



Scottish Women's Convention response to the Scottish Government's:

Onshore Wind Policy Statement

January 2022

Premise

Onshore wind is a proven cheap and reliable source of electricity generation, and Scotland's resource and commitment have seen us lead the way in onshore wind deployment and support across the UK.

Onshore wind will be vital in our progress towards Scotland's legally binding net zero targets. Scotland's net zero commitment presents the perfect opportunity to revisit and reassess the Scottish Government's original Onshore Wind Policy Statement that was published in 2017.

This consultation will consider how the Scottish Government can strengthen its support for Onshore Wind deployment in Scotland, specifically consulting on their ambition for an additional 8-12 Gigawatts to be installed by 2030, how to tackle the barriers to deployment, and how to secure maximum economic benefit from these developments.

The Scottish Women's Convention (SWC)

The Scottish Women's Convention (SWC) is funded to engage with women throughout Scotland in order that their views might influence public policy. The SWC uses the views of women to respond to a variety of parliamentary, governmental, and organisational consultation papers at both a Scottish and UK level.

The SWC engages with women using a range of methods, including roadshow events, thematic conferences, and regional contact groups. This submission provides the views of women, reflecting their opinions and experiences in key areas relevant to women's equality.

The SWC is currently engaging with women through digital roadshows, online surveys, asking women to comment by email, and by telephoning those who want to talk. We are also using our wide network to ask women to collate views in their local communities and forward these to us on a regular basis. We are continuing to review innovative ways of engaging with women throughout Scotland using whichever medium is appropriate to them.

CURRENT POSITION

4. This section also underlines the Scottish Government's strong commitment to the role of community energy, and to community benefit and shared ownership. In what ways can we maximise the benefits of these policies as onshore wind development and repowering increases over the coming decade?

Women reflected on the fact that wind farms are already having an impact on rural communities.

- There must be consideration for the strain on local resources that comes with the building of new wind farms.
- Often, community projects or plans are promised but then not delivered and this can leave communities feeling exploited, resentful and disengaged.
- Some people are moving away from once beautiful rural communities because they feel too much infrastructure is undermining the reasons why they moved to the countryside.
- Some people feel a sense of injustice if they have to see wind farms near their home but do not have reliable access to amenities and infrastructure themselves in their own homes.
- There needs to be better infrastructure around wind farms – e.g., if it is bringing in jobs, to the area, you need to back that up with more schools, shops, GP practices etc.

Women discussed the community funds that are often offered when a wind farm is developed in an area. It cannot just be a case of throwing money at communities, but rather pursuing and investing time in more meaningful engagement and support.

- “Early community involvement and community throughout the planning process and application process will be key.”
- “A good idea would be training and more help with networking to find out how other communities might be doing it better and exchange best practice for them to use those funds. The funds can come into the millions and communities don't always know the best ways to use them.”
- One woman spoke very highly of a project that was run by Keep Scotland Beautiful in her own rural community which could be used as a template for when a wind farm is coming to a community - “The purpose was to collaboratively create this climate action plan and it was really good because people got really stuck into the conversations that they'd not really had before because they were really specific to the local area. So a lot of people got really engaged and it has continued beyond the trial period that they were facilitated and it's got people not just thinking about what to do to but actually doing the things that they'd said they'd do for ages.”
- “If you can get community leaders on board, they are like gatekeepers. If we can get the message to them, then they will take the message to their communities because we can't personally get to everyone.”

- “I think a lot of it is that the community gets offered big money, but I’m not sure how transparent it is when you can apply for money to have a windmill on your land and people then make a lot of money.”
- Women highlighted good examples of community projects in Galloway and in Argyll & Bute where the community has come together to agree on how the grant will be spent.

FUTURE POSITION AND NET ZERO

6. What are your views on the installed onshore wind capacity that will be necessary over the coming decade, recognising the ambition Scottish Government have proposed for 8-12GW? Please share any evidence.

On the whole, women were positive about onshore wind, believed that its benefits outweighed any potential unsightliness, and wanted to see more renewable energy.

- “What’s the difference between having a windmill or having an oil rig? You can see them both, but people don’t complain about seeing an oil rig.”
- “I may not love wind farms but they are a necessary evil at this point.”
- “Wind farms are definitely not spoiling the landscape. We definitely need it and we need to embrace it.”
- “I don’t mind seeing wind mills but driving about sometimes I do think ‘this is a part of the world where you couldn’t see any signs of humans other than the road’.”
- “I love the look of them. I love when you’re out in nature and you can see all the windmills, I don’t think that’s a problem. Other people say they hate that and it’s spoiling the environment but it’s not like when they started putting up electricity pylons everywhere and ruining everything. I think they are making an effort to make things more aesthetically pleasing nowadays, but personally I just always welcome it when I see it.”
- “You don’t hear quite the same outrage about mobile phone masts, although that is more of a health issue people come up with.”
- “My youngest grandson thinks wind turbines are phenomenal! He watches them all the time.”
- “With wind farms, when they come to take them out, the environmental impact is less than with pylons or other ways of generating electricity.”
- “I would say of onshore wind is the most successful form of renewable energy we have.”
- “I think there are many people that agree in principle with onshore and offshore wind farms, but it becomes an issue when the development is in your backyard and you’re going to have to pass by it every day. I think we all need to be more climate clever at this point and increase more knowledge about wind and all these other technologies and be excited about it.”
- “On some of the islands, they have had a turbine put up and that’s supplying all of their electric and that’s fantastic for the community, so if only that could be tried out elsewhere.”

However, there are some concerns around how land is used:

- “You shouldn’t take down forests to build wind farms. That would be my instinct. We do want to have more forests in Scotland with precious habitats, and that’s where the tension comes. We have a given amount of land mass so it’s how you optimise that by making turbines more efficient.”
- “My preference would be to do what some other countries have been doing which is the sea turbines, putting them in the sea rather than on the land. But that requires the political will to pay more for it.”

BARRIERS TO DEPLOYMENT: ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

14. From your own experience what can wind farm developments offer in terms of protecting and enhancing the natural environment, in particular through the planting of trees to compensate for those lost during windfarm development and through peatland restoration?

“The one thing I am familiar with is the wind farms on peatlands which is definitely a no go. I would imagine if they were thinking of cutting down trees and putting wind farms and then putting wind farms on that, it would depend on the type of forest. Where we operate a pumped hydro station next to protected land, there is no way we would be looking to a development that would cutting down trees as these are protected ancient woodlands. A commercial forest, which might be cut down and replanted and you think that the area would be great for wind, that’s when you would have to do a more case by case study of what’s involved and would it make sense from a carbon and environmental point of view. I appreciate having a more blanket ‘this all goes’ offers more predictability to the developer, but I don’t know if environmentally offers the best outcome.”

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

18. What support do Scottish companies need from Scottish Government and agencies in order to successfully bid for and win contracts?

One woman who worked in the commercial side of wind energy said that she felt the timescales for financing and planning wind farms were too long and this is holding up the strategy as a whole.

“There is also the resourcing element to consider, I’m not sure if all local authorities have enough planning officers that would have to deal with those applications coming in. Also, I’m thinking of the statutory consultees like NatureScot and the limited resources there. I think it would be useful from a natural planning framework point of view to have targets by decade or 5 years what they think should come in in case that helps us have better idea of the volume of projects and planning applications, talk of tripling the current capacity.”

One woman spoke to us about the planning process for wind farms and the fact that she recommended to other women that they should turn their tacit support into proactively writing supportive contributes – “So when people are putting in their applications for

planning, they always receive quite a few letters of opposition, and it's not huge numbers but they do have to count them. Even though there's a silent majority of people who want them, either people who don't mind or people who do really like them but just wouldn't think to write to their council in support of a planning proposal. So she said a really good thing would be that if you hear of a wind farm proposal, then write in support rather than staying silent and then assuming you approve of it."

20. How can individual organisations (including onshore wind developers, tier 1 suppliers, and the domestic supply chain) work collaboratively to ensure that key manufacturing projects for Scottish onshore wind stays in Scotland?

Women are very much in favour of keeping production in Scotland:

- "I live in the Mull of Kintyre, and Machrihanish has a lot of windmills... It doesn't make sense to me. We've made ourselves vulnerable. We've got to be self-sufficient, but we are now going to China to ask for nuclear power help, we are going to France for this, that and the other. We could have made our own windmills. Being on the Clyde there is lots of opportunities to do that."

21. Circular economy and zero-waste are core principles that the Scottish Government are promoting. Where do you see the economic opportunities in relation to these policy issues lying with onshore wind? And are there any practical issues you think need to be addressed in order to maximise the benefits?

Many women are very keen on renewables and green alternatives in principle, but there are still lots of issues with accessibility and affordability.

- "I think that's where the government needs to step up, in making things affordable. They need to make it the default, so people aren't having to actively try to be more green."
- Women are already very concerned about price hikes in energy bills because we know that women tend to be in more precarious work with lower pay and are more likely to be single parents in in-work poverty.
- There was some reference to the fact it is often women who organise the family budget and this could be why women are more wary of the price implications of renewable energy. More needs to be done to find the cheapest options and alleviate people's genuine concerns.

22. How can the Scottish Government best support skills for the future of the onshore wind sector? Specifically, we would be interested in oil and gas transition, apprenticeships and entry-level positions for young people, as well as any other experiences you can share.

"What I'm hoping is that we'll come up with more and more efficient solutions so that we can make more energy but with fewer wind farms. As the money is put into these things and scientists refine it, I think it will get better. But it all starts with having to put the money into it, and you need to get the right people into the industry so you need to be paying good money."

The energy and infrastructure sectors are still very male-dominated. More needs to be done to encourage and support women into these roles.

- Only one of the women who came forward to speak to us actually worked in the energy sector. She said “when I’m in meetings I’m either the only or one of two women... when you see the actual engineers, they tend to be middle aged and older men. We have only one female apprentice, for example.”
- “They argue that these new technologies are better for women as they are cleaner, get to be outside more, and are more mechanised these days so the issue of body strength isn’t so much of an issue. I think it should be seen as a more established career path for women.”
- “I think it goes back to school. I didn’t think engineering was for me. I didn’t think I would be smart enough, clever enough, mathematics and whatever is involved and now I’m regretting it. When I see what my colleagues are doing, I feel like I could do that.”
- “Finding spokeswomen that can go to schools to talk to people. Doing more events geared towards younger women, we had different networking groups for women in the energy sector like power women for example. Or science clubs where girls’ participation could be promoted.”
- Ensuring women feature in adverts about wind farms or employment drives.
- “In Scotland we have Claire Mac who is head of Scottish renewables, always talking intelligently about the technology and the future of the industry. More of that would be great and more of that at school level, kids are still deciding on what they would like to do.”

23. Do you have any views on the impact of wind farms on tourism?

Women suggested opportunities that could bring tourism to wind farms:

- Supporting local B&Bs when people are working on the wind farm sites
- Having visitors’ centres alongside the wind farm with information about the local area, the energy history of the area, or about how the wind farm works

24. What is your organisation doing specifically to promote diversity and inclusion in the onshore wind sector?

- We are consulting women to find out their views and lived experience of the onshore wind sector
- Sharing information about projects and how to be more involved in planning processes with women across Scotland
- Highlighting the barriers faced by women in this sector to the Scottish Government
- Building networks of women to discuss onshore wind and other green issues

Conclusion

The SWC is grateful for the opportunity to respond to the Scottish Government's consultation on the Onshore Wind Policy Statement. As an organisation, we will continue to work with women from across Scotland to gather voices and experiences relating to this topic and its effects on women's equality.

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