

How Wind Energy Developers & Locally Elected Officials Behave

November 23, 2008



Post by [wind energy planning](#)

Timlynn Babitsky of [Wind Power Handbook](#) recently wrote a interesting post about the conduct of wind developers in New York. Timlynn talks about wind farm developers bribing officials and explains that a new code of conduct has recently been introduced to stop questionable deals being struck between developers and officials and developers and developers behind closed doors.

The UK experienced corruption at the local level in the 1980's when big out of town supermarket developers were caught bribing locally elected councillors who made decisions on planning consents. Subsequently an investigation took place involving the Nolan Committee and a set of recommendations published. [The Nolan Committee's First Report on Standards in Public Life](#) recommended a code of conduct be introduced for local government officers and locally elected councillors. This code has a big impact on the way council officials behave, even to the point that it is sometimes difficult to even talk to these decision makers about a wind energy project.

Fortunately, perhaps because of past events surrounding other forms of development, the UK does not appear to experience the questionable deals which appear to have been taking place in the US - unless you count community funds as bribery. However the growth of the renewable energy industry has brought with it unexpected effects. Timlynn refers to anti-competitive deals between wind farm developers to keep land rentals for wind farms low in his article [wind power greed](#).

Competition for sites in the UK has increased rapidly over the last few years and this together with the fact that the supply of land suitable for wind turbines is finite – means that land rentals have increased dramatically. This has led to perverse behaviour in the UK wind energy market such as “promises that cannot be kept” from some developers, for example committing to pay huge rentals potentially before planning consent is granted for a wind energy project. Why would a wind energy developer commit to something that cannot be delivered? The wind energy industry is seeing huge growth and values for wind energy projects are high with correspondingly high bonuses being offered to employees or directors who bring forward opportunities. Very often however, as with the property market these people will move on before the inevitable problems arise, usually because either the project has been overvalued or timescales for delivery of the wind turbines underestimated. As a result the project may later be dropped resulting in wasted time and effort for all involved.

The article on this web-site “[Is the renewable sector overheating?](#)” looks at the bubble surrounding the renewable energy industry. It may be that this recession will take the heat out of the renewable energy market and that values will level out. This may be negative in terms of the value of wind energy projects, however it may stop some of the empty promises being made by the fly by night companies trying to make a quick buck in the short term, leaving the people who actually want to deliver effective - good neighbour wind energy projects to get on with the job.

Picture above from <http://flickr.com/photos/52148551@N00/2244262561/>

Picture above from <http://mckr.com/photos/52148551/@1N00/2544565561/>

Share and Enjoy:

- 
- 