP6 also proposes new policy on micro-renewables. Definitions and planning advice on current micro-renewables is presented in the recently published Scottish Executive's new annex to Planning Advice Note 45 Renewable Energy Technologies on Planning for Micro-renewables. Described are micro wind, solar, heat pumps and biomass technologies. This annex is provided as a background paper.

3.7 Permitted development rights, currently under review by the Scottish Executive, allow some micro-renewables to be developed without planning consent. Encouragement of micro-renewables is supported by the Council in appropriate locations and is reflected in recently adopted Edinburgh local plans and draft Edinburgh City Local Plan policy.

3.8 The draft SPP suggests that planning authorities require certain new developments include on-site renewable energy equipment which will reduce predicted annual CO_2 emissions by a given percentage (suggested at 10%). The Scottish Executive asks for views on adopting 10% as a minimum policy standard; on the developments it should apply to; and the manner of its implementation.

3.9 The Edinburgh Standards for Sustainable Building addresses this issue and a report on the standards can be found elsewhere in this agenda. In the Standards, developments over a certain threshold are subject to a 10% requirement for on-site renewable energy generation, on top of a requirement for a high level of energy efficiency. Carbon neutral developments or higher on-site generation is to be encouraged, but a standard set at the limits above will allow developer confidence and a reasonable starting point for proposals. The Standards also propose a 20% threshold in areas of major change developments over 2000sq m or 20 units.

3.10 *Consultation Question: The Scottish Executive is minded to require planning authorities to ensure that certain new developments include on-site renewable energy equipment which will reduce predicted annual CO_2 emissions by a given percentage. We would welcome views on adopting 10% as a minimum policy standard; on the developments it should apply to; and the manner of its implementation.*

3.11 Council Response: The Council supports this requirement which is consistent with its intended policy for on-site renewable energy equipment as set out in full in the Edinburgh Standards for Sustainable Building, supporting a 10% minimum and setting out thresholds for certain developments. This includes a 20% threshold for certain major developments.

Implications for Planning and Strategy in Edinburgh

3.12 Sustainable development is at the core of the Council's statutory development plans. For example, it is a cross cutting theme in the emerging City Local Plan. Standards will set out the requirements for sustainable building design.

3.13 Once the draft SPP is finalised, the development plan will require updating to reflect its policies. The Edinburgh Standards for Sustainable Building will provide a material consideration for which on-site renewable energy generation on new development can be fixed. The finalisation of the Edinburgh City Local Plan can accommodate any provisions of a finalised SPP and the Rural West Edinburgh Local Plan area policy can be reviewed in due course.

3.14 For development quality, there is likely to be a requirement for specialised advice to ensure on-site renewable requirements are implemented by providing pre-application advice and assessing application proposals. This additional resource would need to be acknowledged in the finalised SPP, as a further constraint on planning authority resources.

4 Financial Implications

4.1 None at present, although a finalised SPP could have resource implications in the future (see para above). The requirement to assess applications for on-site renewable energy generation would require specialist advice. This would impact on staffing levels.

5 Conclusions

5.1 Although Edinburgh may not be able to contribute to national targets through large scale renewables, the combined generation of the Council area's potential for micro-renewables particularly in new developments is significant. The provisions within the draft SPP6 set a supportive national priority for renewables, micro-renewables and on-site generation to limit CO_2 emissions and achieve 2020 targets. The Council has prepared a standard similar to that proposed by the Scottish Executive. Further details on this can be found on the report on Edinburgh Standards for Sustainable Building.

6 Recommendations

6.1 It is recommended that the Committee notes the key elements of revised renewable energy policy contained in SPP6 and agrees that this report be forwarded to the Scottish Executive as The City of Edinburgh Council's response, together with the Council's 'Edinburgh Standards for Sustainable Building in the form in which they are approved.

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Appendices Appendix 1 - Summary of SPP6

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Wards affected All

Background Papers

1. Scottish Planning Policy SPP6 Renewable Energy: Consultation Draft, Scottish Executive, July 2006.
2. Planning for micro renewables, Annex to PAN 45 Renewable Energy Technologies, Scottish Executive, 2006.
3. Edinburgh Standards for Sustainable Buildings: Report to the Planning Committee, 5 October 2006.

AE/FK/PLANCOM/SPP6 Renewable Energy
27 September 2006

Appendix 1

SUMMARY

The Scottish Ministers have set a target of generating 40% (since quantified as 6GW) of Scotland's electricity from renewable sources by 2020 and this is by no means a cap. The importance of using clean and sustainable energy from renewable sources will continue to increase as a result of the need to tackle climate change and ensure secure and diverse energy supplies.

The Scottish Ministers will continue to support the full range of renewable generation technologies, including micro-renewables, to enable Scotland to realise its considerable renewable energy potential.

The planning framework set out in this SPP will help ensure the delivery of renewable energy targets as well as facilitating the development of a viable renewables industry in Scotland. The development of existing and new technologies has the potential to provide significant opportunities for Scotland to enhance its manufacturing capacity with associated economic and employment benefits. Such benefits, which may accrue both locally or nationally, should be fully taken into account when considering planning applications.

This SPP sets out how the planning system should manage the process of encouraging, approving and implementing renewable energy proposals when preparing development plans and determining planning applications. Planning authorities should use the development plan process to support the continuing growth of all renewable technologies by guiding developments to appropriate locations. In particular, plans should be used to identify those areas likely to be suitable for wind farm developments.

Planning authorities should also use the development plan process to quantify the potential of their areas to accommodate renewable energy developments taking account of the issues set out in this SPP. An area's potential to accommodate renewable energy developments should be expressed as a local contribution and be quantified in megawatts.

Existing legislative powers, and those proposed in the Planning Bill, will ensure that local policies take account of this SPP.