

www.vindinfo.dk - a Danish shortcut

In 2012, a national committee issued recommendations for what to focus on in order to optimise the planning processes for wind project developments. A central point was improved public access to information. In response to this, four agencies have gathered all available governmental information about wind energy in Denmark on one website: www.vindfo.dk. This way, citizens, local authorities, and wind project developers have easy access to information.

BRINGING THE NEIGHBOURS ON BOARD

A specialised wind turbine task force is assisting the planning process of onshore wind projects.

Schemes focused on citizens and close municipal and state collaboration regarding citizen involvement are just some of the approaches that Denmark takes in order to meet its ambitious targets for CO₂-reduction and the advancement of more renewable energy.

Niels Bjørkbom, Head of the Wind Turbine Task Force, Danish Ministry of the Environment

The 1970s energy crises in Denmark and the rest of Europe sparked an increased interest in renewable energy. During the 1970s, the first wind turbines, less than 50 meters tall, were installed all over the country through local initiatives with no general planning and often through citizen initiated wind turbine cooperatives. Today, onshore wind turbines as high as 150 meters are installed on a commercial scale, which requires larger areas and substantial investments. These kinds of wind turbines are often erected and owned by people living far from the wind turbine areas and that is one of the reasons why it has become increasingly difficult to achieve local acceptance of wind power projects.

A complicated process

In Denmark, local authorities are responsible for planning onshore wind turbine installations, and the planning processes are often long and complicated. In some municipalities, local politicians stop the planning activities at relatively late stages, due to local public opposition against installing wind farms in the specific area. This is a problem, firstly, because it often results in frustration and local division

between opponents and supporters of wind energy. Secondly, because one of the paths to becoming free of fossil fuels, as written in the political energy agreement from 2012, is by installing 1,800 MW of new onshore wind capacity before 2020 - 1,300 MW of which are expected to replace existing, aging wind turbines.

Wind Turbine Task Force and state assistance

In order to assist local authorities with these challenges, a Wind Turbine Task Force was established in 2008. Furthermore, four financial incentive schemes were introduced a year later. These initiatives both aim to increase local interest in and support for the installation of new, modern wind turbines. An important role of the task force is to solve problems as early as possible and assist the local authorities with the planning process.

Citizen involvement takes up an increasingly larger part of the planning process. It is our experience that a good relationship between citizens and the municipality is a crucial aspect in achieving acceptance of new wind turbine

projects. Interviews show that many Danish citizens are unhappy with the way planning activities have been carried out previously. Therefore, we have worked on finding new ways to meet the public and to get them on board at early stages in the planning process. The figure illustrates how the citizens meet the authorities and business community at an early stage in workshops and various networking activities. These include public meetings with display stands, discussion forums and visits to existing and potential wind turbine areas. Traditional citizen meetings usually only include presentations by experts and panel debates and come late in the planning process.

Through our work it has become clear to us that municipalities must be more proactive and direct in meeting the public. So far, feedback from participants has been a call for clear, political statements when it comes to setting up onshore wind farms.

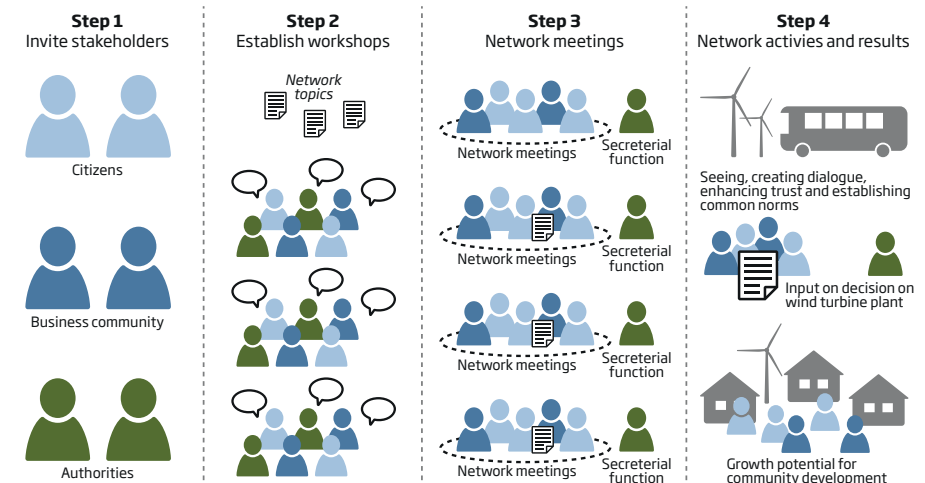
1. Invite stakeholders: Ideally citizens should be invited as a first step in a planning process to participate in a debate about wind turbines within their local community to kick start the planning process of locating areas suitable for possible wind turbines.

2. Establish workshops: Citizens and other stakeholders with different opinions are empowered through constructive dialogue in a workshop.

3. Network meetings: Network groups on topics preferred by participants can be formed in the workshops.

4. Network activities and results: Participants get to know and understand each other better, qualified input to municipal planners and political decision makers, participation in field-trips, bottom-up thoughts etc. This creates an earlier dialogue and increases citizens understanding and acceptance of the need for new wind turbines.

Now the planning process required by law can be done on a new informed basis.



Source: Antropologerne

The introduction of task forces

The Danish Wind Turbine Task Force is a new concept within the Danish public administration. Free of charge, the task force assists local authorities in matters such as siting the turbines and the planning process. Public acceptance is the key to deflect the problems that can arise when planning new onshore wind farms.

Photo: Lia Maria Hauch Kaufmann