

# STATES OF JERSEY



## ISLAND PLAN 2011: WIND-FARMS (P.27/2013) – COMMENTS

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Presented to the States on 4th April 2013  
by the Minister for Planning and Environment

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STATES GREFFE

## COMMENTS

### Renewable Energy as an option for Jersey

There is recognition in a number of strategic policy documents already approved by the States<sup>1</sup> that Jersey has natural energy resources whose exploitation could contribute to the goal of achieving secure and sustainable energy for Jersey. Tidal stream technology, tidal range technology and offshore wind all represent real possibilities for Jersey.

The consultation document – the Energy Plan: Pathway 2050 – recognises that there are a number of enabling steps that need to be undertaken before Jersey will be in a position to take forward a renewable energy project (of any technology) and these include –

- Finalising negotiating the ownership of the seabed with the UK.
- Understanding Jersey’s eligibility for EU grants or Incentive Feed-in tariffs to assist the economic feasibility of any project.
- Marine Spatial Planning to better understand potential sites for renewable installations within the marine environment and its many users, e.g. fisheries, navigation routes, biodiversity sensitive sites (e.g. Ramsar sites).
- Further feasibility studies to understand the nature of the resources available to the Island. A feasibility study into tidal streams has already been carried out, and the project to which this proposition and report refers is one that will measure the offshore wind resource.
- Developing and agreeing a legislative and commercial framework within which a project could be considered. Offshore renewable energy legislation would legislate for the environmental, navigation and health and safety aspects of renewable energy installations. This legislation will work alongside the Island Plan, which outlines the requirements for any potential project to carry out an Environmental Impact Assessment for both “Exploratory, appraisal or prototype off-shore utility scale renewable energy proposals” (Policy NR4) or “Exploratory, appraisal or prototype off-shore utility scale renewable energy proposals” (Policy NR5).

The 2011 Island Plan, which was approved by the States only 19 months ago, has a 10 year horizon, and provides an extensive and robust planning policy framework – including the requirement for an Environmental Impact Assessment – against which any proposals for a renewable energy project would need to be considered.

The Plan, including the policies related to offshore renewable energy proposals, was subjected to the most extensive and transparent consultation process ever undertaken for a development plan in Jersey. Following the public inquiry into the Plan and the representations made against it, the independent planning inspectors made the following comments about the planning policies related to offshore renewable energy proposals –

*“As an island, with a lengthy coastline compared with its land area, relatively shallow seas and strong tidal streams, Jersey is well placed to be an exemplar*

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<sup>1</sup> Including the Island Plan 2011, as well as the current and previous Strategic Plans

*for off-shore energy generation. Rightly, the policies include stringent safeguards, and there will be other important material considerations such as the Ramsar designations... we propose no changes to (the) policies”<sup>2</sup>*

On the basis that the Plan and these policies have recently been through a most extensive and robust process of consultation and scrutiny, prior to their adoption and approval by the States, I can see no justification to make amendments to the policies relating to offshore renewable energy proposals at this time.

### **Protection for the marine environment**

It is important to note that this Minister well recognises that Jersey possesses a world-class marine environment that is ‘integral to Island life’. It is therefore essential that the coast is protected and managed so that it can continue to be enjoyed by generations to come<sup>3</sup>.

The Island Plan itself (paragraph 9.42) recognises ‘The very need for Integrated Coastal Zone Management arises from the need to balance the temptation to exploit the resources that our coast and seas provide with the responsibility to protect an outstanding area containing internationally important ecosystems’.

It is recognised that balancing the environmental and other considerations of the marine space is a crucial part of considering a renewable energy project of any type, and will be a central issue should a project come forward in the future.

### **The current position in respect of investigating renewable energy**

Investigation work currently being carried out by the Minister for Planning and Environment and the Renewable Energy Commission does not favour any particular technology since it is considered too early to ‘pick a winner’ for Jersey’s long-term energy mix. Given the number of unknowns and outstanding work that is outlined above, Jersey is not in any position to be certain about what will be appropriate for Jersey, and when. For instance, offshore wind is an established technology, but can be expensive relative to traditional energy sources; and there are environmental challenges to overcome as well as the unpredictable intermittency of the energy resource.

Tidal turbines will offer a good opportunity for Jersey; with initial feasibility work suggesting that an amount of energy roughly equivalent to half the Island’s electricity demand could be generated from the Island’s best site<sup>4</sup>.

### **Safeguarding the marine environment**

Rather than speculate on what further investigations may uncover, the important consideration is that when any renewable energy project (of whatever technology)

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<sup>2</sup> Report to the Minister for Planning and Environment: the Draft Jersey Island Plan 2009 (Vol. 1) Main Report and Appendices (Shepley and Langton) November 2010: paras. 11.14 and 11.17, p.96

<sup>3</sup> Integrated Coastal Zone Management Strategy – ‘Making the most of Jersey’s Coast’

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.gov.je/Government/Pages/StatesReports.aspx?ReportID=615> ‘Tidal Power for Jersey: The next steps’: a report to the Minister for Planning and Environment from the Tidal Power Commission

should come forward, there are a number of safeguards in place to ensure that the many competing factors are considered transparently before a decision is reached: the existing planning policy framework provided by the 2011 Island Plan enables this to happen. To exclude offshore wind at this early stage is considered premature, and may disadvantage Jersey in the long term, relative to the objectives of achieving secure and sustainable energy for Jersey.

For the avoidance of doubt, there is no intention to site wind turbines on the offshore reefs, which are biodiversity sites of great importance and which comprise part of the Coastal National Park, as defined in the Island Plan. To do so would conflict with several Island Plan policies and the aims of the Integrated Coastal Zone Management Strategy. However, erecting a temporary measuring station on the reefs provides an opportunity to measure offshore wind speed as well as collecting meteorological data that could contribute to safety at sea.

However, it is possible that a wind-farm could be viable at the extremities of Jersey's territorial waters, some 25 km from Corbière perhaps in conjunction with the planned St. Brieuc wind-farm that is being planned by the Aires Marines French Consortium. Whilst this is put forward as nothing more than a hypothetical outcome, it illustrates that if an acceptable site (under environmental, navigational and health and safety criteria) could be found, then there might be potential to further explore the opportunities that offshore wind technology could offer Jersey. However, to adopt this proposition would seriously undermine this possibility.

### **Financial and manpower implications**

My Department would be diverted from working towards some of the business plan objectives set out in the 2013 Business Plan as a result of this proposition being supported.

Any amendment to the 2011 Island Plan would require the engagement of an independent planning inspector to undertake an examination in public of the proposed amendment, and any representations made in relation to it, with consequential financial implications, which have not been specifically budgeted for.

### **Conclusion**

I cannot support this proposition. To do so at this stage will limit Jersey's options. It is misplaced to conclude that a proposed measuring project using temporary masts on the offshore reefs is a pre-cursor to siting wind turbines on these sensitive areas. This is absolutely not the case. Instead, my Department simply seeks to further understand the potential of the wind resource in the wider context.

It may be that in the future an offshore wind project might be considered. But such a project would need to demonstrate economic feasibility, and that it could satisfactorily address the impacts found from a transparent and thorough Environmental Impact Assessment, as required under the existing Island Plan policy framework.

I consider there are sufficient safeguards in place that are provided by the existing Island Plan policy framework to consider these issues at the appropriate time, and that to decide at this point that Jersey does not want to further investigate wind energy is short-sighted and premature.