



**NPF4 POLICY 3:  
LARGE-SCALE  
ENERGY &  
INFRASTRUCTURE  
IN ABERDEENSHIRE**

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# WHY ABERDEENSHIRE NEEDED A CLEAR APPROACH

## DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT

### Planning pressure:

- Aberdeenshire Council is experiencing an unprecedented number of planning applications and Electricity Act applications for large-scale energy, BESS, transmission, and infrastructure projects.
- This reflects major offshore wind activity linked to ScotWind and INTOG, alongside the significant increase in onshore transmission infrastructure needed to transport generated energy.
- The growth in offshore wind has also coincided with wider growth in onshore wind, solar, and battery energy storage proposals.

## POLICY CONTEXT

### Policy tension and response:

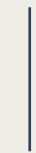
- NPF4 establishes the need for these developments, but that support is caveated by the requirement to consider environmental effects and avoid unacceptable significant effects.
- Policy 1 and Policy 3 place the climate and nature crises on equal footing in decision-making.
- Aberdeenshire's guidance responds to that tension by setting out how biodiversity enhancement and compensatory planting must be capable of being secured and delivered for large-scale energy and infrastructure development.

Source: Introduction and Policy Context sections of Aberdeenshire Council draft guidance.

# CERTAINTY VIA ONSITE-FIRST DELIVERY

01

JUST  
TRANSITION



Affected communities in Aberdeenshire should not become nature poor.

02

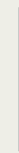
ONSITE-FIRST



Delivery on-site is prioritised over off-site wherever possible.

03

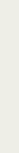
OFF-SITE LIMITS



Off-site must stay close, link corridors, and remain in Aberdeenshire.

04

SECURITY



Monitor and secure for 20 years—deliverable, not aspirational.

ONSITE VS  
OFF-SITE:  
WHAT IS  
ACCEPTABLE  
AND WHAT IS  
NOT

SCENARIO	POSITION IN THE GUIDANCE	REASON
On-site biodiversity enhancement or compensatory planting	Preferred	It keeps benefit where impacts occur and supports the principle that communities should see no net loss in environmental quality.
Off-site delivery close to the development site	May be justified	It can be accepted where all measures cannot be delivered on-site, provided it is close to the site and links to existing nature corridors and habitats.
Off-site delivery elsewhere in Aberdeenshire Council area	Potentially acceptable if justified and securable	The Council must be satisfied that the land is available, legally secured, appropriately assessed and capable of delivery for the required period.
Off-site delivery outwith Aberdeenshire Council area	Not acceptable	The Council states this cannot be secured by the authority and is inequitable to the communities affected by the developments.

# INFORMATION REQUIREMENTS AND MANAGING UNCERTAINTY

LIMITED INFORMATION



HIGHER UNCERTAINTY



Pre-commencement of development

MORE INFORMATION UPFRONT

MORE INFORMATION



LOWER UNCERTAINTY



Pre-energisation

LESS UNCERTAINTY



MORE INFORMATION UPFRONT ALLOWS MORE PERMISSIVE CONDITIONING.

# DIFFERENT TRIGGERS DEPENDING ON CERTAINTY

## HIGH LEVEL OF CERTAINTY

When certainty is high:

- Measures are well defined and detailed within the application.
- This is more likely where measures are proposed on-site.
- In those circumstances, it may be appropriate for a condition to require delivery prior to the operation of the development.
- The key point is that the authority already has reasonable confidence about what will be delivered and where.

## LOW LEVEL OF CERTAINTY

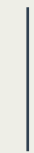
When certainty is low:

- Measures are not well defined and detailed within the application or are proposed off-site.
- In those circumstances, the condition is more likely to be structured as prior to the commencement of any other development on site.
- This removes the risk of non-delivery and therefore non-compliance with NPF4.
- As uncertainty increases, the risk of non-delivery increases, so the trigger moves earlier.

# WHAT CONDITIONS MUST COVER TO SECURE DELIVERY

01

SCOPE



State what is secured and what details must be submitted.

02

TIMING



Set when information is needed and when works must occur.

03

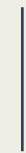
DELIVERY



Identify who will implement the agreed measures.

04

MONITORING



Define monitoring, reporting, and who is responsible. Must also meet Circular 04/1998 six tests.

# CONDITION PROCESS: FROM SITE IDENTIFICATION TO REVIEW

