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Consultation outcome

# Onshore wind national planning policy reform: government response

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Question 41. Do you agree with the changes proposed to Paragraph 155 (paragraph 157 in the consulted text) of the existing National Planning Policy Framework?

Question 42. Do you agree with the changes proposed to Paragraph 158 (paragraph 160 in the consulted text) of the existing National Planning Policy Framework?

### **Summary of consultation responses:**

For question 41, a total of 981 respondents answered yes/no/indifferent to this question. Of those, 560 (57%) said they did agree with the proposed changes, 104 (11%) said they did not and 317 (32%) said they were indifferent. For question 42, a total of 937 respondents answered yes/no/indifferent to this question. Of those, 509 (54%) said they did agree with the proposal, 107 (11%) said they did not and 321 (34%) said they were indifferent. Key points raised:

- proposed changes were supported including for facilitating greater renewable energy generation without needing to focus as much on new sites
- some suggestions that the proposed changes might imply that permanent changes of use should be approved at existing temporary sites
- there should be a presumption in favour of repowering and life-extensions
- definitions or clarifications are needed for what key terms relating to the proposed changes mean in practice, including whether the proposed changes are referring to all renewable energy sources. For question 41, some respondents requested the word 'maintenance' was replaced with 'life-extension' as 'maintenance' is not considered through the planning system, but 'life-extension' is. For question 42, what 'acceptable' means in practice and where the 'baseline' should be set were points raised. Definitions of the terms 'repowering', 'partial repowering', 'full repowering', and 'life extension' were also suggested. It was raised that 'repowering' and 'life-extension' should be added to the NPPF glossary
- upskilling for Local authorities was recommended so they are able to process repowering applications appropriately
- guidance should support the proposed changes
- 'life extension' and 'repowering' should both be referred to in footnote 63 (this is now footnote 54)

Question 43. Do you agree with the changes proposed to footnote 54 (footnote 63 in the consulted text) of the existing National Planning Policy Framework? Do you have any views on specific wording for new footnote 62?

## Summary of consultation responses:

For question 43, a total of 1305 respondents answered yes/no/indifferent to this question. Of those, 307 (24%) said they did agree with the above proposal, 685 (52%) said they did not and 313 (24%) said they were indifferent. Key points raised:

- support for the policy tests being less restrictive
- respondents noted that onshore wind is required to achieve net-zero targets and improve energy security in the UK
- some opposition to the proposed changes was based on the suggestion that onshore wind should be placed on the same footing as other forms of renewable energy and enable significant deployment (through full removal of relevant footnotes)
- concern that keeping a requirement for community support could mean a minority could prevent onshore wind developments, even if the majority are in favour
- suggestions that local authorities should consider community support has been achieved for community-owned energy projects, or where developers can evidence that they have amended a proposed development in accordance with community feedback
- suggestions that local authorities often lack the resources to identify suitable sites through development plans
- local community-owned installations and/or small-scale onshore wind on industrial sites far from residences to be exempt from the site allocation tests in footnote 63
- clarification needed on whether suitable areas can be identified in supplementary planning documents (SPDs) in the context of proposals they are going to be replaced by new Supplementary Plans
- definitions and clarifications for what key terms relating to the proposed changes mean in practice will be required.

## Government response:

The government welcomes the large number of responses to these questions. The range of views has been considered and we have sought to strike the right balance to ensure that local authorities can respond more flexibly to suitable opportunities for onshore wind energy as well as respecting the views of their local communities.

Having considered the responses, we are proceeding with changes to national planning policy for onshore wind which take forward the proposals which were consulted upon, with minor changes to reflect responses and provide clarity on how policy should be applied in practice. Our formal response to the other proposals in the consultation will be published later this year. A fuller review of the Framework will also be required in due course, in response to the

government's proposals for wider changes to the planning system being taken forward through the Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill.

We are amending the planning tests for proposed onshore wind developments to make clear that suitable locations can be identified in a number of ways (rather than solely through an area's development plan).

The government acknowledges the reservations that some respondents had about how to assess whether planning impacts identified by the local community have been addressed. We are taking forward the change in the requirement for planning impacts identified by the affected community being "fully addressed" to "appropriately addressed", so that local authorities can more flexibly address the planning impacts of onshore wind projects as identified by local communities. We will be updating planning practice guidance to support these changes in practice.

After considering concerns raised that the terminology for addressing community identified impacts is inconsistent across footnotes referred to as 62 and 63 in the consultation (in the updated NPPF text, these are now referred to as footnotes 53a and 54 respectively). We have amended the text in footnote 54 from planning impacts identified by the local community being "satisfactorily addressed" to "appropriately addressed". We also amended the text in paragraph 155a from "addressed satisfactorily" to "addressed appropriately" to ensure the terminology is consistent. The Government is also taking forward changes in relation to the repowering and life extensions of existing renewable energy sites to make clearer the circumstances in which these may be approved.

After considering suggestions that we should also include 'life-extension' as an additional exemption alongside 'repowering', we have made this change in footnote to 54 because they are both changes to existing development, and therefore need to be subject to the same planning tests/treated consistently. We have made clear the benefits of re-using existing sites, by indicating that significant weight be given to this when considering applications for the repowering and life-extension of existing sites.

The government acknowledges the comments received requesting definitions and further clarity on certain terms in relation to new onshore wind policy, and as a result, we will shortly be updating planning practice guidance to support these changes in practice.

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