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*From the Treasurer and Vice-President Professor David Wallace CBE FRS*  
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Dear Mr Caplin MP

I am writing to express my concerns, which we have also highlighted in the Royal Society's recent response to the House of Lords Science and Technology Committee Inquiry into meeting the UK's greener energy targets, over the number of pre-applications for wind farms turned down by the Ministry of Defence. As you are probably aware, the Royal Society, the UK national academy of science, has a long-standing interest in UK energy issues and through the expert guidance of our Energy Policy Advisory Group, has published a number of reports and statements to inform discussions on the methods by which reductions in anthropogenic emissions of greenhouse gases can be achieved.

Meeting the UK Government's ambitious greenhouse emission targets will require a substantial investment and growth in renewable technologies. Achieving the target of 10% of electricity to be supplied from renewable sources by 2010 still requires a significant amount to be done. To exploit the full potential of the UK wind resource, currently one of the most economically viable renewable technologies, a key issue that needs to be resolved is the apparent conflict of interests between wind farm developers and aviation requirements related to potential radar interference and safety.

I recognise that the MoD has affirmed its commitment to achieving the Government's renewable targets by participating on the Wind Energy, Defence and Civil Aviation Interests Working Group (Aviation Working Group). One positive outcome of this has been the introduction of a pre-application procedure for wind farm developers to undertake early consultation with the civil and defence aviators. However we are concerned that, according to figures from the British Wind Energy Association (BWEA), the MoD has objected to 34% of pre-applications to build land-based wind farms in 2002, increasing to 48% in 2003. I believe these MoD objections also represent a problem for offshore wind sites.

My understanding is that the current MoD policy appears to reject any wind development application within 74 km of air defence radars. With 13 such installations, this effective moratorium covers a fairly significant area of the UK. Understandably the MoD has concerns over the effects that wind farms may have on radar in terms of personnel safety, especially for low flying aircraft and the potential consequences of compromised radars with regard to national security. It nevertheless concerns me that the restrictions imposed by the MoD are at odds with the rest of Europe, where only Germany imposes a ban, which is set at 5 kms.

I am aware that research commissioned by the Aviation Working Group has identified possible solutions and mitigation strategies for the effects of wind farms on radar systems. In light of this research, how much still needs to be done and are there issues that still need to be addressed before the current restrictions, imposed

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by the MoD, on wind farm developments, can be reviewed? In 2002 your Ministry outlined its hope that the constraint on wind farm developments can be reduced in the near future. Given the technical solutions being developed, how long do you consider it will be before your policies can be brought more into line with our European counterparts?

I am sure you recognise that it's in everybody's interests that technical solutions to this problem are developed and implemented expeditiously. I look forward with interest to your reply.

For your information, we will also be raising this issue with the DTI and making this letter publicly available.

Yours sincerely

Professor David Wallace CBE FRS