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Dedham Vale AONB Position Statement (March 2013)

# Renewable Energy in the Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

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## Introduction

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) are designated by the Government for the purpose of ensuring that the special qualities of the finest landscapes in England and Wales are conserved and enhanced.

## Purpose

This position statement, endorsed by the Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Joint Advisory Committee, provides guidance to local planning authorities, landowners and other interested parties regarding development proposals for renewable energy technologies in the Dedham Vale AONB.

## Background

The Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Joint Advisory Committee supports renewable energy generation within the AONB or contiguous areas provided it is consistent with conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area. The Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Management Plan 2010-15, endorsed by all the local authorities covering the AONB and Stour Valley, has a management policy LFB4 which requires development in the area to:

*Seek to protect the tranquillity of the area, including its setting, from intrusive communication and utility infrastructure; noisy recreational pursuits; air traffic; some forms of national scale renewable energy facilities and light pollution.<sup>1</sup>*

This position is in line with Government Policy on renewable energy and for developments within protected landscapes as described in the National Planning Policy Framework which gives AONBs the ‘highest status of protection.’<sup>2</sup>

## Position

The Joint Advisory Committee recognises that small scale renewable energy projects may contribute to reducing emissions and may be accommodated within the AONB landscape without causing significant harm.

The Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Joint Advisory Committee consider that the contribution to renewable energy targets that can be made from within the AONB or in a setting adversely affecting its natural beauty is small, while the potential harm to a national asset is large.

The question of what constitutes small scale development is crucial as is the impact any development would have on the landscape and its character. Development applications within the AONB need to be judged on their individual merits. Development within existing settlements where there is a prevalence of man made structures may cause less adverse impact on landscape character than those in the open countryside.

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<sup>1</sup> Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Management Plan 2010-15: management policy LFB4

<sup>2</sup> National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 115

The Joint Advisory Committee considers:

- Large scale developments for renewable energy within or affecting the setting of the AONB are likely to be inappropriate<sup>3</sup>.
- Additional benefits offered by community proposed developments will be considered when responding to applications.
- Small single wind turbines promoted by local communities and individual businesses and designed to produce energy for local use are likely to be more easily accepted in the AONB.
- Photovoltaic installations promoted by individuals, local communities and individual businesses and designed to produce energy for local use are likely to be more easily accepted in the AONB. Visual impacts of such installations, including the infrastructure required for tracking, should not significantly impact adversely on the landscape character of the AONB.
- Ground source heat pumps are likely to have minimal adverse landscape implications.
- Small scale hydro-electric schemes are welcomed where biodiversity issues are mitigated.
- Small scale biofuel schemes are welcomed where issues relating to traffic flow; landscape character and biodiversity do not significantly impact upon the AONB.
- Small scale bioenergy schemes are a welcome contribution to farm diversification where they do not significantly adversely impact upon landscape and biodiversity.

All development can have a positive or negative impact upon the landscape. The Joint Advisory Committee would wish to work with developers to minimise any adverse impacts on the landscape.

The Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Joint Advisory Committee recognise that new technologies for developing renewable energy technology develops rapidly and they may update this position statement at any time.

The Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Joint Advisory Committee have produced a management plan for the whole of the Stour Valley and would wish that the protection applied to the AONB is equally applied to the wider Stour Valley.

### **National Policy**

The National Planning Policy Framework seeks to ‘help increase the use and supply of renewable and low carbon energy’ but adds the caveat ‘ensuring that adverse impacts are addressed satisfactorily, including cumulative landscape and visual impacts’<sup>4</sup>

### **For further information**

Contact the Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Project team on 01473 264263 or [dedhamvale.project@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:dedhamvale.project@suffolk.gov.uk)

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<sup>3</sup> See position statement on Development in the setting of the Dedham Vale AONB at <http://www.dedhamvalestourvalley.org/assets/planning/Setting-of-Dedham-Vale-AONB.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 97