

From: Susan Bailey [REDACTED]
Sent: 10 April 2025 19:25
To: NeighbourhoodPlanning
Subject: Formal Objection and Recommendations – Policy W42: Offshore Renewable Energy Projects (10.04.25)

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Dear Neighbourhood Planning Team,

I am writing to submit a formal objection to **Policy W42: Facilitating Offshore Renewable Energy Projects, as outlined on page 154** of the Weymouth Neighbourhood Plan. While I support the transition to low and zero-carbon energy, I believe this particular policy—focused on offshore wind—raises serious technical, environmental, and strategic concerns that must be addressed before the policy is adopted in its current form.

Previous Proposals and Planning Context

Offshore wind development off the Dorset coast is not without precedent, and it is essential that the Plan acknowledge past outcomes. The **Navitus Bay Wind Park** proposal, which involved up to 194 turbines, was refused consent by the Secretary of State in 2015 due to its unacceptable visual and environmental impacts, especially on the **Jurassic Coast UNESCO World Heritage Site**.

Despite advancements in turbine design, concerns around visual intrusion, landscape character, and marine ecosystem disruption remain highly relevant today. Policy W42, as written, fails to recognise or learn from this precedent.

Reference: <https://blog.planningportal.co.uk/2015/09/17/huge-offshore-wind-farm-refused-consent-by-ministers/>

Grid Infrastructure Constraints

There are already well-documented **grid capacity limitations in Dorset**, which are affecting even small-scale domestic solar projects and business developments. The **Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)** has submitted written evidence to Parliament highlighting that grid constraints are actively impeding development and inward investment across the county.

Supporting the introduction of large-scale offshore generation (e.g. a 1GW wind farm) without clearly addressing these technical limitations is premature and could further strain a fragile local energy system.

Reference: <https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/121709/html/>

Environmental and Strategic Risks

Dorset's coastline and marine habitats are an irreplaceable asset. The potential introduction of a

large offshore wind farm brings the following concerns:

- **Visual and Seascape Intrusion:** Even turbines placed 10–15 miles offshore can remain visible from the coast on clear days, affecting tourism, local amenity, and property values.
- **Marine Ecosystem Impact:** Construction and operation of offshore turbines have known effects on marine birds, cetaceans, and fish breeding grounds due to noise, vibration, and habitat disruption.
- **Navigation and Safety Hazards:** The English Channel is one of the UK's busiest shipping corridors. Offshore developments increase collision risk and raise insurance and logistical challenges.
- **Maintenance and Cost:** Offshore wind is expensive to build and maintain. Regen's 2023 report estimates £1.5 billion per 1GW capacity—excluding required grid infrastructure upgrades.

These risks are already raising public concern in relation to the proposed **PortWind development**, which would install 132 turbines off the Devon and Dorset coast. Public backlash is visible on local forums and social media.

Reference: <https://www.facebook.com/BBCDorset/photos/the-wind-farm-portwind-could-see-132-turbines-erected-in-the-sea-off-the-devon-a/1059768412833183/>

Alternative Energy Pathways Better Suited to Dorset

Rather than defaulting to offshore wind, Dorset should explore a more locally appropriate, resilient, and cost-effective mix of clean energy solutions:

- **Small Modular Reactors (SMRs):** Zero-carbon nuclear technology that can be installed safely inland without disturbing coastal or marine ecosystems. **Reference:** <https://www.iaea.org/newscenter/news/what-are-small-modular-reactors-smrs>
- **Community-Led Microgeneration:** Rooftop solar, ground-source heat pumps, and local-scale geothermal and battery systems reduce demand on the grid while bringing tangible local benefits.
- **Energy Efficiency First:** Retrofit schemes, building upgrades, and smart demand management remain the cheapest and most sustainable method of reducing carbon emissions.

Recommendations for Policy W42

To ensure W42 aligns with both local needs and technical realities, I urge the following changes:

- Acknowledge the failure of previous offshore schemes (e.g. Navitus Bay) and explicitly reference current public opposition to PortWind.
- Require full grid feasibility and upgrade planning before any support for large-scale offshore energy proposals.
- Mandate direct community consultation—not merely "engagement"—as a condition for support.
- Explicitly support alternative technologies such as SMRs, community microgeneration, and energy efficiency retrofits.

Conclusion

Dorset must play its part in reaching net-zero, but **not at the cost of our coastlines, our biodiversity, and our local communities**. Blanket support for offshore wind under Policy W42

is environmentally risky, technically untested for our region, and economically uncertain. I urge Dorset Council to amend this policy to reflect a more balanced and evidence-led approach to clean energy.

Please confirm receipt of this submission as part of the public consultation.

Kind regards,

Susan Bailey