

Trudi Elliott
Chief Executive
The Royal Town Planning Institute
41 Botolph Lane
London EC3R 8DL

Sent via email: trudi.elliott@rtpi.org.uk

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Dear Ms Elliott,

Onshore Wind Projects – Recoveries and Call Ins

We the undersigned are writing this open letter to you as concerned members of the RTPI, involved in the wind energy industry in the UK. As you may be aware, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government has continued recovering wind energy appeals and calling in planning applications for wind energy. This is bringing a halt to onshore wind development in England, a programme of work which is judged a National Infrastructure Plan Top 40 priority investment by Infrastructure UK. Wind energy is also vital in increasing our energy independence while helping us to meet our climate change objectives and decarbonising the economy.

Since the Summer of 2013, 47 projects have been recovered by the Secretary of State. Additionally, three more projects have been called in and another two are currently under a holding direction while they are being considered for call in. One of these projects was returned to the local authority for a decision, and was approved in October 2014. Therefore a total of 52 projects have been subject to intervention and delay.

The total capacity of these 52 projects is 528MW. Their investment value is estimated at over £590m, with a GVA to the UK of over £143m and supporting more than 2,190 jobs. This investment is now at significant risk because of the Secretary of State's decision to determine these projects. So far, 24 projects have been decided by the Secretary of State. Of these, he has refused 88% to date. Seven of the 21 refused projects have been dismissed against an Inspector's recommendation to approve them.

Despite the fact that there is now clear and rigorous national planning guidance on renewable energy developments and sufficient ministerial determinations have been made to inform the application of this guidance for renewable energy, the Secretary of State took the decision to extend his recovery powers, which he had taken for a temporary six month period.

The Secretary of State told Parliament that in exercising this power, his decision '[did] not mean that all renewable energy appeals [would] be recovered'. However, more than 85% of wind energy capacity has been recovered from the Planning Inspectorate. Therefore, a very significant majority of wind energy capacity has been taken out of the control of qualified professionals. At the same time, the five projects which have been issued with a holding direction, or called in from local authorities, have all had a majority vote to approve them, at local level.

In our view, the level of intervention by the Secretary of State in planning for wind energy projects is excessive. The decisions to recover wind energy appeals and call in planning applications go against the principles of the planning system and, in the case of project call ins, against localism. We believe that these decision-making powers should be handed back to the planning profession where they belong.

It is essential that we have a stable, timely and transparent consenting process for infrastructure development in order to give investors and developers the necessary confidence to bring forward the vital investments at lowest cost. The continued use of this recovery power will stall onshore wind development and undermine investor confidence across the wider energy community, while eroding the credibility of the planning system throughout the entire infrastructure sector. But more pertinently, these actions slowly erode the credibility of our planning system and undermine investor and developer confidence amongst all parts of our infrastructure system.

As professional members of the RTPI, we are writing to you to ask our Institute to plan an active role in this debate and to more forcefully defend the planning system and the livelihoods of your professional members. Organisations as diverse as the CBI and CPRE have spoken out against current planning interventions, while our professional planning body has remained silent.

As a first step we would welcome a meeting between RTPI and a delegation of those of us signing this letter, which RenewableUK has offered to coordinate.

Yours sincerely,

Yana Bosseva
Planning Advisor
RenewableUK

Justin Reid
Project Manager
EnergieKontor

Gemma Grimes
Director of Onshore Renewables
RenewableUK

Laura Dixon
Project Manager
EnergieKontor

Adrian French
Head of Planning & Development
AGR Renewables

Richard Hind
Project Manager & Acquisitions
EnergieKontor

David Morris
Development Manager
Coriolis Energy

Andrew Smith
Development Manager
Force 9 Energy Partners LLP

Faith Folley
Associate Director
DPP LPP

Stuart Winter
Associate Director – Planning and
Development
JLL

Tim Wheeler
Onshore Wind Development Manager
EDF Energy Renewables

Donald Watt
Director
Kendall Watt Limited

Darren Cuming
Onshore Wind Development Manager
EDF Energy Renewables

Chris Peachey
Planning Consultant
LDA Design

Grant Folley
Onshore Wind Development Manager
EDF Energy Renewables

Martin Hooker
Planning Consultant
Martin Hooker

Will Martin
Project Manager
EnergieKontor

Gavin Shirley
Project Manager
Natural Power

Michael Briggs
Project Manager
EnergieKontor

Euan Hutchinson
Principal Consultant
Natural Power

Owen Saward
Development Manager
REG Windpower

Matt Olley
Development Manager
REG Windpower

Cheryl Hiles
Director of Sustainable Energy Delivery
Regen SW

Dr Richard Frost
Director of Energy & Planning
Savills

Cliff Lane
Director of Planning
Savills

Catherine Sibley
Principal Project Manager
ScottishPower Renewables

Mhari Kennedy
Assistant Project Manager
ScottishPower Renewables

Colin Innes
Partner, Planning and environment
Shapher and Wedderburn LLP

Peter Stephenson
Director
Stephenson Halliday

Louise Leyland
Senior Environmental Planner
Stephenson Halliday

Mary Campbell
Planning Director
Stephenson Halliday

Sue Hudson
Independent Consultant
Sue Hudson Planning

David Anders
Planning Manager
TCI Renewables

Dan Grierson
Planning Director
The Energy Workshop

Chris Haggon
Consultant
TNEI Services

Andy Edgar
Director
TNEI Services

Colin Lavety
Lead Consultant and Manager
TNEI Services

Niall Kelly
Consultant
TNEI Services

Liz Russell
Assistant Consultant
TNEI Services

Rachel Allum
Senior Consultant
TNEI Services

Steve Salt
Planning and Public Affairs Director
West Coast Energy

John McGarry
Project Development Manager
West Coast Energy