



## *News Release*

1 March 2010

### **HEALEY: FAIRER AND FASTER PLANNING DECISIONS WILL HELP POWER THE COUNTRY TO A LOW CARBON FUTURE**

Planning Minister John Healey today (1 March 2010) heralded the start of the new planning regime for major infrastructure as it begins receiving applications for energy projects that have the potential to provide up to £50bn worth of international investment and supply electricity to 22m homes.

From today, the Infrastructure Planning Commission (IPC) will be able to consider proposals for major energy and transport projects, including 17 energy schemes that together have the capability to generate enough electricity to power more than three quarters of all the homes in the UK, and could help drive economic growth and create new jobs

The number of energy schemes that are waiting to be considered has grown to a potential 22GW of new electricity generating capacity, and many of the new projects will use renewable energy that is necessary for the transition to a low carbon economy and a greener future.

The IPC is a new development consent process for large projects such as large wind farms, power stations and major roads. It combines up to eight former planning systems into a single process, and will cut the time taken to make decisions from up to seven years to under a year, saving the country £300 million a year.

Under the old set up, the planning system often tied up applications for years in red tape. In some cases, it took ten years between a company's decision to invest in a new project, and the delivery of energy to the national grid. It took more than six years to get a

decision on North Yorkshire Power Line upgrade, and two and a half years to get to a decision on Staythorpe C gas fired power station.

Planning Minister John Healey said:

“If we are to be competitive in the global economy and have a good quality of life, it is clear we need a better system for planning and building the infrastructure the country needs. The IPC will be a faster and fairer system that is important for delivering these improvements, and with up to £50bn worth of investment in the pipeline, is vital to help drive economic growth and recovery. It will also help meet our targets towards becoming a low carbon country, with a new generation of investments essential to the future of the country.

“In the next 15 years we will need to replace about a third of our electricity generating capacity to keep pace with demand, and make much greater use of renewable energy or we will fail to meet our ambitious low-carbon goals. A new generation of green energy infrastructure is necessary to reduce carbon emissions, and will need to be delivered in a way that takes into account the needs of local communities and the natural environment.

“The growing list of potential projects show businesses and international investors want to do business with the IPC and have confidence in the new planning system.

“The IPC will provide transparency and predictability for investors, and better opportunities for local people to make their case at every stage of the application and decision making process, including the opportunity to speak at open-floor hearings.”

Many of the new projects that will be considered by the IPC will use renewable energy, including:

- Atlantic Array windfarm – project by RWE NPower in the Bristol Channel;

- Irish Sea offshore windfarm – project by Centrica in the Irish Sea between the Isle of Man and Anglesey;
- Nant-y-Moch windfarm – project by Airtricity in Ceredigion, Wales; and
- Blyth biomass power plant - project by RES New Ventures in Northumberland

Sir Michael Pitt, IPC Chair, said:

“The IPC is ready to start delivering its core business and we are delighted to have received the green light from the Minister today. The next few months will see the IPC considering matters of significant national importance for communities in England and Wales. We will deliver a faster, more cost-efficient system for deciding applications, and we will achieve this based upon core principles of fairness and accountability.

“The IPC will ensure there are meaningful opportunities for all who are affected by proposals to have their views heard. Applicants will need to demonstrate that they have sought and acted upon the views of local people in developing their proposals. And in each case, the public will also have the opportunity to be heard by the IPC as part of the examination process.”

The IPC can now consider applications from the energy and transport sectors, and will make decisions about new energy infrastructure, ports, roads and railways using National Policy Statements (NPSs) that are being produced across Government.

John Healey also announced more appointments for the IPC to ensure it has the full complement of staff it needs to start work. Andrew Phillipson has been appointed as a commissioner to act as a decision-maker on infrastructure projects, and two non-executive directors, David Clements and Sheila Drew Smith, will make sure the IPC meets its aims and objectives and works according legislation set out in the Planning Act. A further ten registered Commissioners have been recruited to enable the IPC to manage a fluctuating workload and will work on a case-by-case basis.