

made in recent years to better understand the root causes of the opposition to wind farms, and to develop strategies to help secure acceptance of and support for these projects.<sup>100</sup> For example, in the Dutch city of Zeewolde, initial opposition to a 320 MW onshore wind farm was overcome when the residents were allowed to invest in the project.<sup>101</sup>

Public opposition can also apply to transport infrastructure if a direct conflict arises over making changes to road use to create more space for active travel or to public transport. Both of these examples underscore why effective integration of active travel and public transport are key to ensuring high levels of uptake.<sup>102</sup>

The business case study below highlights some of the key challenges that energy companies face in relation to permitting processes and the deployment of renewable energy infrastructure.

## Business case study

### Improving permitting and administrative procedures to accelerate renewable deployment in the EU context – a case study by Iberdrola

There are currently large delays in renewable and storage projects in Europe largely due to issues to do with planning permissions. Removing the planning permission bottlenecks experienced by both onshore and offshore renewable energy developers and storage developers should be an important action line to tackle current challenges in the European energy markets as part of the transition towards a net zero economy.

In the context of the current European response to the energy crisis, the REPowerEU plan includes a wide range of interesting guidelines and policy recommendations. Some key elements of the proposed framework and other European proposals in this field are summarised below.

## Recommendations

- Proposals should consider investments in renewable energy, related grid infrastructure and storage as projects of high public interest, or the creation of go-to areas<sup>\*</sup>, thereby receiving the most favourable conditions in planning, and permitting procedures.
- Country-specific recommendations for Member States in the context of the 2022 European semester on permitting processes should be in line with Fit for 55 and REPowerEU objectives.
- ‘Best practice’ guidance for simpler and faster planning and permitting rules in 2022 to support national governments in identifying and addressing specific local challenges; Member States should be publicly benchmarked against these.

Although the proposals constitute a good starting point, at this stage it is essential to integrate them with Member States’ regulatory and administrative frameworks.

The challenge is paramount as the role of renewables in the European energy model will be increasingly important. The administrative process for renewable projects to obtain the permits often takes over two years. Moreover, the high number of projects currently in progress has created a permitting bottleneck that will likely cause further delays in the permitting process. In this regard, deadlines should be one year of processing in the go-to areas as indicated by the EU in RePowerEU.

<sup>\*</sup>Renewables ‘go-to area’ refer to a specific location, whether on land or sea, which has been designated by a Member State as particularly suitable for the installation of plants for the production of energy from renewable sources, other than biomass combustion plants. Source: COMMUNICATION REPowerEU Plan, 18.5.2022 COM(2022) 230 final.

