

Managing Landscape Change: Renewable & Low-carbon Energy Developments – a Landscape Sensitivity Framework for North Yorkshire and York

- **Local authority area:** North Yorkshire and York
- **Stakeholders:** Steering Group (LGYH, North Yorkshire County Council, North York Moors NPA, Hambleton DC, Selby DC), Consultants (AECOM)

Summary

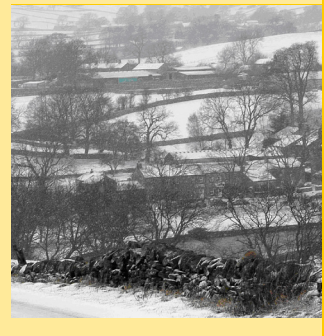
The development of a guidance-based framework for policy making / development management. It synthesises existing sub-regional studies on landscape sensitivity, and the capacity of the landscape to accommodate renewable and low-carbon energy (RLCE) schemes.

Key learning points

- Understanding national policy context
- Understanding landscape character assessment
- References to a wide range of other relevant national and sub-national guidance
- Synthesising existing work as a means of providing for and assessing RLCE schemes

Background

- Studies have been completed which help to provide certainty around the potential to deliver RLCE. These include:
 - 2005 (Land Use Consultants) Delivering sustainable energy in North Yorkshire: Recommended planning guidance
 - 2011 (AECOM) Yorkshire and Humber Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Potential Study
- Local authorities now have the task of translating these documents into their Local Development Frameworks in order to help realise RLCE potential. One of the key considerations when balancing these studies against other competing objectives is the impact that RLCE may have on the rich and diverse landscape resource within the sub-region.
- Planners in North Yorkshire now have a framework that moves forward some of the evidence within the studies currently available,



and that provides a means of developing policies – whilst considering landscape impacts in a pragmatic and pro-active manner.

- The 2011 AECOM Regional Capacity Study identifies the strong role that wind will play in realising the potential for RLCE generation in the sub-region. The visual impact of turbines is a common source of debate around wind energy developments. Windy sites most suitable for a wind farm development are often in prominent positions, such as on the brow of hills. This, combined with the scale of the turbines themselves, often leads to a relatively high visual impact.

Method

- Aecom have developed of an appraisal methodology for assessing the suitability of RLCE development types in relation to the sensitivity of any given area of landscape or biodiversity within the sub-region. This includes consideration of cross-character area thinking and analysis, i.e. the relationship between character areas and how generation activity in one has the indirect potential to affect another. Based on this, three case studies were developed to illustrate worked examples of the proposed appraisal methodology. Each case study comprises the following information:
 - Location plan to define scale and scope of area;
 - Summary description of existing character and existing landscape issues/considerations;
 - A tabulated matrix setting out the assessment of the sensitivity of the landscape to different types of RLCE development (development types to comprise those technologies/installations considered in the Aecom Regional Capacity Study, 2011), assessed against a set of typical attributes and comparable criteria related to key landscape characteristics e.g. scale and enclosure / landform and topography / land cover and landscape pattern / settlement pattern and density / landmarks / built form and vernacular style / skyline and visual connection with adjacent landscapes;
 - A judgement in relation to the capacity of the landscape to accept change of the types assessed, based on sensitivity and value - the judgement is broad, identifying whether there would be low, medium or high capacity, for example.

Result - Key outcomes and impact

- The key deliverable is a report summarising the above which is set out thus:
- Introduction (including a summary of the brief and of the methods used to undertake the study).
- Policy Context of RLCE in relation to landscape and biodiversity
 - National Level
 - Regional Level
 - Local Level (Including examples of best practice from the UK).
- A Framework for Policy Development and Decision Making in North Yorkshire and York (to include guidance relating to the level of

information that should be expected to support a typical planning application).

- Case Studies for the following identified areas:
 - Vale of Mowbray
 - The Humberhead Levels
 - The North Yorkshire Moors

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References / Links

On completion (spring 2012) the Framework will be shared across all local planning authorities in the sub-region, who will, as appropriate, provide ways of making the guidance more widely available.