

Consultation on National Policy Statements Overarching National Energy Infrastructure Policy



What is Planning Aid?

Planning Aid offers people the opportunity to get involved in the development of their local areas. We provide free and independent professional planning advice to community groups and individuals who cannot afford to pay professional fees. We work with communities to help them understand and play a role in the planning process. We are an independent source of advice and information on planning issues, not part of central or local government.

The new planning process for nationally significant infrastructure

The 2008 Planning Act introduced a new planning system for applications to build nationally significant infrastructure facilities in England and Wales. The new system covers applications for major energy generation, railways, ports, major roads, airports and water and waste infrastructure. Under the new system, national policy on infrastructure will be set out in a series of new National Policy Statements (NPS) which can be reviewed by the Secretary of State if there is a change in circumstances. A new independent body, the Infrastructure Planning Commission (IPC), will examine and decide applications for new infrastructure development, using the criteria on national need, benefits and impacts set out in the NPS, and consideration of evidence put forward on potential local effects.

Why should I get involved in the debate on National Policy Statements?

In autumn 2009 the Government published the first set of draft National Policy Statements (NPS) for public consultation. It is important to make your views known because once finalised the NPS will provide the framework for future decisions by the IPC on individual applications. Issues relating to the need for a specific type of infrastructure will not be debated again. Each NPS will be accompanied by an Appraisal of Sustainability on which comments are also invited. Except for the NPS on nuclear power stations and airports, specific locations for infrastructure are not identified although criteria may guide developers to appropriate types of area.

Overarching Energy Infrastructure Policy

This Overarching National Policy Statement (NPS) establishes national policy for major energy infrastructure provision in England and Wales. It is supplemented by technology specific NPS for nuclear power stations, renewable energy generation, fossil fuel power stations, oil and gas pipelines and gas storage, and electricity power lines (see separate leaflets), which must be read with the Overarching NPS and which together form the primary basis for IPC decisions on energy infrastructure applications.

The objectives of government energy and climate change policy for the power industry are to reduce emissions; provide security of energy supply; expand grid capacity; keep costs down; and contribute to sustainable development.

A large number of power stations are due to close over the next 10 – 15 years (oil, coal and nuclear) and significant new electricity generating capacity is needed to meet future demand and ensure that peak demands and unexpected events do not lead to interruptions in supply. The NPS sets out a diverse energy mix to deliver the new capacity requirements and makes clear that the IPC does not need to

consider the relative advantages of the different technologies. By 2020 around 30% of future electricity generation will be from renewable sources. Nuclear power will be an important part of the mix and will potentially amount to 40% of new capacity by 2025. New fossil fuel (oil, coal and gas) electricity generating stations with carbon capture and storage are expected to be operational by 2020, and a 'smarter' electricity grid for distribution is required. Imported gas will become increasingly important as production in the North Sea declines and will require new infrastructure.

The NPS also sets out five key principles which will guide the IPC when deciding applications, these are:

- If the development contributes to meeting the need and is in accordance with the NPS, then consent should be given;
- Regard should had to local impact reports (produced by local authorities) and other matters considered relevant and important;
- National, regional and local benefits (environmental, social and economic) should be taken into account of;
- Adverse impacts should be considered, longer term and cumulative impacts and proposed mitigation; and
- If the IPC considers that the adverse impacts (after mitigation) outweigh the benefits, then consent should be refused.

In the event of a conflict with existing planning policy, the NPS will be followed.

The NPS identifies a series of criteria and impacts applying to all energy infrastructure projects which the IPC will take into account when reaching a decision. These include:

- Good design
- Air Emissions – the impact on the health of ecosystems and Air Quality Management Areas.
- Biodiversity and Geological Conservation – particular consideration of impacts on designated ecology sites and mitigation.

- Aviation and Defence Interests – includes consideration of effects on civil and military airports and aerodromes, radar and other military interests.
- Coastal Change – resilience to coastal change, taking account of climate change, impacts on marine biodiversity and designated areas of conservation.
- Nuisance from Noise, Odour, Dust, Light, Smoke etc – impacts on amenity must be considered.
- Flood Risk – Flood Risk Assessment is required. Development in a flood risk area must be designed to remain operational if floods occur.
- Historic Environment – includes consideration of effects on listed buildings, archaeology, historic monuments and world heritage sites.
- Landscape and Visual Impacts – the character and value of landscapes, especially National Parks and AONBs.
- Land Use – impacts on high quality agricultural land, Green Belt (England) and Green Wedges (Wales), coastal recreation sites, open space and sports facilities.
- Social and Economic Impacts - positive and negative impacts will be considered.
- Traffic and Transport – mitigation of impacts will be required.
- Waste Management – requires effective management of hazardous and non-hazardous waste.
- Water Quality and Resources – have regard to the Water Framework Directive

Further information on the consultation process, the questions on which comments are sought, related events, the draft NPS and the supporting documentation is available on the Department for Energy and Climate Change website www.energynpsconsultation.decc.gov.uk. Welsh language, Braille and large print copies are available on request. Responses can be submitted online, by letter, fax or email. The consultation will close on 22 February 2010.



Contact Details

You can call the Planning Aid NPS advice line for independent advice. Initially advice will be given to all. If your enquiry is more complex and meets our eligibility criteria, you will be assisted by a qualified planning advisor or volunteer. If you can afford to pay, you will be referred to a planning consultant.

Planning Aid on 0121 214 2915 or www.planningaid.rtpi.org.uk

Planning Aid for London on 020 7247 4900 or www.planningaidforlondon.org.uk

Planning Aid for Wales on 02920 485765 or www.planningaidwales.org.uk

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