

Impact case study (REF3b)

<p>Institution: Queen’s University, Belfast</p>
<p>Unit of Assessment: 16 Architecture, Built Environment and Planning</p>
<p>Title of case study: Creating Good Practice in Renewable Wind Energy Policy for a Low Carbon Economy</p>
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>This case study describes the policy impact of research on the deployment of renewable energy in Ireland, the UK and internationally. Three key policy impacts are highlighted;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The research has shaped policies underpinning the Republic of Ireland’s aim to become a net energy exporter by 2030 and influenced other stakeholders in this field; 2) It has influenced good practice recommended globally by the International Energy Agency on the social acceptance of wind energy; 3) It has generated evidence on the performance of the UK’s devolved administrations on renewable energy, which has been deployed in constitutional debates over Scottish Independence.
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Although the deployment of renewables is often seen as being limited by technical factors, this research has highlighted the social constraints to the expansion of sustainable energy and led to its reflection in policy and practice.</p> <p>The research evolved from an ESRC project (RES-000-22-1095, PI Ellis₁), examining the motivations of supporters and opponents of a disputed wind farm on the island of Ireland. Using innovative methods, it developed a novel critique of the dominant ‘NIMBY’ discourse that has (mis)informed debates about opposition to renewable energy projects—even at UK ministerial level (see http://bit.ly/1075d9M). It showed that dominant terms of reference have exacerbated the weak community acceptance of wind projects. The project undermined the stereotype of wind-farm objectors as monolithic, irrational and ‘deviant’, showing a variety of attitudes and rationalities for opposition and support. It found that the adversarial discourse prevented positive engagement, often condemning developments to prolonged opposition, when rapid deployment was needed to meet renewable-energy targets. It highlighted the need for a more nuanced understanding of disputes and for developers and policy-makers to respond to local concerns through enhanced community benefits, public participation and more sensitive appreciation of project impacts. It also highlighted the impact of governance structures and decision-making processes on attitudes to renewable-energy development. This project led to a number of highly cited research papers (e.g. Ellis <i>et al.</i> 2008) and disseminated via stakeholder workshops.</p> <p>These insights led to engagement with scholars from other institutions, including Cowell (Cardiff University), Strachan (RGU Aberdeen), Warren (St. Andrews), Szarka (Bath University) and Toke (Birmingham/Aberdeen universities). Projects included an ESRC seminar series (<i>Where Next for Wind</i>, RES-62-232526, 2007-09, Ellis CI) that involved discussion with over 150 leading stakeholders from government, community and industrial interests, leading to further outputs, some specifically aimed at the planning-practitioner community (e.g. Ellis et al, 2009,2,3). This led to new research directions for assessing the policy lessons arising from devolution through a major ESRC project (RES-062-23-2526, 2011-2013, Ellis CI₄) involving researchers across the UK. The end of this project coincided with a major dissemination programme across the UK which led to extensive press coverage and the impacts discussed below.</p> <p>This work also led to opportunities to directly shape Irish national energy policy, through the development of best practice for social acceptance for the Sustainable Energy Agency Ireland</p>

(SEAI 2012₅), and through this work Ellis was appointed the Irish National Expert for the International Energy Agency's work in this area. This has led to Ellis being a key author on the IEA's *Recommended Practices for Social Acceptance of Wind Energy Projects* (2013₆), which has been taken up by national governments, local authorities and wind-energy developers throughout the world and promoted by wind energy agencies in Europe and North America. More recently, Ellis has been part of a team preparing a report on *Transforming the Irish Energy System* for the National Economic and Social Council (<http://www.nesc.ie/>), which directly advises the Taoiseach on strategic issues for Ireland's economic and social development.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

1. Ellis, G., Barry, J. and Robinson, C. (2008), Many Ways To Say 'No'—Different Ways to Say 'Yes': Applying Q-Methodology to Understand Public Acceptance of Wind Farm Proposals. *Journal of Planning and Environmental Management*, 50 (4), pp 517-551.

This remains one of the most cited papers in the *Journal of Environmental Planning and Management*.

2. Ellis, G., Cowell, R., Warren, C., Strachan, P. and Szarka, J. (2009), Expanding Wind Power: A Problem of Planning, or Perception?' *Journal of Planning Theory and Practice*, 10 (4), pp 521-547.

This was published as the lead article in the Interface section of the *Journal of Planning Theory and Practice*, which is specifically aimed at an exchange of ideas among researchers, policy-makers and wind-energy developers. It was circulated to more than 23,000 members of the Royal Town Planning Institute (see www.rtpi.org.uk/item/3327). Ellis *et al.*'s lead paper was responded to by the Minister of the Environment in the Republic of Ireland, the CPRE (a key objector to many wind energy schemes) and other leading international scholars.

3. Szarka, J., Cowell, R., Ellis, G., Strachan, P. and Warren, C. (2012, eds), *Learning from Wind Power: Governance and Societal Perspectives on Sustainable Energy*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

This edited book sought to transfer the policy lessons from wind energy to other renewable energy technologies.

4. Toke, D., Sherry-Brennan, F., Cowell, R., Ellis, G. and Strachan, P. (2013), Scotland, Renewable Energy and the Independence Debate: Will Head or Heart Rule the Roost? *Political Quarterly*, 84 (1), pp 1-8.

This paper sparked a wide range of press coverage, as shown in section 5.

5. Sustainable Energy Agency Ireland (2012) *A review of the context for enhancing community acceptance of wind energy in Ireland*, Report written by SQW and Geraint Ellis. Available at: http://www.seai.ie/Renewables/Wind_Energy/Attitudes_towards_Wind_Energy_in_Ireland/A_review_of_the_context_for_enhancing_community_acceptance_of_wind_energy_in_Ireland.pdf
6. IEA Wind (2013), *Expert Group Summary on Recommended Practices on Social Acceptance of Wind Energy Projects*, International Energy Agency. Available at: http://www.ieawind.org/index_page_postings/RP/RP%2014%20Social_Acceptance_FINAL.pdf

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

The impacts from this research include direct influence on renewable energy policy and practice in Northern Ireland, the Irish Republic and internationally, involving public, NGO and private sectors.

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This is reflected in the demand for Ellis as a speaker, having made over 40 presentations to national, international, academic and practitioner audiences.

The impact having greatest reach is Ellis' role as the Irish National Expert for IEA Task28 Working Group on Social Acceptance of Wind Energy Projects. The IEA has 28 member countries and is one of the world's leading energy authorities. Ellis's work on Task28 has included participation in a series of high-level international meetings and development of good-practice guidance, including co-authoring the Task28's *Final Report* (2012) and its *Recommended Practices for Social Acceptance of Wind Energy Projects* (2013). These were disseminated at a global level, setting international standards for wind-energy development and have been promoted by the European Wind Energy Association among others. A corroborating statement confirms that Ellis:

'... had an active and influential role in the Group's activities, including helping to draft the Group's Final Report in 2012 and its Recommended Practices Report in 2013. The expertise developed through [Ellis'] peer-reviewed research provided a crucial input to the development of these reports, which are being disseminated to Governments, regulators, industry interests and other stakeholders throughout the world.'

More specifically, this research has had a direct impact in Ireland, one of the world's most wind-rich countries, via Ellis' work for the SEAI (the national energy authority). This included authoring best-practice principles for fostering social acceptance of wind energy projects. A corroborating statement notes Ellis' expert contribution:

"... on a number of initiatives aimed at helping [SEAI] understand and formulate guidance for improving social acceptance of renewable developments ... which reflects our view that [Ellis is] the leading authority on social acceptance on the island of Ireland and we welcome the advice [provided] in this capacity."

Ellis has also acted as an independent expert witness to the NI Assembly Environment Committee's enquiry into wind energy.

Although it is difficult to provide evidence for a direct impact in other jurisdictions, many issues raised in Ellis' research are being addressed throughout the UK, such as the emphasis on community energy and awareness-raising activities of organisations such as the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. For example the Fermanagh Trust, drew on Ellis' work in its report on community energy in NI, which itself has stimulated government policy in this area. Their corroborating statement notes:

"... this research and policy advice has played a very important role in developing our position on these issues and that [Ellis'] expertise in this area has had an influential role on a number of stakeholders throughout Northern Ireland and beyond."

In addition to policy influence, the research has had impact on the practice of wind developers, with Ellis being asked to address the 2013 UK staff training day of RES (a leading developer) and the 2013 Wind Energy Developers Congress in Berlin. More widely, many developers now employ community-liaison officers informed by Ellis' work, while the Irish Wind Energy Association and the NI Renewable Industry Group have adopted protocols for securing community benefits, as called for in Ellis' 2012 SEAI report. A corroborating statement from one developer, notes:

"...exposure to [Ellis'] work has certainly been useful for us to reflect on the social and policy environment in which we work and the nature of our approach to community engagement as followed in our projects."

Finally, Ellis' et al recent work on devolution and renewables were presented at Welsh and NI Assembly committees, the Westminster Parliamentary Renewable and Sustainable Energy Group and at events in Aberdeen, Belfast, Cardiff and Dublin. These had more than 250 high-level participants, findings reported by more than 60 UK newspapers (A, below) and cited by the

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Scottish First Minister (B). A subsequent paper published in the *Political Quarterly* was also covered by the press, influencing the debate on Scottish independence (C). Recent work for Ireland's National Economic and Social Council will also directly advise Ireland's Prime Minister.

This work has piloted the research on the social interaction with renewable energy and how it can be integrated into policy and practice. Combined with high level dissemination, press coverage and agenda-setting academic papers makes a persuasive case for claiming international impact. While it is possible to provide examples of impact from the last six years, the increasingly deployment of renewables and the need to rapidly decarbonise, will ensure that its relevance will continue into the foreseeable future.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

Operating Agent, International Energy Agency Wind Task 28.

Chief Executive Officer, Sustainable Energy Authority Ireland.

Director, Fermangh Trust.

Director, First Flight Wind LtdA. The launch of the final report on *Delivering Renewable Energy Under Devolution* was covered in more than 60 UK papers at the end of January 2013, with examples being:

- The Scotsman: www.scotsman.com/the-scotsman/uk/british-renewables-fuelled-by-devolved-scotland-say-experts-1-2758359
- The Daily Telegraph: www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/scotland/9825296/Most-wind-farms-in-Scotland-after-SNP-overrules-councils.html
- The Belfast Telegraph: www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/local-national/northern-ireland/devolution-boosted-green-energy-29040589.html

B. The First Minister of Scotland referred to the research in his keynote speech on January 29th 2013 at this conference: www.scottishrenewables.com/events/offshore-wind/programme/

C. The paper published in the *Political Quarterly* on Renewable Energy and Scottish Independence was covered in more than 10 national newspapers, including:

- The Scottish Herald: www.heraldscotland.com/politics/referendum-news/salmond-told-green-targets-impossible-without-uk-cash.20150454
- The Guardian: www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2013/feb/11/scotland-green-energy-renewables-alex-salmond
- The Scotsman: www.scotsman.com/the-scotsman/politics/renewables-targets-unachievable-after-yes-vote-1-2784328
- Newsrt: www.newsrt.co.uk/news/renewables-targets-unachievable-after-yes-vote-1205101.html