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Clean & Green Could offshore wind farms revolutionize the energy industry?

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Wind energy is getting a lot of attention these days, but companies tapping into wind turbines are still running into stiff resistance. While wind farms are popping up onshore all over the country, not a single offshore turbine has been installed in the United States. Europe, by contrast, is home to more than 20 offshore turbine projects. What is stopping American communities from embracing wind energy?

The Department of Energy recently released a [report](#) asserting that wind energy could supply up to 20% of the nation's needs by 2030. Wind is already supplying 20% of Denmark's needs and 12% of Spain's demand. This would mean that U.S. wind companies, which are currently supplying just over 1% of the U.S. megawatt hours, would need to dramatically ramp up production. However, community groups in many coastal locations have stalled or blocked offshore turbines from being developed.

Offshore turbines are controversial for a number of reasons. Even though offshore installations would make the delivery system more efficient, supplying larger coastal cities, they do present a number of problems. For one, installation costs are shocking for offshore projects. A Long Island wind project was rejected by the local power authority following homeowner protests and controversy surrounding a \$700 million price tag. A Massachusetts project near Nantucket Island has also seen protests by local residents. Seaside homeowners say the wind turbines would drag down property values because of their supposed unsightliness. Others claim the massive mills would harm sea life.

Indeed, offshore turbines are huge. A typical turbine is described by the [Wall Street Journal](#) as, "a tower nearly as tall as the Statue of Liberty and a rotor roughly as wide as a football field is long." However, not all coastal communities are thinking of seascapes and property values when they think of wind installations. Hull, Massachusetts has embraced wind energy, with town manager Philip Lemnios calling the turbines, "one of the defining symbols of our town."

Hull has installed two onshore wind turbines, which combined supply approximately 13% of the town's energy needs. Now a plan is moving forward to install 4 larger turbines offshore, which could potentially provide power for the entire town. Residents already enjoy lower electricity bills than surrounding communities, and on the whole the seacoast community supports the clean energy project. A community website, [HullWind.org](#), tracks their wind energy production and follows the progress of their offshore project. The town has even been honored by the Department of Energy, receiving the Wind Power Pioneer Award in 2007.

Hull's example of embracing coastal wind projects will hopefully be emulated by other seaside towns. If more offshore projects receive community support, windmills can become beautiful symbols of clean, renewable energy instead of being perceived as the end of a "perfect" view.

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By Haley January Eckels

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