



The countryside charity  
Hampshire

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Position Paper

## Renewable Energy

### CPRE Issue

In principle CPRE supports renewable energy. However renewable energy generation schemes can have serious impacts on landscape character, visual amenity and tranquillity, which CPRE is mandated to protect.

#### *Large wind turbines*

Due to their height and location on high ground, large wind turbines inevitably have significant adverse impacts on the landscape over a very wide area, and so all schemes proposed within Hampshire have been opposed by CPRE Hampshire and local communities, and none have gained approval to date. Wind speeds within the county are understood to be marginal for profitable generation in the absence of government subsidy, and there are currently no applications for large wind turbines within the County.

#### *Solar energy*

Large solar energy schemes not confined to solar panels but will include some or all of: 2-metre-high perimeter fencing, communication masts and buildings, metal clad inverter cabins, access roads, and substation equipment and switchgear - all of which when combined with the solar panels will markedly change the character and appearance of any agricultural site. They also generate electrical noise. A scheme designed to generate 49.9 megawatts (and so avoiding classification as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project) will cover as much as 240 hectares of land (approximately 300 football pitches).

It follows that large schemes will usually have significant adverse impacts on landscape character, visual amenity and tranquillity. This is of particular concern where proposed to be located within National Parks, AONBs, "valued" landscapes, or their settings; also if within the setting of public viewpoints or views from public rights of way - especially national trails or regional long distance routes. There may also be impacts on heritage assets.



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So, we consider that solar energy arrays should be located on brownfield sites, and on the roofs of large industrial or agricultural buildings, rather than on land in use for agriculture. But where a countryside location is deemed essential, an acceptable scale and location within the landscape is vital if the proposal is to be acceptable. The overall plan needs to be landscape led. It will often be possible to contain smaller solar farms successfully within the landscape but large-scale solar farms will rarely be acceptable within a designated, "valued" or highly sensitive landscapes, or their settings. Cumulative impact with other solar farms must be considered. The best and most versatile agricultural land (Grade 3a and above) should not be used for solar panels.

### *Battery Storage Schemes*

Batteries storage facilities generally consist of a number of shipping containers housing the batteries, with a number inverter and transformers, all contained within security fencing. These can have significant adverse impact on landscape and visual amenity. They can also be a significant source of noise, particularly if cooling fans are installed, and will degrade rural tranquillity.

The batteries are of lithium type, with potential to catch fire, and there have been a number of thermal runaway events in this country and internationally which have proved exceptionally difficult to control and have resulted in the release of large amounts of highly toxic gasses as well a large quantity of contaminated water.

Owing to the industrial nature of battery storage facilities, they will rarely be suitable for greenfield locations.

### CPRE Guidance

Under current planning rules, there is no need for the applicant to demonstrate a need for renewable energy, which is assumed. The CPRE focus therefore has to be on the impact of the proposed scheme on landscape character, visual amenity, tranquillity and public enjoyment of the landscape from public viewpoints and rights of way. Also, on heritage assets.

The applicant should be required to justify the proposed location as against alternative sites, including urban sites, brownfield sites and, in the case of solar panels, on the roofs of large industrial or agricultural buildings.



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Where the site is within a National Park, AONB, "valued" landscape, or their setting, the starting point for CPRE is a presumption in favour of objection.

A crucial document in any application will be the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) or, where this is not required, then a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) in order to identify the degree of impact on landscape, visual amenity and tranquillity. Cumulative and intervisibility impacts may need to be considered.

#### Sample Policy - Renewable Energy

1. Development proposals for renewable energy schemes outside settlement policy boundaries that contribute towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions will be permitted only where the proposal:

(a) is accompanied by an accompanying Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment which demonstrates compliance with the landscape character, visual amenity and tranquillity policies of this Plan

(b) does not result in loss of Grade 1, 2 or 3a agricultural land

(c) ensures existing access is not impeded

(d) will only utilise lighting in emergencies

(e) makes provision for the removal of the facilities and reinstatement of the site, should it cease to be operational

In considering the wording of individual policies in Local Plans, it is important to bear in mind that Local Plans must be looked at as a whole. This means, for example, that policies for the protection of landscape must be applied when considering each and every planning application; and accordingly, there is generally no need for other policies to refer specifically to landscape matters.