



The countryside charity
Norfolk

CPRE Norfolk Position Statement **Onshore wind turbines**

We think that the gold standard for onshore renewable energy done well means community energy - renewable energy projects proposed, designed, and owned by local people. We know that the climate emergency threatens to damage many of our most loved landscapes and ecosystems. Places that are precious to us all, including the Broads, the north Norfolk coast and the wildlife-packed Brecks, could all be changed irreparably as our climate shifts.

We need to act fast to cut our greenhouse gas emissions, and to do that we need more low-carbon renewable energy. We want to see these new renewable energy projects done well, in a way that minimises impacts on landscapes, and makes sure that the rural communities who host wind turbines or solar farms get to keep the money these schemes generate.

Onshore Wind Turbines

- The environmental objective of developing renewable energy through wind turbines should not come at the expense of the beauty, character and tranquillity of Norfolk's countryside, especially when much larger installations can be built offshore which do not have the same negative landscape impacts (see the separate [position statement for offshore energy and associated onshore works](#)), yet have much greater capacities for power generation.
- Wind turbines are capable of altering the look of a landscape over a very large area of countryside. Modern commercial wind turbines are large industrial structures - mostly 125 metres or more in height (to blade tip). They dwarf all other landscape features - even Norwich Cathedral spire only reaches 96 metres and most Norfolk churches have towers that are around 20 metres tall. A mature oak tree has an average height somewhere between 15 and 25 metres. Therefore, wind turbines have the potential to become the dominant feature in a landscape. 'Zones of visual intrusion' maps relating to wind turbines often show an impact over an area delineated by a 20km radius centred on a turbine site.
- Aside from visual intrusion wind turbines can produce a number of other detrimental side effects: noise, shadow flicker and light pollution. The MOD may require tall structures to be lit by navigation lights and these lights have a very negative impact when introduced into previously dark rural landscapes.
- Wind turbine developments are accompanied by a considerable amount of supporting infrastructure including new access roads, buildings and the need for a grid connection and pylons (see separate statement). This infrastructure has a significant impact on landscape character.
- In an attempt to minimise the noise problems associated with turbines developers often seek sites in very rural locations. Such areas are becoming increasingly rare in our small densely populated island and should be protected from the kind of disturbance produced by wind turbines.

- There are also concerns about the potential threat that turbines pose to bird and bat populations especially in areas that contain Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

What CPRE Norfolk is campaigning for:

- Greater weight for local landscape issues. Renewable energy targets should not be allowed to override concerns about the damage onshore wind turbines can do to the landscape.
- Stronger local landscape policies in Local Plans: It is of course important to protect conservation areas, Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty from the negative impact of wind turbines. But the majority of Norfolk is undesignated landscape and it is here that most people enjoy their countryside as they walk the footpath network or cycle along by-roads. Much of this so called 'ordinary' countryside is very attractive and tranquil and equally deserving of protection from visual domination by tall industrial structures. Local Planning Authorities need to include strong local landscape policies in their local plans.

The way forward must not involve a return to a subsidised system in which developers and landowners make large sums of money from "planting" groups of tall turbines in fields dotted around Norfolk at the expense of the landscape. This approach caused much distress and opposition. It should allow communities to own and operate their own smaller turbines (less than 40 metres in height) – possibly one per village. If practical these turbines would be de-coupled from the national grid with the energy they produce used locally. If de-coupling is not feasible the monetary value of all the energy produced should be made available for use by the community. This method of production could lead to many small turbines, in terms of their aggregated output, contributing a greater amount of renewable energy than could ever be achieved by a return to the old divisive system.

Ultimately the choice on whether wind turbines are acceptable must rest with the local community and CPRE Norfolk fully supports the footnote in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which says that: *"a proposed wind energy development involving one or more turbines should not be considered acceptable unless it is in an area identified as suitable for wind energy development in the development plan; and, following consultation, it can be demonstrated that the planning impacts identified by the affected local community have been fully addressed and the proposal has their backing."*

April 2021

This position statement is extracted from
['Onshore wind turbines, solar farms and pylons - Position Statement'](#)