

Pembrokeshire Friends of the Earth response to the proposed Atlantic Array Offshore Wind Farm

Pembrokeshire Friends of the Earth supports the application made by Channel Energy Ltd for development consent to construct and operate the proposed Atlantic Array Offshore Wind Farm.

The development, which would have a capacity of up to 1200 MW producing enough electricity to meet the average electricity needs of up to 900,000 homes each year, is just the sort of large-scale renewable energy project that is needed to reduce climate-changing emissions, improve energy security, help the on-going development of the rapidly growing green economy in the UK, and make an important contribution towards enabling the UK government to meet its legal target of generating 15% of energy demand from renewable sources by 2020.

Although the government has not set specific targets for wind energy, DECC's latest 'roadmap' for renewable energy suggests that by 2028 around 18 GW of offshore wind could be needed, compared to under 4 GW available today. Last year, only 4% of UK energy demand was met by renewable sources indicating the significant challenge we face in reaching the target of 15% by 2020, and the importance of developing large windfarms such as the Atlantic Array.

We do not believe that landscape/seascape concerns are sufficient to jeopardise the development of this project. It would be 28 km from the nearest point on the Pembrokeshire coast (St Govan's Head), with the nearest point to land anywhere being Lundy Island at a distance of 14 km. With climate change continuing to be such a major threat, and with efforts at reducing climate-changing gases to date being so inadequate, we do not have the luxury of opposing such an important clean energy development so far from land. We believe that if the development of applications such as this are prevented from going ahead because of landscape/seascape concerns, humanity hardly deserves to survive the threat posed by climate change.

We are pleased that the developer has undertaken extensive studies of the environmental impact of the proposed wind farm. It is important, however, that the application gains the approval of the RSPB and similar wildlife organisations.

Although applications for wind farms often attract more attention from opponents than from supporters, it is important to note that public opinion polls consistently show significant support for wind energy in the UK. The recent DECC "public attitudes tracker" survey - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/public-attitudes-tracking-survey-wave-6> - found that 71% of people support offshore wind with just 8% opposing. Overall, the poll found that support for renewable energy sources to provide the U.K.'s electricity, fuel and heat remains strong at 76%.

We are pleased that the developer has a strategy in place to ensure local and UK based contractors are well placed to successfully bid for work. We hope that this strategy is effective and that Pembrokeshire County Council and the Pembrokeshire National Park Authority give this application their full backing and make every effort to ensure that Pembrokeshire reaps economic benefits.

The next Inter-Governmental Panel on Climate Change report is due on 27th of September and is expected to strengthen the scientific evidence for anthropogenic climate change and the need for urgent action to address it. The Atlantic Array windfarm should be a part of our response to this threat.

