



ANNEX D

Renewables Statement of Need

We remain committed to the important role renewables have to play in helping the UK meet its energy policy goals. In this publication we are reiterating previous commitments we have made, not least in the 2003 Energy White Paper and Planning Policy Statement 22 on renewable energy (PPS22), on the importance of renewable generation and the supporting infrastructure. We intend this to reconfirm the UK Government policy context for planning and consent decisions on renewable generation projects.

As highlighted in the 2006 Energy Review report¹, the UK faces difficult challenges in meeting its energy policy goals. Renewable energy as a source of low-carbon, indigenous electricity generation is central to reducing emissions and maintaining the reliability of our energy supplies at a time when our indigenous fossil fuels are declining more rapidly than expected. A regulatory environment that enables the development of appropriately sited renewable projects, and allows the UK to realise its extensive renewable resources, is vital if we are to make real progress towards our challenging goals.

New renewable projects may not always appear to convey any particular local benefit, but they provide crucial national benefits. Individual renewable projects are part of a growing proportion of low-carbon generation that provides benefits shared by all communities both through reduced emissions and more diverse supplies of energy, which helps the reliability of our supplies. This factor is a material consideration to which all participants in the planning system should give significant weight when considering renewable proposals. These wider benefits are not always immediately visible to the specific locality in which the project is sited. However, the benefits to society and the wider economy as a whole are significant and this must be reflected in the weight given to these considerations by decision makers in reaching their decisions.

If we are to maintain a rigorous planning system that does not disincentivise investment in renewable generation, it must also enable decisions to be taken in reasonable time. Decision makers should ensure that planning applications for renewable energy developments are dealt with expeditiously while addressing the relevant issues.

¹ *The Energy Challenge*, July 2006.

PPS22 makes clear that regional planning bodies and local planning authorities should not make assumptions about the technical and commercial feasibility of renewable energy projects, and that possible locations for renewable energy development must not be ruled out as unsuitable in advance of full consideration of the application and its likely impacts. Planning policies, in Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Documents, should not place unjustified restrictions on renewable developments; they must be flexible to cope with technological and other change over time.

However, there will be certain areas with more readily available access to renewable resources that will be more attractive for developers, for example where windspeeds are greatest. As such, as we increase the level of renewables, in line with our energy policy goals, there will be occasions when proposals are received for renewables projects that are located closely enough together potentially to have cumulative impacts. Decision makers will have to work closely together with statutory advisers, such as English Nature, to consider the handling of assessments of the cumulative impact of such proposed developments. Cumulative effects, like the impacts of individual projects, will not however necessarily be unacceptable or incapable of reduction through mitigation measures.