

**Isle of Wight AONB Partnership - Development Control & Planning Work Group
Minutes of Emergency Meeting held on Thursday 20 April 2006
2.00 p.m. Upper Conference Room, Seaclose Offices**

In Attendance

Richard Grogan	IW AONB Steering Committee Nature Conservation Portfolio (Chair)
Denis Russell	IW AONB Steering Committee Vice-Chairman/Community & Parish Portfolio
David Court	IW AONB Steering Committee Coastal Portfolio
Vicky Basford	IW AONB Steering Committee Historic Environment Portfolio
Professor Dennis Russell	Chairman CPRE
John Hague	Ramblers Association (invited attendee)
John Brownscombe	AONB Lead Officer
Carrie McDowell	AONB Assistant

Remote Member

Nicola Davies	Countryside Agency
---------------	--------------------

Apologies

Tony Tutton	IW AONB Steering Committee Chairman
David Groves	IW AONB Steering Committee Rural Business Portfolio
Nicky Rogers	AONB Planning Officer

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the West Wight Project (Wellow Wind Farm Proposal) - Updated Scoping Report. The Chairman advised this was not a planning application, and discussions should be confined to the contents of the document and J Brownscombe's paper, when considering the impact on the AONB of any future application.

JB advised that amendments have now been made to the original proposal to improve the visual aspect, following the results of the public exhibition. There will now be two turbines measuring 116m from base to tip and four turbines measuring 106m from base to tip, with a change in the alignment from a scattered position to a straight line. Owing to the time lapse from the original scoping document, the applicant is keen to check there are no changes that are of material consideration. JB has read through the document, and feels our original comments should be re-iterated, as they do not seem to have been taken into account in the new document. It is expected the application will be received before mid-summer, and a further meeting of the Work Group will be held at that time.

A question was asked about comments received from statutory consultees, and it was advised these had only been received from ThWART.

JB then gave a brief overview on the key issues that Your Energy need to consider, in addition to those shown in their report. Although the site is not in the AONB, the broader issues of tourism and education are relevant enough for us to have a view and comment on broad spatial issues in particular, footpaths on the site, historic environment and conservation issues.

The most important area affecting the AONB is the Visual and Landscape Character Impact. VB advised that Archaeology have produced a new document about how to mitigate the impact of developments on the historic environment. In addition, English Heritage have produced a document relating to Wind Farms and the Historic Environment. It was agreed these should be mentioned in our response as documents that should be referred to by Your Energy.

The earlier suggestion about viewpoint sites is not mentioned, and it was agreed this should be re-submitted. It was felt the use of a barrage balloon to illustrate the hub and tip height of one or a number of the proposed sites is vital, preferably on selected days for the whole consultation period. Views from open access land and other areas were a key consideration, particularly with regard to the visual aspect of access roads.

The point was raised about whether there was an opportunity to look at changes in land use under Section 106, to reduce or mitigate the impact on arable farming in the area. JB advised we were faced with a situation that we may be giving the wrong signals if we discuss mitigation. We should ask the applicant to demonstrate what the impact is, and if they want to show change based on land use, we can try and look at this in a positive way.

The question was asked about whether the document should make any mention of alternatives to wind power. It was advised this is not within the remit of the applicant, and they only have to demonstrate that alternatives have been considered.

The point was raised about whether the concerns of the AONB Partnership to preserve the AONB have been given sufficient weight. The Scoping Document does make a strong statement about the importance of the environment and the landscape, as well as the setting and views from the AONB. There are also statutory duties set out in the Management Plan, and the fact that AONBs are now regarded as equivalent to National Parks. If the Local Authority does not take account of the AONB, they could be taken to task for failing in their duty of regard, and the EIA could be amended to include these issues. It was felt our approach should be co-operation and neutrality, which should be reflected in our comments.

The Local Authority are also progressing the promotion of biomass and other alternatives, which are less detrimental to the landscape. This information could be used if the application should go to appeal, to show that other approaches are being made to meet targets on renewable energy.

The meeting agreed they would support the comments set out in the paper circulated by JB.

Any Other Business

The meeting were advised that AA would be leaving the Authority in July, and current understanding is that it is intended to recruit a replacement. Once this is formalised, it was agreed that a letter of thanks should be sent to AA for all his support for the work of the AONB Unit and the AONB Partnership.

AC has now taken on the role of Acting Head of the Regeneration Service, and will still have responsibility for line management of the AONB Unit. WP will be acting Planning Policy Manager to deliver the Island Plan.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 2.35 p.m.