

Positive attitudes to offshore wind farms



By journalist Steen Hartvig Jacobsen
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As part of the environmental monitoring programme, the Environment Group has also examined public attitudes to offshore wind farms. This part of the study consisted of a sociological survey with in-depth interviews with local residents both in the Horns Rev and Nysted areas and an environmental economy survey, in which local questionnaire surveys were supplemented by surveys among a national reference group.

The Horns Rev offshore wind farm is located 14 km west of Blåvandshuk in an area dominated by holiday homes with only 3,300 permanent residents. The offshore wind farm is only visible from just a few houses. The Nysted offshore wind farm is located 10 km from the coast and some of the approximate 4,300 permanent residents in the area can see the wind farm from their homes. The wind farm is also visible from Nysted harbour.

The environmental economy survey shows that more than 80% of the respondents are either positively or extremely positively disposed towards offshore wind farms. The greatest support is to be found in the area around Horns Rev, whilst there were most negative reactions in the Nysted area, though opposition here was restricted to a mere 10% of the respondents.

In the opinions of almost two thirds of the population, offshore wind farms have either a neutral or positive visual impact on the coastal landscape. Least opposition was found at Horns Rev.

The surveys also charted attitudes to the future extension of offshore wind farm building. When given the choice between fewer and larger farms or more small farms, attitudes are clearly more positive towards concentrating building. There was a clear willingness to pay more via electricity bills to reduce visual impact. Residents at Nysted were those prepared to pay most to have new wind farms located further offshore.

The sociological survey showed that the original opposition in the Blåvandshuk area has gradually diminished after the Horns Rev offshore wind farm was commissioned, and by 2004 the general attitude was already neutral or even slightly positive. Opposition in Nysted has been more persistent. The original opposition in Blåvandshuk stemmed from worries concerning the visual impact and resistance to a "centralised decision-making process".

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