

**DAVID BELL
PLANNING**
CHARTERED TOWN PLANNERS



National Planning Policy Review

Response to NPF4 'Call for Ideas'

April 2020

on behalf of

Statkraft UK Ltd

Contents

1. Introduction	4
1.1 Background	4
1.2 The Renewable Energy Policy Background	4
1.3 Reluctance of Decision Makers to engage with the Climate Emergency & Net Zero	7
1.4 The Presumption in Favour.....	9
2. Policy Review & Additional Recommendations	10
2.1 Current Problems and Suggested New Policy Approaches – Onshore Wind	10
2.2 Conclusions	18

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 David Bell Planning Ltd (DBP) has been instructed by Statkraft UK Ltd to undertake a review of national planning policy matters with regard to onshore wind in the context of the Scottish Government’s early engagement on National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) ‘Call for Ideas’.
- 1.1.2 Given the current review of national planning policy in Scotland there is a need and opportunity to help shape new policy and guidance and this early engagement is welcomed by Statkraft.
- 1.1.3 The outcome of the national policy review is going to be very important in that it will provide the new planning policy framework for onshore wind over the next 10 years and will look out to 2050.
- 1.1.4 The Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 provides for NPF4 which will incorporate Scottish Planning Policy (SPP). The status of NPF4 is to be elevated from a material consideration to part of the statutory “Development Plan” (together with the relevant Local Development Plan) increasing its importance.
- 1.1.5 Given NPF4 will incorporate the new renewables and onshore wind policy for Scotland, it is considered important by Statkraft to have early engagement in the NPF4 review process. Whilst it is recognised that Scottish Renewables will be making submissions, this representation sets out Statkraft’s view of current key issues with national planning policy and opportunities for change. This paper is intended to inform the preparation of the draft NPF4.

Statkraft is Europe’s largest generator of renewable energy and is a global company in energy market operations. Statkraft has 4,000 employees in 16 countries. In Scotland, Statkraft is committed to building out at least 600 mega-watts (MW) of onshore wind over the next five years. Statkraft currently operates three onshore wind farms in Scotland with a combined capacity of 155.5 MW and has consent for another two onshore wind farms, now entering construction. The Scotland team is based in offices in Glasgow.

- 1.1.6 The approach to the preparation of this representation has involved:
- Consideration of what works and what does not work well in the current NPF3 / SPP (the topics are quite wide ranging and include spatial planning, wild land, tip heights to secure route to market, shared ownership, scale issues, the role of landscape capacity studies etc); and
 - Consideration has been given to potential policy changes to address current issues.

1.2 The Renewable Energy Policy Background

Climate Emergency and the ‘Net Zero’ Challenge

- 1.2.1 Before addressing the specific planning policy issues and in turn the positive recommendations for change that could be expressed in NPF4, it is important to set out some comments on the renewable energy policy framework and how it is evolving. This sets the context for the nature of policy response required. In this regard, the backdrop to necessary planning policy change includes a number of what can be considered landmark reports and statutory provisions which have emerged and been put in place in 2019. These include the following:
- The **Committee on Climate Change (CCC) Report on ‘Net Zero’** published in early 2019.
 - The declared UK and Scottish Government **Climate Emergency** positions.
 - The **Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019** – which received Royal Assent in 2019 and has introduced legally binding greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction targets of 75% by 2030 and net zero by 2045 – 5 years ahead of the UK target date of 2050.

- The **United Nations ‘Gap’ Report** published in November 2019 which has set out the annual gauge of the disconnect of ‘where we are and where we need to be’ with regard to action on the Paris Agreement and GHG emissions reductions.

- 1.2.2 In addition, in December 2019 the **CCC ‘Progress Report to the Scottish Parliament’** was published. It sets out that in the CCC’s ‘net zero’ report published earlier in 2019, the Committee had made it clear that meeting Scotland’s 2045 target is contingent on early and decisive action to strengthen policy. The key messages in this very recent report include the following:
- Net zero GHG emissions by 2045 is a ‘step change’ in ambitions for Scotland – requiring urgent action in order to meet that target.
 - The Scottish Parliament’s 2030 target to reduce emissions by 75% will be extremely challenging to meet. It must be backed up by steps to drive meaningful emissions reductions - immediately. The new NPF4 will cover the time period to 2050.
 - The forthcoming update to Scotland’s Climate Change Plan is an opportunity to set a clear and credible path to net zero emissions in 2045.
 - There is a need for a Climate Change Plan that puts Scotland on the path to net zero and which must focus on taking action in the 2020s and 2030s – this was expected to be published in late April 2020 but is now understood to be delayed.
 - More rapid electrification in Scotland must be supported by further development of low carbon generation capacity.
 - Given the important roles for electrification in both transport and heat, electricity demand is expected to rise across Scotland. The UK should aim to support a quadrupling of low carbon power generation on the GB network by 2050, a significant portion of which will be located in Scotland due to its potential for onshore, offshore and remote island wind generation.
 - Renewables without Government backed contracts will not be deployed at scale sufficient to meet the expected generation gap in 2030. In this regard the recent (March 2020) consultation paper published by the Department of Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS) entitled ‘*Contracts for Difference for Low Carbon Electricity Generation – consultation on proposed amendments to the scheme*’ is of relevance.
- 1.2.3 The CCC Report (Chapter 9) with regard to the power sector, sets out a number of short and medium-term actions and included within these, is making use of the 2020 Energy Statement to set out an updated assessment of how much renewable and low carbon energy generation will be required to meet net zero in Scotland, with a clear trajectory to 2045.
- 1.2.4 The report adds that Scotland’s target to meet 100% of gross electricity consumption from renewables by 2020 remains challenging as it is unlikely that all the projects consented will progress to the commissioning stage. One of the key reasons for this is that many of the consented projects for onshore wind were decided in the context of available Government subsidy and now in present circumstances where there is no subsidy support for onshore wind (although as noted, the below, BEIS consultation on this topic is now underway), the tip heights of projects that have been consented are in the majority of cases, too low and as a result, these projects are largely unviable.
- 1.2.5 As noted, a very recent and relevant material consideration with regard to evolving energy policy is the **consultation on proposed amendments to the CfD scheme for low carbon electricity generation** issued by BEIS in early March 2020. The Secretary of State confirmed on 02 March that onshore wind and solar developments would be able to bid in the 2021 CfD round and the current consultation is on how best to facilitate this change to the CfD scheme.
- 1.2.6 The document is informative in setting out the UK latest policy position in relation to renewables and ‘net zero’. Key points arising with regard to the policy position within the consultation document include the following:

- The document states on page 10 that the changes to the CfD scheme have been made to support the increase in ambition needed to achieve the Government’s 2050 net zero target.
- It states that decarbonising the power sector is a vital part of the UK’s effort to meet its world leading net zero target. It states whilst we cannot predict today exactly what the generating mix will look like in 2050, we can be confident that “renewables will play a key role, alongside firm or flexible low carbon generating capacity”.
- It adds that the UK was the first major economy to set a legally binding target to cut emissions to net zero by 2050 and end its contribution to global warming. It states, “*the target, which came into force on 27 June 2019, will require the UK to reduce all greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050, compared with the previous target of an 80% reduction from 1990 levels. This is a landmark decision for the UK and one which demonstrates that we are continuing to lead the international effort to bring an end to climate change*”.
- It further adds that this is “..... an important step towards decarbonising the UK’s energy system. The UK’s new 2050 net zero emissions target means that we will continue to require substantial amounts of new, low carbon power sources to be built before 2050. In the report on net zero the Committee on Climate Change (CCC) states that the UK could require four times the amount of renewable generation from today’s levels, requiring sustained and increased deployment between now and 2050”. (underlining added)
- Page 11 also adds that “*the transition to a net zero greenhouse gas economy will require change across the whole of society, and in this context the Government has considered how to ensure that CfD allocation rounds can best support an increase in the pace of renewable deployment needed to achieve its net zero ambitions.....*”. (underlining added)

1.2.7 The aims of the consultation set out (page 11) are described as supporting the following themes, *inter alia*:

- Delivering net zero - by supporting the increased ambition required by the Government’s economy-wide legislative target to reach net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050; and
- Maintaining energy security - by supporting deployment of new power sources needed to achieve a low cost and secure low carbon power system.

1.2.8 At page 15 of the document ‘delivering net zero’ is addressed and the Government sets out that “*on 27 June 2019, a new legally binding target to reach net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 came into law in the UK. By 2050, the UK will need an ultra-low carbon power sector to meet this economy wide net zero emissions target. In parallel, generation will need to increase to meet future demand and at the same time as aging plants are being decommissioned. The CCC believes almost complete decarbonisation in the power sector can be achieved, but that to achieve this, low carbon electricity generation will need to quadruple by 2050. The CfD scheme therefore needs to be able to support a substantial increase in low carbon generation capacity*”.

1.2.9 The document continues by stating “*the UK’s new 2050 net zero target will require a substantial amount of new, low carbon power sources to be built before 2050 and to produce the majority of power with renewables if we are to decarbonise at low cost... In its report on net zero, the CCC advise that the UK could require up to a four-fold increase in renewable generation under their ‘further ambition’ scenario*”.

1.2.10 With regard to the established technologies for CfD, importantly the consultation document sets out that Government is aware of a number of projects (mainly solar PV and onshore wind) that have deployed or are planning to deploy on a merchant basis since the last ‘Pot 1’ auction was held under the CfD regime. It adds “*however, there is a risk that if we were to rely on merchant deployment of these technologies alone at this point in time, we may not see the rate and scale of new projects needed in the near term to support decarbonisation of the power sector and meet the net zero commitment to low cost*”.

- 1.2.11 The recent consultation document from BEIS is therefore very important in further strengthening the overall policy case for onshore wind.
- 1.2.12 In addition, recently the **Court of Appeal Judgment on the third Heathrow runway** dated 27 February 2020 is of relevance in that it firmly sets out that the UK Government’s commitment to the Paris Agreement (2015) is part of Government policy. The UK Government’s commitment under the Paris Agreement links to the CCC’s advice to both the UK and Scottish Governments on net zero targets which have now, at both the UK and Scottish levels been translated into new legislative provisions and therefore binding targets for both 2045 and 2050.
- 1.2.13 Against this backdrop, it will clearly be essential to have in place an appropriate planning system and a key part of such a system is facilitative national planning policy and a body of guidance for onshore wind development. Whilst the Scottish Government will clearly be aware of the content of the December 2019 CCC Report and the other various documents referred to above that have been issued in 2019 (as noted in the Scottish Government’s ‘Programme for Government’ 2019), it is critical that positive and radical changes are made to national planning policy to increase deployment. This is particularly important given planning policy in England largely prohibits new onshore wind development there – therefore the opportunity for growth of the technology (and the resultant benefits) in terms of deployment will be in Scotland.

1.3 Reluctance of Decision Makers to engage with the Climate Emergency & Net Zero

- 1.3.1 One aspect of the planning balance in planning determinations (including Planning Appeals and Section 36 Inquiry cases) for onshore wind developments is what is termed the ‘need case’ for renewable energy and low carbon deployment and the benefits that flow with regard to renewable energy and electricity generation and consequent reduction in carbon emissions and other greenhouse gases (GHG).
- 1.3.2 In December 2017 the Scottish Government published the Onshore Wind Policy Statement (OWPS) and the Scottish Energy Strategy (SES) both of which contain very positive references to the need for further onshore wind development and the documents both highlighted the ‘vital role’ that the technology had in contributing to Scotland’s various energy and climate change targets. This language needs to be reflected in new national planning policy.
- 1.3.3 Despite that wording, there is growing evidence of a reluctance by decision makers, Reporters dealing with Planning Appeals (and indeed Planning Authorities in determining both planning and s.36 applications) to place any more weight on the need and benefits case despite the various landmark Climate Change Reports and indeed new statute / law being before them, including, as noted:
- The Committee on Climate Change (CCC) report on ‘Net Zero’ published in May 2019.
 - The declared UK and Scottish Government ‘climate emergency’ positions.
 - The Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019 – which received Royal Assent and has introduced legally binding very challenging greenhouse gas reduction targets of 75% by 2030 and net zero by 2045.
 - The United Nations ‘Gap’ Report, published in November 2019 which set out the major disconnect of ‘where we are and where we need to be’ with regard to action on the Paris Agreement and GHG reductions.
- 1.3.4 Furthermore, the Scottish Government’s ‘Programme for Government’ which was published in November 2019 made it clear that *“there is a requirement for transformative change”*. The First Minister is quoted in the document as follows: *“This Programme for Government sets out some of the next steps on Scotland’s journey to net zero emissions and raises our ambition in light of the emergency we face. We are leading the world in setting challenging targets, but we must also redouble our efforts to meet them.”*

- 1.3.5 In the Programme, a commitment is that *“the Fourth National Planning Framework will help to radically accelerate reduction of emissions”* and it adds *“the global climate emergency means that the time is right for wide ranging debate on more radical planning policy options....we will begin engagement on the Fourth National Planning Framework in autumn this year. Through it we will explore planning options that radically accelerate reduction of emissions.”* (underlining added)
- 1.3.6 Against that backdrop, it is considered that a fair position would be that there has been - since SPP and NPF3 were published in 2014 – a material strengthening of the need case for renewable energy developments and this is a matter that is open to decision makers to treat as a material consideration and give the weight to that they deem appropriate. The logical position is that the need case must surely attract more weight given the growing urgency of the situation and the increase in targets etc. The new NPF4 must engage with this and give a clear direction to decision makers – as it is clear they are waiting on that.
- 1.3.7 What is happening in practice is fundamental reluctance of Planning Authorities in determining applications and of Reporters in Planning Appeals to go beyond what is in the current SPP and NPF3 which as noted, dates from 2014. Two examples are:
- The Planning Appeal Decision Notice dated 7 November 2019 for a wind farm known as Ardtaraig in Argyll & Bute (reference PPA-130-2073); and
 - The Planning Appeal Decision Notice for a wind farm known as Gilston dated 6 February 2020 (reference PPA-140-2068).
- 1.3.8 Another earlier case where the Reporter refused to place any more weight on the need case is Druim Ba (reference PPA-270-2147, dated 28 June 2018).
- 1.3.9 Disappointingly, the reason for this stance, raised consistently by Reporters, seems to be that they take the view that if there was to be a change to the weight to be given to renewable energy developments and their benefits in the planning balance, then for them to do so, they would need explicit Government direction by way of policy change.
- 1.3.10 It is considered however that the various new targets and net zero provisions that are now clearly material matters do not need formal policy articulation in order for them to be given weight by a decision maker. However, given the reluctance for some decision makers to do so – the Scottish Government should address this in new national planning policy.
- 1.3.11 It needs to be acknowledged that the need case with regard to renewable generation and emissions reduction targets as set out in NPF3 and SPP are now dated. The documents have to a large extent been overtaken by new statutory provisions on renewable energy targets and GHG emissions reductions ambitions. The expression of the need case needs to intensify in future policy documents such as NPF4.
- 1.3.12 One of the key messages in the Scottish Government’s Onshore Wind Policy Statement (OWPS) is the recognition that onshore wind is to play a “vital role” in meeting Scotland’s energy needs, a “material” role in growing the economy and it is specifically stated that the technology remains “crucial” in terms of Scotland’s goals for an overall decarbonised energy system and to attain ambitious renewable targets for the milestone dates of 2020, 2030 and 2045. This position must be carried forward into new national planning policy but with the added considerations of a Climate Emergency and challenging ‘net zero’ policy imperative.
- 1.3.13 The need case in the planning balance has, in Statkraft’s view, become markedly stronger. It cannot be ‘business as usual’ and there needs to be a notable shift in the planning balance: not to grapple with and embrace the clear new messages of ‘Net Zero’ would be to fail to take what is happening so fast in other aspects of public policy seriously. The renewable energy policy framework remains an extremely important consideration. It is of course not an over-riding matter, but it is one that should attract very significant weight in the balance of factors in the determination of applications for consent and that should be made clear in national planning policy.

1.4 The Presumption in Favour

- 1.4.1 The current SPP contains the planning principle of a ‘presumption in favour of development that contributes to sustainable development’. A major problem since the current SPP came into force in 2014 has been a reluctance of decisions makers (particularly Local Planning Authorities) to engage with and apply the presumption in the way it was intended as set down at paragraphs 32 and 33 of SPP. It is recommended that the new NPF4 should make it explicitly clear that the presumption applies in certain circumstances and suggestions are as follows:
- Guidance could be along the lines of ***where development is being determined in planning and Electricity Act cases for all types of land use – if the development in question contributes positively to addressing the global climate crisis and would result in benefits such that there would be a reduction in carbon emissions and other greenhouse gas emissions then that is a benefit that should be afforded great weight whatever the scale of development.***
 - Furthermore, consideration could be given to applying the current presumption as set out in the existing SPP to all such development and that would mean that ***where such development is proposed the presumption would be a significant material consideration carrying great weight and in such cases consent should follow unless the benefits arising would be ‘significantly and demonstrably outweighed by adverse effects’.***
- 1.4.2 Importantly such an approach would not mean that the need case would be an overriding consideration (relative to certain environmental resources), but it would properly position that very important material matter at the heart of decision making and allow the weight it should be afforded to be unambiguously applied in the planning balances that still of course need to be struck against environmental considerations.

2. Policy Review & Additional Recommendations

2.1 Current Problems and Suggested New Policy Approaches – Onshore Wind

2.1.1 Table 2.1 below sets out a list of current issues and ‘problems’ with current national planning policy and describes the basis of a potential new policy approach to address each matter.

Table 2.1: Summary of National Planning Policy Issues and Recommended new Approaches

Issue 1: The need for Interim Policy Guidance before NPF4 is adopted	
Problem	Recommended New Approach
<p>The original programme of the Scottish Government was that the consultation on the draft NPF4 was to start in September 2020. As per the Chief Planner’s Letter of 03 April 2020, it is understood that the consultation draft is now delayed until ‘sometime in 2021’ - when the document is to be laid before the Scottish parliament for 120 days.</p> <p>The key issue arising is that new national planning policy position may now not be in place (adopted) until very late 2021 or possibly 2022 - this is far too late.</p> <p>In light of the current declared Climate Emergency and challenging net zero targets and the economic difficulties that COVID-19 is creating, the timeline for the new national planning policy is too slow.</p>	<p>It is recommended that the Planning Service of the Scottish Government issue interim policy guidance on some key matters (e.g. the presumption) and the materially strengthened need case for onshore wind / renewables. This could be done by the issue of interim policy Guidance, a Ministerial Statement, a further Chief Planner’s Letter or a mix of these.</p> <p>As set out in section 1.4 above, the strengthening of the presumption could be made in relation to all development types / land use proposals that make a positive contribution to combatting the climate crisis.</p>
Issue 2: The Policy Framework needs to deliver ‘transformational change’	
Problem	Recommended new Approach
<p>Current national planning policy is inadequate to deliver projects at scale, and which are commercially viable and at the pace that is now required. This is self-evident with the slowdown of new investment in onshore wind and solar in Scotland, and the supply chain difficulties of firms like CS Wind in Argyll and Bute.</p> <p>Changes to the planning system need to be ambitious to ensure that transformational change is delivered – including increased volume and a rapid pace of deployment of onshore wind.</p> <p>The UK Committee on Change (CCC) in its advice to Government has stated that low carbon electricity “must quadruple” and</p>	<p>If key objectives set out in the OWPS include the delivery of subsidy-free onshore wind projects and a robust, sustainable and growing supply chain and increasing employment, then the necessary changes to the planning system and specifically to the national planning policy framework must be put in place to enable that to happen.</p> <p>There should therefore be significant changes to the planning system as set out in the ‘<i>Programme for Government</i>’¹.</p> <p>The Programme states that the Scottish Government is making a number of major commitments in response to the climate emergency and in terms of ‘planning’ this will include NPF4 “<i>which will help to radically accelerate reduction of emissions</i>”. New policy therefore requires to be radical itself.</p>

¹ Scottish Government, ‘Protecting Scotland’s Future’, The Government’s Programme for Scotland, 2019-20 (September 2019).

<p>recommended that policy frameworks should create “a favourable planning regime for low-cost onshore wind.”</p>	<p>The Programme (page 39) refers specifically to planning and key points referenced in this regard include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The global climate emergency means that the time is right for wide-ranging debate on more radical planning policy options; • Planning is a vital tool in leveraging the changes needed to “achieve our goals”; and • Through engagement on NPF4 the Government will explore planning options “that radically accelerate reduction of emissions”. <p>As the NPF and SPP are brought together into a National Development Plan for Scotland, it is vital that it unlocks the ready investment in renewable energy.</p>
<p>Issue 3: Retain a Criteria Based Approach to siting of Development rather than a Spatial Planning Approach with Specified Zones for Onshore Wind</p>	
<p>Problem</p>	<p>Recommended new Approach</p>
<p>The current spatial planning approach in the existing SPP is generally working well (i.e. the Spatial Framework approach), taken together with the listed criteria at paragraph 169 of SPP. However, there are issues with the current policy approach to Wild Land and improvements can be made to policy.</p> <p>The Scottish Government should not impose a national level zoning of spatial planning defined areas for onshore wind. In Wales, the ‘TAN 8’ route has not been successful and did not deliver required deployment.</p> <p>Furthermore, it should be noted that the Welsh Government has very recently consulted on a new National Development Framework (NDF) for spatial planning in Wales. This did propose a spatial planning approach for onshore wind based on defined “Preferred Areas” in which there would be a presumption in favour of development. This would inevitably mean that although development outside of “preferred areas” would not be ruled out – such locations could clearly be viewed by Planning Authorities as sub-optimal and this difference in national spatial zoning could well become a major barrier to deployment of what would otherwise be acceptable development projects. Renewable energy industry bodies and numerous onshore wind developers criticised this approach.</p>	<p>It is recommended that the Scottish Government should retain the Spatial Framework planning approach coupled with a criteria based assessment. However, the approach should be amended to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply a presumption in favour in ‘Group 3’ areas and apply the current test in SPP para 33 which is that “consent should be granted unless the adverse effects significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the proposed development”. • Changes needed with regard to Wild Land recommended and are addressed below.

<p>It is understood that the Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee has published its report on the draft NDF and its (Conclusion 40) is that the NDF should adopt a “criteria-based policy framework for renewable energy developments” which has now been welcomed by the renewables sector.</p>	
Issue 4: Apply the Presumption in Favour more widely	
Problem	Recommended new Approach
<p>The “<i>presumption in favour of development that contributes to sustainable development</i>” as set out in the current SPP has never been properly engaged by Planning Authorities in practice (see section 1.4 above).</p> <p>It is only in the relatively recent <u>Caplich</u>² Wind Farm s.36 Inquiry Report and <u>Dell</u>³ Wind Farm Appeal Decision Notices that the proper approach for applying the presumption has been set out.</p>	<p>The new policy approach should make it mandatory for all planning determinations to explicitly address the application of the presumption in favour and NPF4 should explain clearly how it operates in situations where policies in Development Plans are out of date with national policy, in situations where LDPs are over 5 years old and as noted above, where onshore wind development is proposed in ‘Group 3’ areas.</p>
Issue 5: Landscape Capacity Studies are too Restrictive and have been a significant brake against Onshore Wind Deployment	
Problem	Recommended new Approach
<p>Landscape capacity studies are generally very restrictive and overly conservative and can unnecessarily frustrate good development. This is evident by the number of wind farm developments that are consented on Appeal in situations in which the relevant ‘Capacity Study’ states there is ‘no capacity’ or very limited capacity for any form of wind energy development.</p> <p>An example is the Reporter’s reasoning in the Larbrax Wind Farm decision (the case involved a wind farm in Dumfries and Galloway). In paragraphs 25 and 26 of the Appeal Decision Notice⁴, the Reporter stated:</p> <p><i>“25. ...the [Dumfries and Galloway Landscape Wind Farm Capacity Study (DGLWCS) 2011] finds that there are no remaining sites within the peninsula on which to develop a wind farm that have the appropriate landscape attributes (an open, extensive upland plateau) as are found at</i></p>	<p>Landscape Capacity Studies should be phased out and replaced with ‘landscape sensitivity appraisals’ to inform strategic level assessment of projects - as a starting point.</p> <p>They should be restricted to presenting landscape sensitivity information only, and not specify or determine maximum turbine sizes or specific typologies in any location.</p> <p>Policy and guidance should make it explicitly clear that while they can be a material consideration, more weight should always be placed on site specific landscape and visual impact assessments.</p> <p>At the present time, LPAs continue to prepare them and seek their adoption as statutory Supplementary Guidance. It will be important for interim / transitional advice to be provided to LPAs on this matter so that this issue does not persist for years to come.</p>

² Caplich Wind Farm, s.36 Public Inquiry Report, Case reference WIN-270-7 and Scottish Ministers’ Decision Letter dated 27 April 2018.

³ Dell Wind Farm, DPEA reference PPA-270-2183, Appeal Decision Notice dated 22 August 2019.

⁴ Larbrax, DPEA reference PPA-170-2105.

the site on which the existing North Rhins wind farm was developed. The authority concludes that the development would be out of scale and character with the small-scale landscape of the appeal site and contrary to the DGLWCS.

The DGLWCS is a useful indicator of the relative ease with which a particular landscape might accommodate a particular type of wind farm. However, it is no substitute for a site and proposal-specific assessment of landscape and visual effects, as has been carried out by the appellant, or the development-specific analysis that has been carried out in response to this proposal by the planning authority and SNH. The fact that the DGLWCS effectively rules out the possibility of developing a wind farm of the scale proposed anywhere within the Rhins peninsula is a material consideration, but in no way obliges me to dismiss this appeal.” (underlining added)

Other examples include the Kirk Hill Wind Farm Appeal Decision Notice⁵ (16 February 2017) and the Fauch Hill Appeal Decision Notice⁶ (13 June 2018).

Even though a number of such studies note that developments need to be also considered on a site specific basis – the problem is that a number of Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) apply the guidance in Capacity Studies directly and often take a stance that applications for development need “to comply” with such studies.

They are intended to be strategic level documents but too often they conclude no capacity for any development and such findings are directly applied in planning determinations by LPAs.

Landscape Capacity Studies have generally been prepared by a small number of individual landscape architects, are not consulted on and face no independent scrutiny whatsoever. Furthermore, they have in many cases been ‘adopted’ as statutory Supplementary Guidance (e.g. in Dumfries and Galloway, Highland and Moray Council areas) and often run to many hundreds of pages – in the case of Dumfries and Galloway – over 500 pages.

⁵ Kirk Hill, DPEA Appeal reference PPA-370-2052.

⁶ Fauch Hill, DPEA Appeal reference PPA-400-2084.

Issue 6: The Need for Higher Blade Tip Heights should be explicitly supported in Policy	
Problem	Recommended new Approach
<p>Too often applications for consent are being refused because of matters relating to tip height / scale disparities of new turbines compared to existing schemes which may be close by.</p> <p>This is an inevitable result of technological change and the need for turbine heights to be higher in a subsidy free context, in order to improve efficiency and yield, which in turn contribute further to targets. The Climate Emergency situation and the need case imperative means that this matter has to be addressed in policy and related guidance.</p>	<p>The new policy approach should support the installation of taller turbines and have the flexibility to accommodate the speed of technological change.</p> <p>No national spatial plan for taller turbines should be proposed and is not required. The recent consented Hagshaw Hill repowering project (No objection from South Lanarkshire Council or SNH to 200 metres to tip turbines) and other consents for turbines over 150 metres to tip⁷, demonstrates that consenting authorities are able to determine schemes for taller turbines in the absence of a national spatial plan.</p> <p>The new policy approach has to go beyond the rhetorical phrase “<i>the right development in the right place</i>”.</p> <p>Consideration should be given to setting out that only limited weight should be afforded to scale disparities between new and ‘legacy’ turbine schemes given the climate emergency situation and the vital role that onshore wind will have in attaining targets.</p> <p>If new wind energy development is to take place it is increasingly inevitable that differences in scale between older and newer wind farms will occur and landscape and visual matters can only be addressed through design to a point. Such differences in scale should not be an argument against new development precisely because they are inescapable. This must be acknowledged in new policy provisions.</p>
Issue 7: Wild Land Mapping and related Policy needs to be addressed	
Problem	Recommended new Approach
<p>Wild land is an extensive geographical constraint and although not intended to be a ‘designation’ has been treated as such in practice – given Wild Land Areas (WLAs) are shown with boundaries on Wild Land Maps and in Spatial Frameworks.</p> <p>The policy ‘test’ at paragraph 215 of SPP as set out for ‘Group’ 2 in the Spatial Framework approach of SPP has proven to be a very significant constraint and far too high a ‘bar’ for any wind energy scheme to satisfy.</p>	<p>In some cases, Wild Land boundaries should be ‘pulled back’ and rationalised in key areas where wildness qualities are more limited and where there is demonstrable onshore wind activity / interest and grid capacity. This would be complementary to an amended policy approach which can seek to protect Wild Land but also allow for some development.</p> <p>There is a need for a balance between the two interests but at the moment the balance has tipped too far such that very limited development has been able to take place close to Wild Land and next to no development within it.</p>

⁷ For example the Lethans and Kype Muir developments. Other applications in the system for turbines over 150 m to tip include Windy Standard III, Stranoch II, Arcleoch Extension, Faw Side, Douglas West, Kirkan, Sanquhar II, Troston Loch, Energy Isles and Rothes III.

<p>No wind farm development in Wild Land has ever satisfied that test – it has proved in practice, to be a fundamental embargo for onshore wind development in Wild Land Areas – this is not acceptable.</p> <p>To date since 2014 only one consent has been granted for a wind development in a WLA. Part of the consented Creag Riabhach wind farm is within a WLA, but the Ministers only granted consent for this under section 36 of Electricity Act by stating that the development in their view was contrary to SPP. In contrast various schemes have been refused consent for development wholly or partly within WLAs (Allt Duine, Glenmorie, Sallachy, Glencassley, Culachy, Caplich, Carn Gorm to name a few).</p> <p>Developers are understandably wary of promoting schemes within WLAs given this track record. In addition, SPP paragraph 125 and Table 1 development management advice is almost impossible to satisfy since substantially overcoming a significant visual effect which would inevitably result from turbines is logically impossible. And there is no evidence to date that Reporters and Planning Authorities have been prepared to apply the overall planning balance in favour of development where there are such significant effects.</p>	<p>Given the need for additional onshore wind development, which will inevitably mean more development in Highland, where the majority of Wild Land is located – a more permissive policy approach is needed which can protect the best of the resource but at the same time enable further wind deployment.</p>
--	--

Issue 8: Address Repowering & Extensions of Life

Problem	Recommended new Approach
<p>Current national planning policy is weak in relation to repowering proposals and applications for extensions of life of operational developments.</p> <p>Most onshore wind developments have time limited consents and many schemes are due to be decommissioned in the early 2030s.</p>	<p>There should be a presumption in favour of physically extending and repowering existing developments in the right circumstances subject to the EIA process where required: recognising that extensions which utilise some of the same infrastructure as an existing development is beneficial.</p> <p>Given net zero and other challenging targets which stretch into the long term – 2045, 2050 and beyond – extensions of life to operational developments, well beyond the often consented 25-year periods, will be essential to maintain renewable generating capacity and sustain targets.</p> <p>Renewable energy developments should be consented for longer periods, at least up to 50 years (as recently specified in the Tangy repower decision), with the requirement for conditions of consent to be applied securing the decommissioning of</p>

	developments once they come to the end of their operational life.
Issue 9: The speed of the Planning Process and impact on Viability & Deployment Need	
Problem	Recommended new Approach
<p>The planning process (duration and cost) can have significant impact on the viability of onshore wind projects given the requirement for modern, efficient and taller wind turbines in a merchant and/ or highly competitive CfD market.</p> <p>Planning application and s.36 application fees have significantly increased in recent years, but there has been no discernible change to the length of the consenting process – if anything the process is getting slower.</p>	<p>Government should seek to reduce delays to getting in place climate emergency mitigation by way of more onshore wind deployment.</p> <p>Emphasis should be put on timescale performance indicators for all planning and section 36 applications and in relation to Appeals and Public Inquiries held under the terms of the Electricity Act 1989.</p> <p>Given the recession that has resulted from the COVID-19 emergency situation, no increase should be progressed to planning application fees in the short to medium terms.</p>
Issue 10: Ensure strong policy expressions in place which reflect the need to attain ‘Net Zero’ Targets and which properly address the vital role of onshore wind in dealing with the Climate Emergency	
Urgent Problem	Recommended Immediate Action
<p>The current SPP / NPF3 and the related ‘online guidance’ for onshore wind dates from 2014. NPF3 and SPP encourage deployment of renewables and onshore wind but the policy support does not reflect the language of the Onshore Wind Policy Statement (OWPS) or the policy imperative arising from the declared ‘Climate Emergency’ or the provisions of the recent Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019 – which has introduced legally binding greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction targets of 75% by 2030 and net zero by 2045.</p> <p>The BEIS consultation document (March 2020) makes it clear that “<i>whilst we cannot predict today exactly what the generating mix will look like in 2050, we can be confident that renewables will play a key role</i>”.</p>	<p>Clear policy direction on the need case for new onshore wind should be set out, with instruction to decision makers to place substantial weight on the benefits from onshore wind, whether it is in the form of new development, extensions of wind farms, repowering projects or extensions of life.</p>

Issue 11: Recognition of the Positive Socio-Economic Impacts on the Supply Chain and Rural Economy	
Problem	Recommended new Approach
<p>In light of the current declared Climate Emergency and the economic difficulties that COVID-19 will create, industries with the potential to make significant contributions to both net zero and to economic recovery should be identified and supported as such, in planning decisions.</p>	<p>It is recommended that increased planning weight is given in decision-making to socio-economic factors, where specific details are provided in applications, including the positive effect on: inward investment in Scotland; local community funding; supply chain jobs; local jobs; economic growth/ regrowth; creation and/ or improvement in infrastructure; which in turn will encourage more people to live in rural Scotland and/ or reverse rural depopulation.</p> <p>Socio-economic impacts are already a consideration set out in paragraph 169 of SPP however there is justification to elevate its importance along with the climate change benefits that can be derived from proposed developments. Such an approach would fit well with the national development assessment criteria which the Scottish Government has set, namely in relation to climate change, people and inclusive growth.</p> <p>Giving more weight to such matters would also be consistent with The National Outcomes set within the Government's ‘National Performance Framework’ with key ones of relevance being economy, communities, poverty and environment.</p> <p>As noted, as a result of the COVID-19 situation there is clearly going to be a considerable economic downturn which may last into the medium term. In this regard, achieving deliverability of ‘a more successful country with opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish, through increasing sustainable economic growth’ becomes ever more important (as set out in the National Performance Framework).</p> <p>In terms of inclusive growth, it is understood that it is meant in the sense of not creating inequality as the economy grows. In part that is about tackling poverty but there are also other dimensions – an important one being geographic. Onshore wind investments can make a significant contribution to inclusive growth by providing an ‘engine of growth’, including many jobs, in high value added sectors, in remote and rural parts of Scotland which have suffered from various issues including long term population and economic decline and fragile local economies.</p>

2.2 Conclusions

- 2.2.1 As explained in the Introduction to this paper, NPF4 will incorporate the new renewables and onshore wind policy for Scotland. This early engagement is welcomed by Statkraft and this representation is intended as a positive contribution to that process.
- 2.2.2 Finally, to reiterate, the Scottish Government has made it clear in the *Programme for Government* (2019) that there is a need to examine radical planning policy options and in particular “*planning options that radically accelerate reduction of emissions.*” It is considered critical therefore that NPF4 delivers on that objective – the various policy ideas in this submission would help facilitate such ambitious transformational change.
- 2.2.3 Moreover, given the very difficult current circumstances with COVID-19 – there will be a need for swift economic recovery and the national planning policy position needs to be responsive to that need, alongside a response to the Climate Emergency and ensuring an accelerated transition to ‘net zero’.

David C Bell BSc (Hons) DipUD MCIHT MRTPI
Director

David Bell Planning Ltd
26 Alva Street
Edinburgh EH2 4PY

T: 0131 259 6017
M: 07876 597494
E: david.bell@dbplanning.co.uk

