



Coronavirus industry issues

April 29, 2020

Support schemes

We are grateful for statements made about the continued availability of LCITP funding through the current pandemic but would like to make clear that these funds represent business-critical investments for some of our members, who remain concerned about the future of LCITP projects. A further detailed statement on the administration of this scheme in light of current difficulties would be welcome.

We would also seek information, should it exist, on any conversations the Scottish Government has had with the UK Government on the impact of coronavirus on deployment of renewable energy in Scotland, including on support schemes which directly impact that deployment (CfD, RHI, FiT).

Maintenance – key workers

While the maintenance of generation infrastructure has continued, Scottish Renewables is aware that key workers carrying out these tasks can face questioning by both the police and members of local communities.

It would be extremely helpful if the Scottish Government were to provide these workers with a letter outlining the importance of their work. We understand UK Government will be doing so in the coming days and would welcome the reflection of that process in Scotland in order to reduce stress on police officers, as well as ensuring members of the public do not mistakenly believe energy workers are continuing in their roles in defiance of the coronavirus social distancing guidelines, and therefore feel more able to ignore the guidelines themselves.

Construction

A number of members have indicated that they are confused about whether construction of energy projects can continue, in the context of energy's designation as critical national infrastructure and discussions with civil servants about ongoing construction projects which would contribute to 'wider resilience'. Industry would be keen to work with government to develop specific guidance which would enable sites like these to restart where that could be done safely.

Ecological surveying

There is a degree of confusion over whether or not ecological surveys can be undertaken at this time. The [current guidance](#) is that if the work is essential and can be undertaken in line with social distancing guidelines then the work may be undertaken. The uncertainty centres on whether or not ecological surveying is considered essential work.

SNH's note on this issue has not clarified the acute situation. We would seek amendments to existing guidance to ensure that delays – which have the real potential to last years and impact the achievement of Scotland's bold climate change ambitions – are dealt with pragmatically.

SR also sent a letter to Marine Scotland on Tuesday April 14 seeking clarification on how gaps in ecological data caused by the COVID-19 restrictions will be viewed, and how offshore wind applications will be treated as a result. We understand that this matter is being considered and would welcome clarification.

Members have now also raised the difficulties of carrying out post-consent monitoring at offshore wind farm sites. We would be pleased to provide further information on this issue and to discuss potential approaches which could mitigate its impact on projects in the development phase.

Planning issues

Industry welcomes the publication of the [letter](#) from the Chief Planner on the impact of COVID-19 on the planning process and understands that the timetable for developing National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) will be extended. At a roundtable meeting with the Chief Planner on March 5 industry requested a Chief Planner's letter be issued to ensure that the Climate Emergency and the achievement of Scotland's net-zero target be made material considerations in any planning application made between the present and NPF4 coming into force. Given that NPF4 will now come into force later than originally planned, we would welcome the issuing of this letter as soon as possible to ensure renewable energy is able to play its full role in the green recovery.

Testing

Industry welcomes Scottish Government guidance which has set out a prioritisation matrix for identifying which key workers should be able to access testing in Scotland, and energy's inclusion in Priority Group 2.

Members have raised that the extension of testing on a precautionary, proactive basis would be beneficial, for example so that the crew of a vessel which was setting sail to an offshore wind farm or an offshore transmission project could all be tested before departure.

We would welcome further discussion as this situation evolves.

ScotWind Leasing

Crown Estate Scotland has updated [a statement on its website](#) about the ScotWind Leasing process. It has also finalised the development of its online portal through which applications will be made. It is important that this process proceeds quickly, and members would find it useful to know when the ScotWind process will be launched.

Lockdown transition and recovery

We are grateful for the Scottish Government's framework around decision-making in relation to [transitioning out of lockdown](#).

Renewable energy projects have considerable potential to act as a fulcrum for a green economic recovery and we would welcome the prioritisation of renewable energy construction by the Scottish Government as an important way in which the country could begin to sustainably restart its economy.

We will provide a paper on this topic shortly and would also welcome the chance to discuss its contents with the relevant Minister.

The onshore wind sector has already produced [guidance](#) on how its activities can be carried out safely, and Scottish Renewables is about to publish a document setting out how industry has responded positively and proactively to demonstrate its responsible approach during the coronavirus pandemic.