EU guidance on 'Wind energy developments and Nature Conservation'

Dr. Micheal O'Briain

Deputy Head of Nature Unit

DG Environment, European Commission

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CONTEXT

- **EU has adopted far reaching '*climate change and renewable energy*' commitments to cut greenhouse gas emissions, increase the use of renewable energy and cut energy consumption by 2020**
- **EU has also ambitious targets to halt and reverse the loss of biodiversity by 2020: NATURA 2000 ecological network critical to achieving biodiversity goals**
- **Potential conflicts between climate change mitigation and biodiversity policy - *Wind energy developments should be carried out in a sustainable and balanced way that does not lead to significant damage to sensitive areas of high conservation importance.***

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Growth in Renewable energies in EU

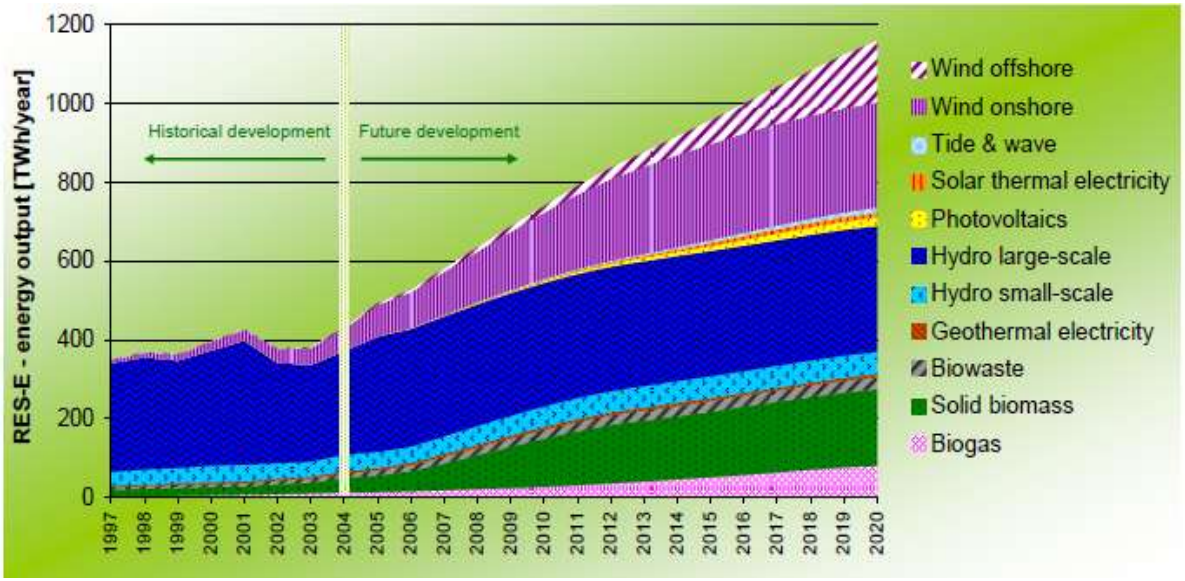
Various forms:

- *Solar*
- *Wind,*
- *Aerothermal*
- *Geothermal*
- *Hydrothermal*
- *Ocean energy*
- *Hydropower,*
- *Biomass*
- *Biowaste*
- *Biogasses*

Various uses:

- *to produce electricity*
- *for heating and cooling*
- *for fuel for transport*

Projected growth likely to be substantial



Renewables growth: electricity projections by 2020 – from Commission Communication COM(2006) 848 final, 10.1.2007 'Renewable Energy Road Map:

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Are developments restricted in NATURA 2000 sites ?

- no '*a priori*' prohibition of new activities or developments
- judged on 'case by case' basis
- procedure for assessments & decisions
- additional safeguards for priority habitats/spp

Art.6.3 of the Habitats Directive

Any plan or project likely to have a significant effect on the site shall be subject to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives. The competent authorities shall agree to the plan or programme only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site.

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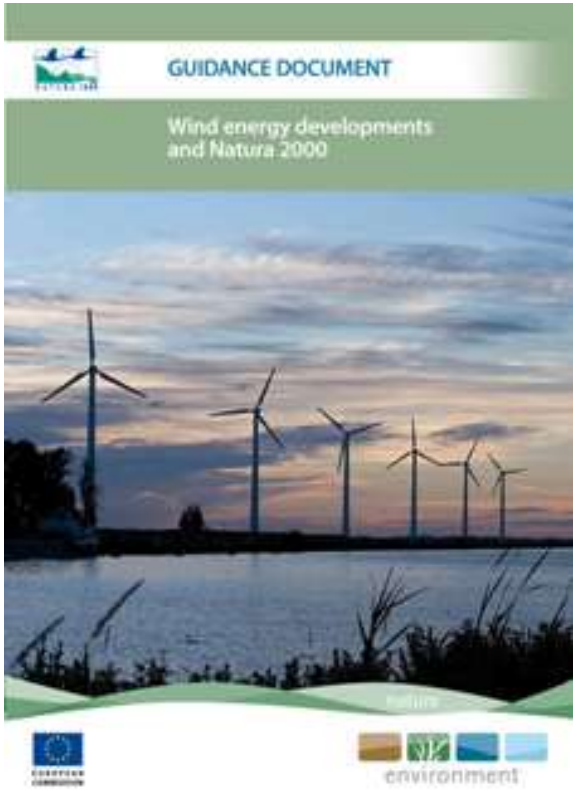
Aims of Guidance

To provide guidance on how best to ensure that wind energy developments are compatible with Habitats and Birds Directives

To Promote good practice in relation to location, planning, design, construction and operation of wind farms and their associated infrastructures in order to minimise their impact on biodiversity



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Target audience for Guidance

1. **competent authorities in countries planning for wind energy as well as those dealing with protecting natura 2000 sites.**

2. **It should also be relevant to developers in clarifying the relevant EU/international legal and policy context and promoting practice that minimise future conflicts.**

3. **Finally, it should also be of interest to other stakeholders including NGOs**

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Organisation of Guidance - Chapters

1. **Purpose of the guidance document**

2. **A review of wind energy development in context of EU climate change and energy goals and EU policy framework for development**

3. **a review of EU legislation on nature and biodiversity and of the relationship between SEA,EIA and « Appropriate Assessments » under Article 6 of Habitats Directive**

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Organisation of Guidance - Chapters

4 A review of potential impacts of wind energy developments on nature and wildlife

- ***Impacts during different phases of wind farm development***
- ***Impacts of different aspects of project (turbines, grid connections etc)***
- ***Types of impact (collision mortality, barrier effect, disturbance and distancing, habitat loss of degradation***
- ***Particularly sensitive species***
- ***Assessing significance of impacts***
- ***Looking out for cumulative effects***

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Organisation of Guidance - Chapters

5 Strategic planning of wind farm developments as a means to:

- ***Ensure more efficient and integrated decision making***
- ***Avoid and minimse conflicts later on at project level***
- ***Ensure the appropriate siting of wind farms in areas of low or no conflicts with nature and wildlife (incl Natura 2000 sites)***

Illustrated by good practice examples of how this has been achieved in practice in different parts of the EU

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Organisation of Guidance - Chapters

6. Step by step guide to the procedures under Article 6 for wind farm developments affecting Natura 2000 sites

- ***Stage 1 : screening: when is an Appropriate Assessment needed?***
- ***Stage 2: carrying out an Appropriate assessment***
  - **Purpose**
  - **Timing**
  - **Who does the AA**
  - **Scoping and information gathering**
  - **Assessing the impacts on a Natura 2000 site**
  - **Considering how to mitigate adverse effects**
  - **Long term monitoring requirements and adaptive management**
  - **Recording the results of the Appropiate assessment**

- ***Stage 3: in case of negative assessment – examining alternative solutions***
- ***Stage 4: exceptions for IROPI and compensation***

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KEY MESSAGES

- **Planning wind farm developments in a strategic manner over a broad geographical area is the most effective means of minimising the impacts of wind farms on nature and wildlife**

- **It not only leads to a more integrated development framework but reduces the risk of difficulties and delays later on – eg at level of individual projects**

- **Evidence to date shows that wind power does not have to threaten wildlife but appropriate siting is critical and must be first goal of any planning process**

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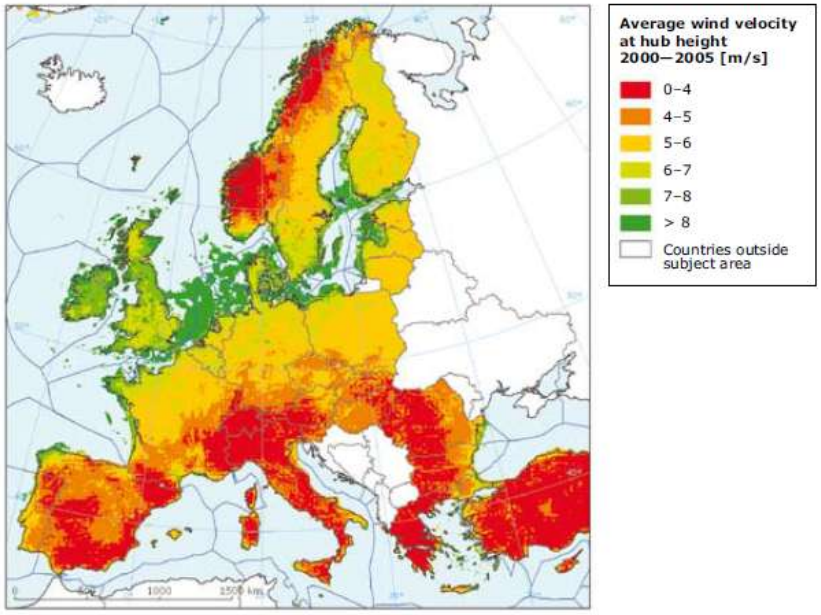
KEY MESSAGES

EEA report on Europe's wind energy potential concluded that even if all Natura 2000 sites and other protected nature areas were theoretically excluded from wind energy development, there would still be enough wind potential to supply 3-7 times the total estimated energy demand in 2020 and 2030



Source: EEA, 2008.

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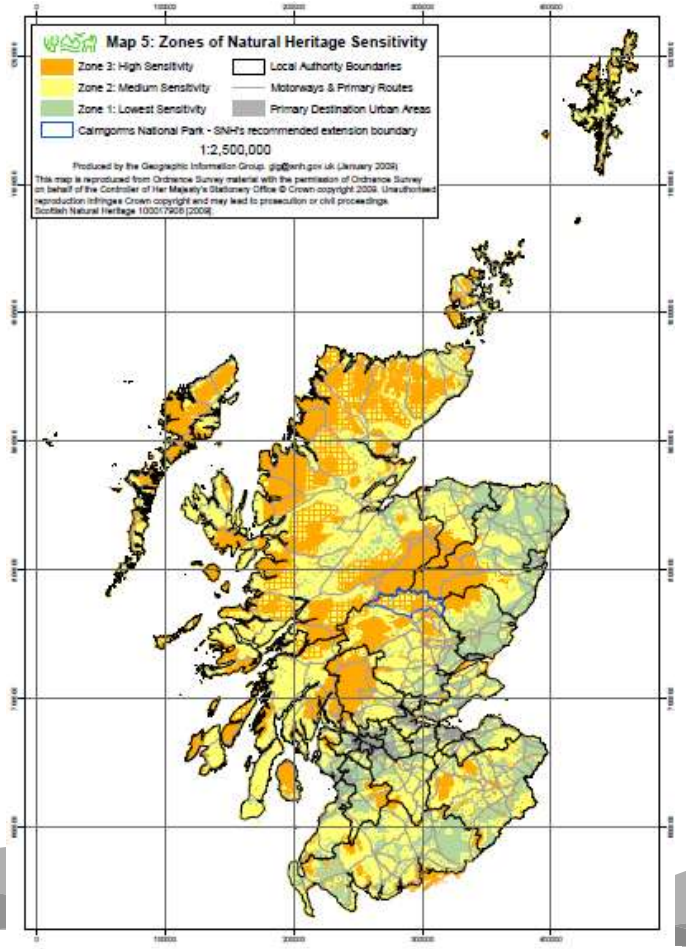
EC Guidance on wind energy
KEY MESSAGES

Developing wildlife sensitivity maps at strategic planning stage enables areas to be identified where wind farm development might be considered a :

- **low,**
- **medium or**
- **high risk**

in terms of nature and wildlife.

Scottish example of good practice



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EC Guidance on wind energy
KEY MESSAGES

Project environmental assessments appear to be of varying quality and there is a need for improved assessment procedures, tools and standards.

Need to measure significance of effects in the context of the conservation objectives of the Natura 2000 area which in turn, is based on the conservation status and needs of the species and habitat types of EU concern for which the site is designated

Assessment must be based on sound science - lack of scientific data or information on potential risk or significance of impacts cannot be accepted as reason for proceeding with a plan or project

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Thank you for your attention !

More information is available at:

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature

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