

## Statement from members of the Government's Renewable Energy Deployment Environmental Issues Project Board

Tackling climate change is imperative for the protection of our valuable natural environment and will require concerted action from all levels of society, including Government, the private sector and individuals. We – the members of the Government's Renewable Energy Deployment: Environmental Issues Project Board – are committed to working together, within the context of our respective statutory obligations, to help address that threat.

A large increase in renewable energy will be a key part of the solution, which is why we strongly support the objectives of the EU Renewable Energy Directive (RED) which has recently been adopted. That requires the UK to achieve 15% of energy use from renewable sources by 2020, a dramatic increase from current levels in a relatively limited amount of time, which reinforces the need for urgent action. It is imperative that the UK manages this revolution in its energy infrastructure – for the national good – whilst continuing to meet statutory obligations on nature conservation and the environment, minimising local adverse environmental impacts where they arise and building public confidence in renewable energy developments. This is a significant challenge that we cannot achieve without a strategic approach from Government.

The RED also requires Member States to take steps to ensure that procedures for licensing and consenting new renewable energy infrastructure are for example, clear, transparent, co-ordinated and proportionate. This will be a particular challenge given the likely significant rise in the number of proposals coming forward to develop renewable energy installations. Consenting bodies and developers will need to work together constructively and effectively to meet that challenge.

We will need to build on the positive practice that is already occurring, as there are many examples of renewable energy developments which have not harmed the natural environment. Early engagement between developers and statutory consultees at the pre-application stage will help to identify issues early and create opportunities to resolve them, so speeding up the consent process. Early engagement will also ensure that developers provide robust, evidence-based assessments of local environmental impacts. In turn, as consenting bodies and statutory consultees we accept the critical roles we will play in helping developers to achieve this and in helping to deliver planning decisions.

We strongly support the need for a large increase in renewable energy and recognise its global benefits in addressing the causes of climate change. We must recognise that in some cases its deployment can lead to adverse local environmental impacts which should be addressed appropriately via the planning process, with the Environmental Impact Assessment and HRA processes rigorously followed where they apply. We also recognise that projects generally, and in particular large projects, have to be carefully sited.

We will therefore work together to help ensure more consistent, evidence based and timely consenting decisions for renewable energy projects, including by:

- improving the consistency and clarity of the requirements on developers through setting clear guidance on environmental impact assessments and on management objectives which are proportionate to environmental objectives;
- improving understanding of the impacts of renewable energy developments and helping developers produce evidence based environmental impact assessments through collating and making available the best possible environmental data, including jointly agreeing standards for transferability and collection of data;
- developing best practice guidance on pre-application engagement with developers, including joined up working between case officers in different organisations to reduce burdens on developers;
- working formally and informally with developers, planning authorities and other stakeholders to help identify locations of high and low sensitivity for renewable energy deployment and thus inform the process of local and regional planning for renewable energy.

We will report regularly on the progress of our work to DECC and Defra Ministers (with the appropriate members reporting as well to Ministers in the Devolved Administrations) and contribute to the UK's first report to the European Commission on progress against the Renewable Energy Directive targets.

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The Renewable Energy Deployment and Environmental Issues Project Board is comprised of the following members:

Department of Energy and Climate Change  
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs  
Department for Communities and Local Government  
Environment Agency  
Natural England  
Joint Nature Conservation Committee  
Forestry Commission  
Countryside Council for Wales  
Scottish Natural Heritage  
Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science  
Marine and Fisheries Agency  
Scottish Government  
Welsh Assembly Government  
Northern Ireland Executive