

Developing Proposals for Renewable Energy Generation

Executive Summary

This report provides an update on Wiltshire Council's approach to energy generation from renewable sources, which includes:

- (i) Developing policies to support renewable energy development for inclusion in the Wiltshire Core Strategy;
- (ii) Developing a Wiltshire Renewable Energy Action Plan; and
- (iii) Supporting and promoting opportunities for renewable energy proposals.

Evidence to support draft policy options for inclusion within the Wiltshire Core Strategy is currently being prepared and will be published for key stakeholder consultation. This includes a study assessing the potential for renewable energy across Wiltshire.

A Wiltshire Renewable Energy Action Plan is proposed for completion by April 2012. This will include targets for renewable energy development in Wiltshire and establish a delivery plan for how these targets can be met. Detailed proposals for completing the action plan will be published later in 2011 following approval of the Energy, Change and Opportunity Strategy.

Proposal

That the Committee:

Considers and comments on the content of this report.

Reason for proposal

To update the Environment Select Committee on the development of renewable energy proposals for Wiltshire.

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Developing Proposals for Renewable Energy Generation

Purpose of report

1. To update the Committee on the development of proposals for energy generation from renewable sources in Wiltshire.

Main Considerations for the Committee

2. Wiltshire Council's approach to energy generation from renewable sources fall into three areas:
 - (i) Developing policies to support renewable energy development for inclusion in the emerging Wiltshire Core Strategy;
 - (ii) Developing a Wiltshire Renewable Energy Action Plan; and
 - (iii) Supporting and promoting opportunities for renewable energy proposals.

These are discussed below.

Wiltshire Core Strategy

3. Work is ongoing to develop the Wiltshire Core Strategy. This will set a strategic policy framework to shape development across the county up to 2026. A draft Core Strategy will be published for public consultation in the spring of 2011, with a final document programmed for submission to the Secretary of State for examination before the end of the year.
4. The Wiltshire Core Strategy will contain policies to be used for determining planning applications across several topic areas, including climate change.
5. Climate change, including development of renewable energy, is a key UK Government priority. A strong national policy framework has been established to drive climate change action and these include the 'Planning and Climate Change Supplement to Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 1'. The planning system is expected to make a significant contribution to reducing Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions, stabilising climate change and to take into account its unavoidable consequences. These matters are often referred to as climate change mitigation and adaptation.
6. The PPS 1 supplement sets out a number of clear requirements for Wiltshire Council, as local planning authority (LPA). These include the need to develop an evidenced based understanding of the local feasibility and potential for renewable and low carbon¹ technologies to supply new development in their area, as well as providing alternative energy sources generally.

¹ Low-carbon energy utilises conventional and non renewable fuels, such as oil or gas, however they use technology which reduces carbon emissions. An example is a very efficient gas fired boiler.

7. The evidence to support the development of climate change policy falls into five main categories:
- (i) Review of relevant national and local policy, including the performance of any existing policies already adopted in Wiltshire;
 - (ii) Review of emerging best practice from other LPAs;
 - (iii) Identifying relevant priorities across Wiltshire communities;
 - (iv) National Indicator (NI) 188 'Planning to Adapt to Climate Change' - ongoing monitoring to help us understand the likely future consequences of climate change in Wiltshire; and
 - (v) A study of renewable energy potential has been undertaken by Camco to fulfil the requirements of the PPS 1 Supplement, as above. A brief summary of some of the main findings of this report are included in **Appendix 1**.
8. In order to adequately address climate change in line with PPS 1, the Core Strategy will need to contain policies relating specifically to renewable energy which:
- (i) Maximise opportunities to deliver decentralised², low-carbon and renewable energy in new development; and
 - (ii) Encourage the development of large scale stand-alone renewable energy schemes in Wiltshire.
9. A Draft Climate Change Topic Paper, identifying the evidence base and policy options, will be available for key stakeholder consultation during February 2011. The paper could be presented to the March meeting of the Committee for comment.

Wiltshire Renewable Energy Action Plan

10. A Draft Wiltshire Energy, Change and Opportunity Strategy has been prepared and will be considered by Cabinet early in 2011. This draft Strategy provides a framework for addressing climate change in Wiltshire and proposes that detailed action plans, including one for renewable energy, will be prepared by April 2012.
11. The draft Strategy suggests that the renewable energy action plan should:
- (i) Set targets for renewable energy for Wiltshire for 2020;
 - (ii) Establish a delivery plan for how the Wiltshire renewable energy targets can be met;
 - (iii) Investigate particular opportunities for large scale renewable energy development in Wiltshire and work with developers to secure inward investment and job creation;
 - (iv) Work with communities across Wiltshire to promote community based renewable energy schemes which should also help to address fuel poverty; and
 - (v) Identify particular opportunities for improving the energy performance of the existing building stock across Wiltshire, including funding sources to deliver these improvements.

² Decentralised energy means generating energy on-site or near to the development site. This is more efficient than generating electricity in large central power stations as a large amount of energy is lost through its distribution.

12. More detailed proposals for developing the Wiltshire Renewable Energy Action Plan could be presented to the Committee for comment once they have been prepared later in 2011.
13. Some specific projects have already been initiated to help increase the delivery of renewable energy in Wiltshire. Details of some example projects have been summarised in **Appendix 2**.

Environmental Impact of the Proposal

14. In line with current planning legislation, the Wiltshire Core Strategy is subject to Sustainability Appraisal (SA), Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulations Assessment. These are processes designed to test the overall sustainability and environmental impact of the strategy. Reports into each of these will be published alongside each stage of the draft Core Strategy.
15. Any potential environmental impacts of the Wiltshire Renewable Energy Action Plan will be considered in more detail once the draft Action Plan has been prepared.

Equality and Diversity Impact of the Proposal

16. There is no direct equalities impact arising from the proposal. The Core Strategy will be subject to an Equalities Impact Assessment.

Risk assessment

17. There are no risks arising directly from the proposal. However, the risks associated with the timely delivery of the Core Strategy and the Energy, Change and Opportunity Strategy are referred to in the Corporate Risk Register.

Financial implications

18. There are no financial implications arising directly from the proposal. Work to prepare the Wiltshire Core Strategy and Wiltshire Renewable Energy Action Plan already form part of the commitments of the Spatial Planning and Climate Change Teams and so there are no further implications.

Legal implications

19. There are no legal implications arising directly from the proposal. The Core Strategy must be prepared in accordance with relevant European and national planning legislation.

Options considered

20. The Council has a statutory duty to prepare a Core Strategy which needs to be developed in accordance with national planning policy and make provision for renewable energy. The Renewable Energy Action Plan will enable delivery of the Core Strategy and renewable energy projects generally in the interests of energy security and helping address fuel poverty.

Conclusion

21. This report provides an overview of Wiltshire Council's approach to energy generation from renewable sources and includes progress on the preparation of renewable energy policies within the Wiltshire Core Strategy and proposal to develop a Wiltshire Renewable Energy Action Plan. In addition, a summary has been provided of the findings of a study undertaken to assess the renewable energy potential in Wiltshire, as well as an overview of projects that have, or will, contribute to the delivery of renewable energy within Wiltshire.
22. The Committee is asked to consider and comment on the contents of this report including whether it would like to receive updates and provide comments on both documents as they develop.

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The following unpublished documents have been relied on in the preparation of this Report:

Draft Wiltshire Energy, Change and Opportunity Strategy
Wiltshire Renewable Energy Planning Study

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Summary of main findings from Draft Wiltshire Renewable Energy Study, Camco (October 2010)

Appendix 2: Summary of Wiltshire projects to promote renewable energy