

Appendix 1
Commentary on recent reports in and to the UK Parliament
and the Scottish Parliament

1. It is important to place wind energy in its place in the array of potential sources of energy which are being put forward as potential means of solving the world-wide issues that have been identified. A 2004 report by the House of Lords Science and Technology Committee pointed to the difficulties in meeting some of the targets due to the fact that some of the technologies that are required are not sufficiently far advanced to be able to make a major contribution during the initial period up to 2010 and indeed after that in the medium term.

2. The House of Lords Committee concluded:

“3.19 The Government’s projections show that the bulk of the new renewable generating capacity between now and 2010 is expected to be in the form of wind energy, both onshore and offshore. In practice there appears to be little alternative. The United Kingdom has a huge potential wind resource and the technology for converting wind energy to electricity, at least onshore, is mature and reliable.”

“3.64 The relative maturity of wind generating technology, and the scope for expansion given the United Kingdom’s favourable wind profile, mean that it already has the potential to make a major contribution to renewable energy development.”

“ 4.12 Achieving development on the scale envisaged by the Government represents a huge task for the wind energy industry. Onshore, we have little doubt that it is technically and physically possible to manufacture and install sufficient numbers of wind turbines to meet the Government’s targets. The constraints on onshore development are not primarily technical, but environmental.”

“4.13 The White Paper describes offshore wind power as ‘about to

take off". In spite of the Danish experience, we are less sanguine. Offshore development is still largely a step into the unknown and potential investors face serious technological and commercial risks. The next few years will be crucial, and it remains to be seen whether offshore wind power can fulfil the vital role assigned to it within the Government's energy strategy."

3. The House of Commons Select Committee on Environmental Audit also reported in 2004 on the achievement of targets for environmental objectives. It found that:

"20. The other main plank of the Government's policy is to promote renewable energy. Yet it is increasingly clear that the Renewables Obligation will not provide sufficient stimulus to technologies other than wind power, and that without this there is little chance that the 10.4% renewables target can be achieved by 2010. We have updated the graph that we have produced for the last two years, and it shows no evidence of a step change in deployment so far..."

"21. Recent data supports our contention that the Climate Change Strategy is seriously off course. The policy instruments that the Government has put in place have yet to make a significant impact on the UK carbon emissions trajectory. The Government's latest forecasts indicate that carbon emissions will fall to only around 140MtC by 2010 - some 8 MtC more than the target. This carbon gap could be much greater if the policy instruments in place and planned fail to deliver the reductions envisaged."

4. The Enterprise and Culture Committee of the Scottish Parliament reported in 2004 on Renewable Energy in Scotland, and found that while the Executive is expected to meet its 18% target for 2010, this will be almost entirely due to the contribution from onshore wind.
5. A report by the National Audit Office was published in February 2005. The NAO is independent of Government and it has a statutory remit to

report to Parliament on the economics, efficiency and effectiveness of use of resources by departments and other bodies. This report is into the Department of Trade and Industry's involvement in Renewable Energy. The Executive Summary updates the House of Lords Committee Report referred to above (3.3.4) which indicated that against the Government targets of 10% of electricity generation from renewables by 2010, only 7.5% might be achieved on current forecasts. The NAO assessment is based on studies commissioned by OXERA who have a long experience in renewable energy development in the UK and who indicate that a 9.9% figure might be achieved, of which 3% would be onshore wind and 3% offshore wind. It identified the key factors for achieving this and the future success of the renewables sector.

6. At Paragraph 9 of the Summary it identified in particular the need for a step change in the delivery of renewable energy developments if the targets are to be met, because an ineffective or delayed response could jeopardise target achievement. Of the five key factors it identified as needing to be addressed, the first was that the planning system can pose difficulties for renewable developers. It noted that the revisions to the Scottish Guidance in 2001 had already contributed to a large increase in onshore wind developments and that the ODPM had issued "similar" guidance in England, requiring LPAs to give due consideration to regional and national renewable energy targets when considering applications. Clearly the 9.9% is predicated on the basis that PPS22 will be deployed to produce a favourable planning regime, since the system needs to deliver in the next five years three times as many consents in terms of installed capacity as the system has managed to deliver in the previous 15 years – amounting to an annual commitment of around nine times the previous rate of installation. The crucial point about the installation rate is of course the time it takes to bring a scheme forward. There remain just five years to the next milestone in terms of the national targets if one is looking at entirely new schemes coming forward in the planning process. It must also be remembered that the so-called targets are in fact minima to be exceeded where possible and to be revised upwards even if met (see

PPS22).

7. Also in 2005, there was the publication of a report by the Sustainable Development Commission, entitled Wind Power in the UK. This is a body set up in 2000 to provide advice direct to the Prime Minister on a range of issues relating to sustainable development. It notes that the impact of climate change on the landscape will be radical and that the effects of wind farm development need to be considered in that context. It reinforces the position of onshore wind power as one of the cheapest forms of renewable energy currently available. It goes on to deal with many of the myths surrounding wind energy including the payback time for the energy needed to produce the wind turbines in the first place, and the proportion of the year when they will be generating electricity. It looks at the way in which wind energy can be accommodated satisfactorily into our grid system and maintains that this is essentially a cost issue for the industry rather than purely a technical one. Finally it looks at the issue of public perception not just in the UK but abroad and found that in the three main developers in the EU (Spain, Germany and Denmark) the levels of support for wind energy were consistently above the two thirds level.