

Public Affairs Awards 2017

Party Conference Fringe Event of the Year, Greenpeace UK, offshore wind campaign

The Issue

The changes in Government in 2017 and Conservative Party leadership in 2016 meant there was a risk that the new Conservative Government might not recognise the benefits of offshore wind. £730m was promised for offshore wind and other low carbon technologies in March 2016, but only £176m had been allocated. No reassurances had been provided since the change in Party leadership that the remaining £554m would still be delivered. This risked limiting offshore wind's growth potential, restricting progress towards decarbonisation, and jeopardising future energy security.

We had advance warning that the price of offshore wind power would fall dramatically on 11th September 2017 - making offshore wind the cheapest form of large-scale low-carbon power, and therefore vital for helping reduce consumer bills. Offshore wind also provides industrial strategy opportunities for the UK, with the potential to create tens of thousands of new high quality jobs across the UK, often in regeneration priority areas.

To seize these opportunities and mitigate the risk of a funding shortfall, we launched an effective public affairs campaign, making the most of lobbying opportunities at Conservative Party Conference in particular, to raise Government awareness of offshore wind, and encourage ministers and key decision-makers to feel a sense of pride about the successes of the industry to date. This would help lay the groundwork for the Government to re-commit the £554m in the 2017 November Budget.

Raising visibility before Conservative Conference

- **Formed a campaign coalition with offshore wind developers and other environmental NGOs, to strengthen our message to Government.** The coalition included: Orsted/ DONG, Scottish Power Renewables, GE, SSE, Vattenfall, Siemens, Marine Conservation Society and WWF
- **11th September press launch and MP mail out:**
 - Secured wide-ranging press coverage in establishment media to raise the visibility of the price drop to decision-makers. Coverage included: 3 front pages ([Times](#), [FT](#) and [Guardian](#)), 1 front page of a Business section ([Telegraph](#)), 1 double page spread in the [Times](#), 3 broadsheet editorial comment pieces ([Times](#), [Telegraph](#), [FT](#)), pieces in [The Mirror](#), [City AM](#), [Evening Standard](#), [The One Show](#), [Channel 4 News](#), [BBC News at One and Six](#) and many more
 - We arranged a photo opp. with Emma Thompson to maximise press coverage
 - We adopted a simple tagline of "50% off a great deal for the UK" – so the good news would stick in politicians' minds
 - We sent personalised emails to a target list of 350 MPs, notifying them of the price drop news, attaching a briefing with more info, and flagging up relevant information about offshore wind in local constituencies
- **26th September – 9th October – Westminster station Tube ads**
 - Arranged '50% off' ads at MP entrances of Westminster Tube station, with coalition member logos at the bottom – to maximise MP exposure to campaign messages before conference
 - Peter Capaldi attended the ad launch – boosting press (e.g. [New Statesman](#) [Guardian](#) and [Telegraph](#) – see attached) and social media coverage
 - HM Treasury officials saw and responded to the ads on the day of their launch

Conservative Conference lobbying and outcomes

The tactics above boosted political awareness in advance of Conservative Conference, and enabled us to line up a large number of MP meetings. We planned two additional tactics for Conservative Conference to maximise impact:

- **Pop-up banners at 3 offshore wind fringe events – replicating the same “50% off” tube ad designs, to reinforce the campaign framing:**
 - RenewableUK Breakfast fringe with Climate Change Minister Claire Perry MP
 - Industrial strategy fringe with Offshore Wind Industry Council and Taxpayer’s Alliance
 - Northern industrial strategy fringe with IPPR, DONG/ Orsted and James Heappey MP

- **Offshore wind socks, with “50% off” labels, reiterating the campaign ask, alongside coalition logos**
 - An unusual and fun conference give-away helped attract MPs’ attention and provide a further hook for discussions about our ask
 - Distributed 200 pairs of socks at the fringe events above, Scottish Conservatives reception, and during multiple private meetings with MPs during conference
 - Recipients of the socks included the following politicians – many of whom agreed to speak to Ministers about the benefits of offshore wind, raise the issue about funding specifically, and promote the sector in Parliament:
 - **Theresa May**
 - **Claire Perry, Climate Change Minister** – stated publicly *“what’s happened in offshore wind is extraordinary”* and *“Very very well done (on the socks), excellent – especially to hand out at a Conservative party conference.”*
 - **Richard Harrington, Energy Minister** – used 50% off framing in 2 fringe events and stated publicly that the price drop is *“a massive achievement”*
 - **Peter Aldous MP**
 - **Bernard Jenkin MP**
 - **Andrew Bowie MP**
 - **Giles Wilkes, Industrial Strategy Spad for No 10**
 - **Marek Zemanik, Director of Policy for Scottish Conservatives**
 - **Maurice Golden MSP**
 - Additional outcomes included:
 - **Greg Clark, BEIS Secretary** – complemented the Tube ad campaign
 - **James Heappey MP** – said he loved the Tube ad campaign, and spoke passionately about offshore wind at fringe events
 - **John O’Connell, Chief Exec of The Taxpayer’s Alliance** – described the socks as the best conference give-away he’d ever seen

Post Conference campaign win

The activities above ensured our “50% off” campaign framing was used proactively by Ministers, backbench MPs and establishment commentators – nurturing Government interest in providing further support for offshore wind. This meant we secured a campaign win earlier than expected. The Government launched its [Clean Growth Strategy](#) on Thursday 12th October 2017, containing the following:

- **Greg Clark, in his Forward, referred with pride to the fact that offshore wind costs “have halved in just a few years,”** as a result of “sustained commitment... and targeted public sector innovation support”
- **The plan commits to deliver up to £557 million for further offshore wind auctions.** It also commits to work with the offshore wind industry to develop an ambitious industrial strategy Sector Deal, “which could result in 10 gigawatts of new capacity, with the opportunity for additional deployment if this is cost effective, built in the 2020s”