Engaging with developers

Feedback from Envirolink Northwest Low Carbon Market Development Programme

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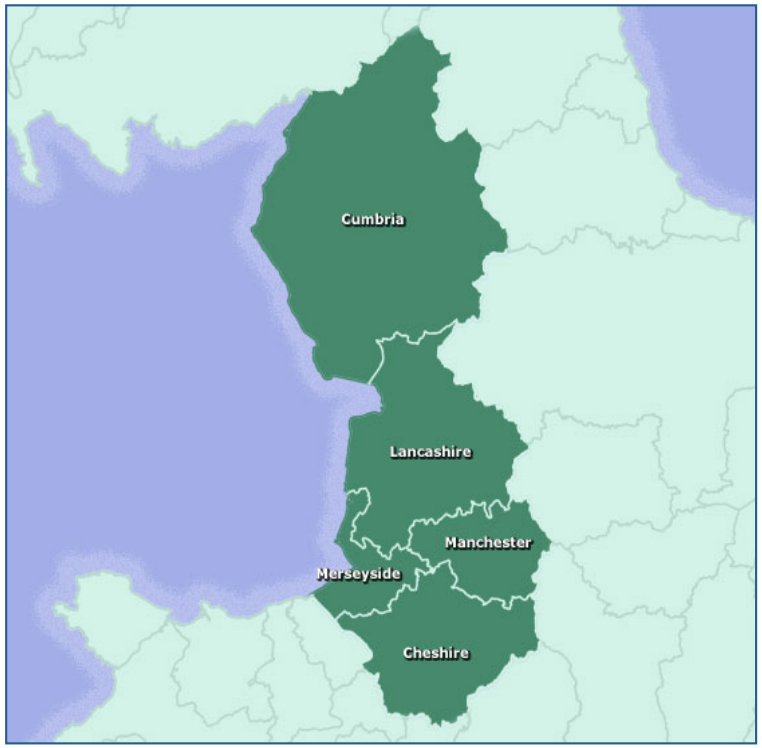
Envirolink Northwest:
Low Carbon Market Development Programme

- 3 year ERDF / NWDA funded business support programme (2009 – 2012)
- Provides support and advice to NW SMEs wanting to install low carbon and renewable energy technologies
- Aim is to help overcome barriers to deployment of renewable energy and support the development of the low carbon economy in the region



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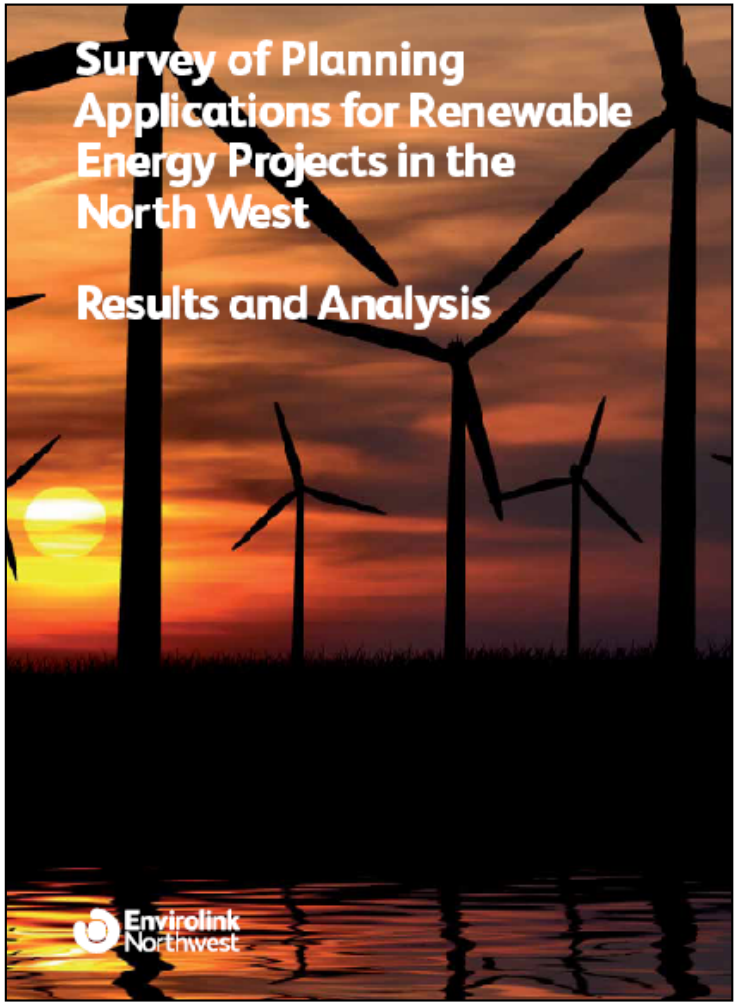
Low Carbon Market Development Programme: Barriers to delivery

- Planning system – lack of certainty, public opposition and disconnect between national policy and on-the-ground implementation;
- Grid connection – lack of understanding of DNO systems and reduced connection capacity available;
- Finance – up front capital costs and payback periods restricting uptake;
- Technology availability – global competition for technologies (e.g. current shortage of inverters delaying solar PV installations);
- Knowledge - lack of technical understanding of systems.

Envirolink Northwest: Survey of Renewable Energy Planning Applications

- Survey of all renewable energy planning applications in North West over 5 year period (2004 – 2009)
- Determines the volume and distribution of planning applications submitted to LPAs in the region, and identifies any emerging trends and issues
- Report of Findings has been sent to each LPA to inform LDF Evidence Base



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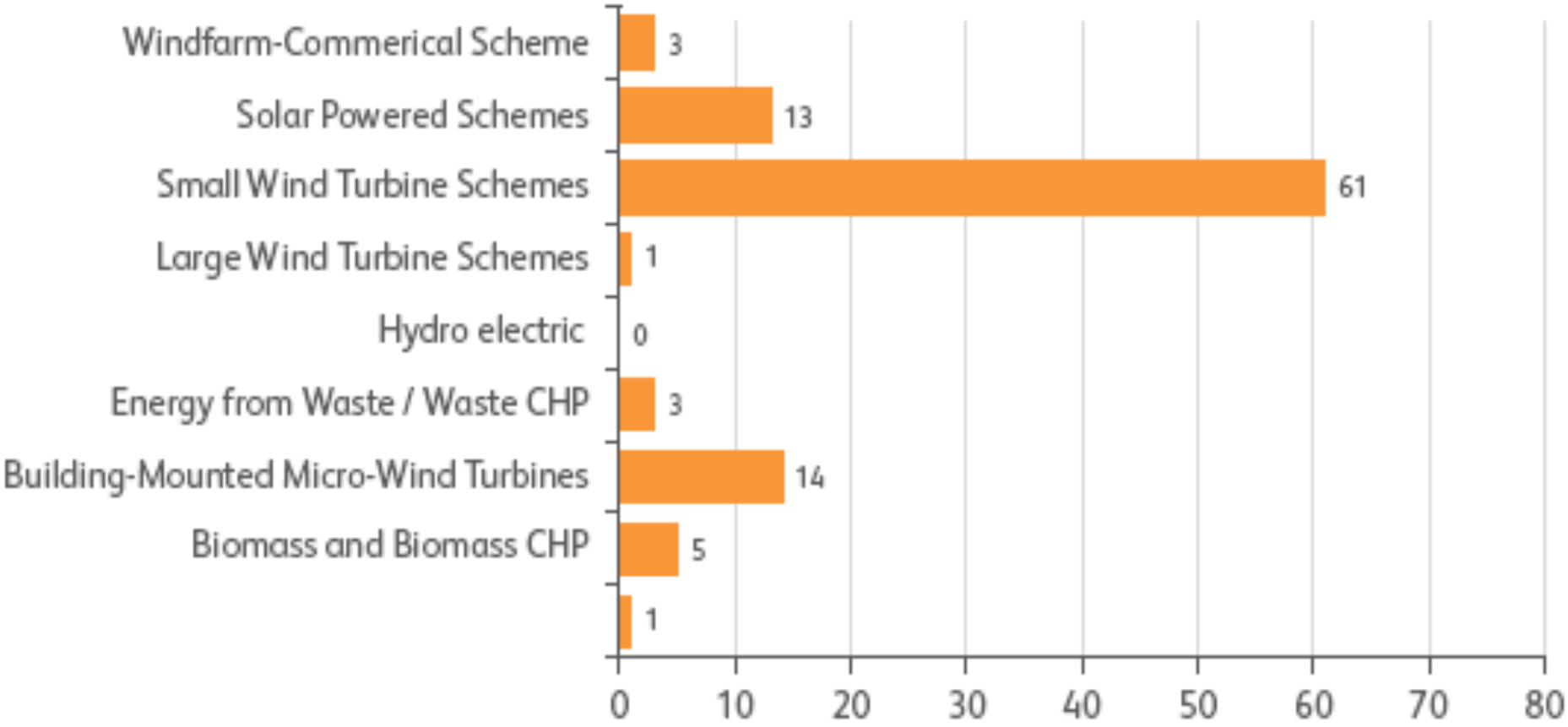
Application by technology (%)

- At 75%, small scale wind turbine and building mounted schemes make up the greatest number of planning applications in this survey



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SME experiences of the planning system

Communication & advice

- SMEs have limited experience and / or understanding of planning system - become confused and frustrated with planning requirements
- Unlikely to appoint a planning consultant (expensive) – will act on their own, or technology installer or architect will act as the agent
- Some difficulty experienced when trying to obtain initial advice from LPA (e.g. No duty officer system in place or pre-application fees prohibitive)
- Advice is sometimes conflicting (e.g. between different officers & departments) – can be put off by initial negative feedback
- Supporting information - not clear what is required and applicants don't fully understand why it is necessary
- Delays – don't understand why planning delays occur / reasons not communicated back to applicant

SME experiences of the planning system

Wind turbines

- Request for environmental surveys (bat, newt, noise etc) which don't relate to the size of turbine or the surrounding area. Adds costs & delays projects;
- Requests to re-site a turbine, usually to a less effective area, can impact on wind speeds & project viability (reduced energy yields);
- Turbines come on specific height towers - asking for a smaller tower will require a smaller turbine output; reduced energy yields impact on viability.
- E.g. popular turbine - 11kW / 18m pole / 6.5m blade diameter

SME experiences of the planning system

Site Constraints

- Not enough up front information available on site specific constraints, especially for smaller projects - applicants want clarification on the issues affecting their projects and guidance on how to address them, e.g.
  - aviation restrictions;
  - ecological constraints;
  - acceptable noise thresholds and proximity to residential properties;
  - visual impact (landscape and built conservation issues).

SME experiences of the planning system

Environmental Impact Assessment

- Ambiguity with regards to what is or is not EIA development, esp. :
  - Projects > 2 wind turbines / hub height > 15m
  - Anaerobic Digestion (AD) projects;
- Businesses would like more guidance on EIA requirements for renewable energy development

Lessons to be learned

- Be positive – planning is seen as a 'barrier' and applicants put off by negative responses; need to promote the benefits and opportunities for decentralised renewable energy generation and promote good practice
- Be consistent - make sure all officers (planning and non-planning) are giving consistent advice
- Be clear - Clarify what supporting information is required and why (should be proportional to the scale and location of proposed development)
- Learn about market drivers – a better understanding of technical and economic viability of projects will help with negotiations and inform decision making
- Work with developers and energy sector - a collaborative approach to tackling climate change is essential to achieve renewable energy and carbon reduction targets

Further information

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- Envirolink Northwest funded programme website - www.envirolinknorthwest.co.uk

- Envirolink company website: www.envirolink.co.uk

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