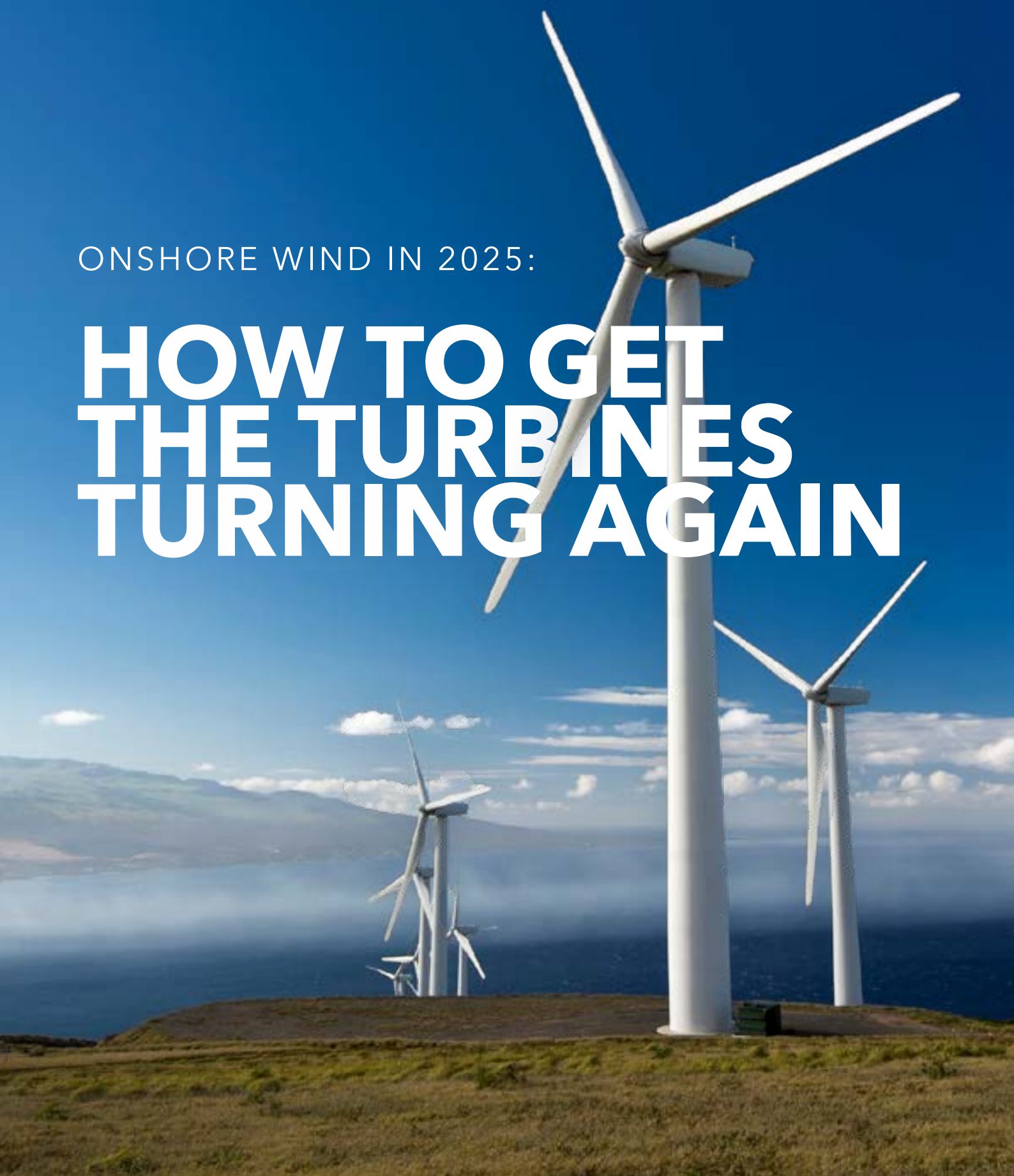


ONSHORE WIND IN 2025:

HOW TO GET THE TURBINES TURNING AGAIN



Onshore wind is back. Government has said it wants to connect 27GW by 2030 and has ripped up planning barriers in England.

It's been more than a decade since councils have considered planning applications. That means there are some barriers developers need to consider before they can get turbines turning again - including planning itself.

There are relatively few suitable sites in England for wind farms generating more than 100MW - the new threshold at which they will be considered NSIPs. That will put the burden on local authorities to consent many of the new wind farms. Applicants are likely to find planning departments lacking not only resource but also recent expertise in handling wind applications – risking delay and likelihood of consent.

Wind farms have also changed over the last decade. Turbines are taller – up from an average of 250ft when we last saw onshore wind in England to a new average of 850ft. They will affect a wider range of communities in new ways.

To move at pace, developers will need to invest significant time and effort in educating local politicians and communities about onshore wind. Proactive engagement, supported by wider ongoing communication, will be key.

27 GW
of onshore
wind by 2030



15 months
to get planning
permission



Overtaken
the 10-year
English ban



100 MW
new threshold
for NSIPs



250 ft vs
850 ft size
of new turbines



As the year progresses, these are the key things we're watching:

Canaries in the coal mine

The first new wind farms in the country are being submitted now and will pave the way for the others to come. Will the old legal precedents hold, or will new standards around visual impact be set? Will the old opposition groups remobilise, or will a new generation take a different approach? A good strategy will be flexible – allowing room to respond to evolving circumstances.

The start of campaign season

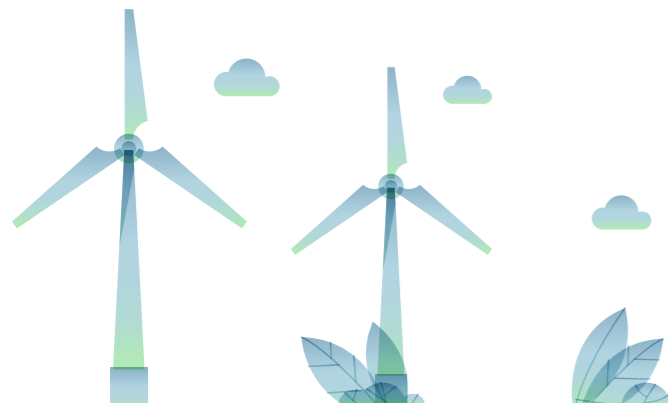
While some county council elections are postponed, several seats will still be contested on 1 May including mayors of combined authorities in key locations where renewables have become a flashpoint. Gains by Reform and Conservatives could fuel resistance to net-zero targets, pressuring Labour representatives caught between supporting energy projects and appeasing sceptical constituents. This brings a much higher risk of project refusal at a local level.

Standardised community benefits

Community benefit is no longer a nice to have, it's an expectation for new renewable projects. While Scotland is moving towards a standardised community benefit scheme through the Sector Deal, will communities in England call for the same? Our research shows that reduced energy bills are the most popular community benefit, while other benefit schemes have faced complexity in implementation that resulted in a benefit package with no real benefit. Developers will be asked for detailed plans around jobs and skills, and how they will ensure local labour benefits from the developments.

Spatial differentiation

The Clean Power 2030 Action Plan set connection targets by region, and the upcoming Strategic Spatial Energy Plan (SSEP) should help to coordinate development. Communities and committees may become frustrated by the impression that new projects have already been approved in these locations – undermining the consultation and decision-making process. At the same time, zonal pricing continues to be discussed – resulting in lower energy costs in areas with high generation, as well as potentially higher costs for developers. Aligning with regional priorities and building local planning authority support early will be key to securing consent.



Clearing obstacles

To achieve Clean Power 2030, we must have honest conversations to strengthen the case for approval and reduce the risk of opposition. By securing your corporate reputation, doing your research, and engaging early and often—you can help secure smoother sailing.



Don't forget to take a look in the mirror

Before launching a project, don't let corporate reputation fall by the wayside. Review your image and messaging, prepare for increased scrutiny on supply chains and ESG during procurement and construction, and any issues that may have developed in prior projects. To build trust, use relevant experience in Wales, Scotland or elsewhere to help build your evidence base as a credible developer.



Do your research

Understanding the local issues and sentiment is key to a successful consultation. [Our research](#) shows that support for wind is high, but knowledge levels are quite low. This gap creates an opportunity for misinformation to influence members of the community and other stakeholders, and push those on the fence towards the opposition. Understanding the current knowledge and sentiment levels will be important to tailor messages to land with key stakeholders and the public.

In communities that have already experienced infrastructure development, the dynamics are slightly different. Our research and on the ground experience shows that myth busting is not as important, because the communities have a basic level of understanding already. However, they will be tuned into the key issues they experienced before, so be prepared with messaging around traffic and noise, flicker, and the impacts of the taller height of turbines.



Engage right now to minimise challenge later

Delays often stem from weak pre-submission engagement. Once you have built a strong evidence base, refined your messaging, and positioned yourself effectively – it's time to engage. Identify key stakeholders, and work closely with them to ensure smoother and faster progress. Provide information that is clear and concise, timely, and tailored to the needs of each audience to build your credibility as a good developer that responds to feedback. Remember that communities and circumstances evolve; avoid one-size-fits-all engagement and adjust strategies to address new developments.



Your engagement shouldn't just be local

Those surprised at the moves made in CP2030 need to be engaging with political and industry stakeholders now to get a seat at the table. There are plenty of opportunities for proactive and positive engagement to shape the direction of the industry – now is the time to start having those conversations.



HOW WE CAN HELP

Our 20-strong specialist infrastructure practice sits within an award-winning integrated communications consultancy. Drawing on experts in digital, design, research, public affairs and corporate reputation, we are uniquely placed to address any communications challenges 2025 might throw at you. Together, we've worked on over 8GW of renewable energy projects including more than 20 wind farms and within 90% of local planning authorities. We know wind, and our specialists are here to ensure your project is a success.



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Come see us at:

All Energy: 14-15 May, Glasgow
Onshore Wind: 16-17 September, Edinburgh

Our research:

[Public perceptions of onshore wind farm development in the UK](#)

[NSIP Research 2025: Energy, Energy, Everywhere, All At Once](#)

[National Planning Barometer 2024](#)

Our Newsletter:



We publish a fortnightly politics and planning newsletter.
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