

Environment and Sustainability Committee

Inquiry into Energy Policy and Planning in Wales

EPP 124 – Barbara Jessop

21st September 2011

To whom it may concern

I am writing to you to express my deep concern about the proposed wind farm developments, hubs and pylons in Montgomeryshire and the Welsh Government's policy on renewable and non-renewable energy generation.

This is the biggest infrastructure project ever undertaken in Wales and the preparation and consultation process has so far been wholly inadequate and sadly lacking in strategy.

I believe there now needs to be an comprehensive review of TAN8 and the renewable energy policy of not just Cardiff but also Westminster. Such a review should take a holistic approach, one that takes into account the environment, the lack of infrastructure, impact of flooding down stream, impact on communities, tourism and general business concerns. It should also look at the impact on the already very congested roads around Welshpool and Newtown. Individual aspects cannot and should not be looked at in isolation. The review should also consider the latest evidence and scientific research on renewable energy. TAN8 was drawn up in a different 'area' and as a document is now out of date

Environmental concerns

This project means that as the plans stand currently 40% of Montgomeryshire will be affected by potential wind farms developments, pylons or the hub. This in return for just 4% of the renewable energy target for Wales! The impact of this development on the people, the economy as well as the environment of Montgomeryshire is out of all proportion!

An Olympic size swimming pool area will have to be excavated for every windmill and peat will be replaced by concrete. The removal of peat might lead to flooding further down the valleys as water can no longer be absorbed. Montgomeryshire already has severe flooding problems during heavy rain. Hedges will have to be cut down, roads built etc, this will have a serious impact on our environment, our daily lives and the future of Montgomeryshire.

Countryside is not something that should be wantonly destroyed; it has a value that has so far been completely ignored.

Impact on birds not least the County Emblem the RED KITE

According to research by Scientists from the Centre for Ornithology at the University of Birmingham, UK, birds collide with power lines because they have "blind spots" in their field of vision. This will be true for many of the corridor routes, the big bird population will suffer from the wind farm blades and power lines.

What will happen to our red kite population we are so proud of? Has anybody looked at the potential impact this will have on our birds of prey? Who will measure the impact of the development on the birds? Surely we cannot rely on the developers to monitor and report

back?

Tourism

Montgomeryshire is a relatively poor county and relies heavily on tourism income to support its economy; this will be lost with the arrival of big scale wind farms. Tourism in Montgomeryshire is valued at £358 Million and currently supports 6300 jobs (figures from Mid Wales Tourism). But not just Mid-Wales will lose income, so many holiday makers travel through the area from the Midlands to reach the West Coast of Wales, I don't think many will make the journey a second time with the inevitable travel chaos. They will look for other places to go to. Will they come back after 7 years? What happens to Tourism in West and Mid Wales in the meantime?

Lack of infrastructure in Montgomeryshire

I live in Castle Caereinion which lies on the A458 and it will be heavily affected by wind turbine traffic movement going towards Cefn Coch. Most people commute to Welshpool on a daily basis either for work, shopping or medical appointments. I don't think any of the parties involved have truly assessed the impact this will have on my life, the life of my family and my community. The roads are narrow and bendy and do not lend themselves to huge lorry traffic.

The number of traffic abnormal loads in the first three years is 2,565, the number of convoys 855, convoys and convoys through Welshpool town centre per week 18.

I work on the outskirts of Newtown and can see daily the traffic chaos to get into Newtown. Queues regularly reach back to the Gro Guest House on the A483, this will only increase with the holiday traffic. The same applies for the bottleneck in Welshpool. Our road network is already at breaking point from May till August and cannot cope with the substantial additional traffic from wind farm developments.

My family as well as my community rely on these roads to go about our daily lives and earn a living. My children attend Llanfair School, I travel to Newtown to work and my husband to Llanfyllin. How will emergency vehicles get through?

Our beautiful countryside will be turned into an industrial area, we will suffer from major traffic problems for many years to come, lose our main source of income which is tourism as well as our County logo, the red kite.

The more we hear and read about windfarms the more it becomes obvious that it is foremost about business and profits and not about what's in the best interest of Wales. Politics and business is so interwoven that it is sometimes difficult to see who is leading whom. This applies not just to Britain but unfortunately also to the European Union who is the driving force behind the supergrid. All this despite growing evidence that shows the folly of onshore windfarms

I urge the Environment and Sustainability Committee to press for a comprehensive environmental impact assessment as well as a review of TAN8. This is a strategy Wales cannot afford to get wrong.

On a slightly different note, my husband recently organised a discussion on windfarm

developments for the 6th form of Llanfyllin High School and could not get a single politician or energy company to come and speak in favour of windfarms? This, in my opinion, speaks for itself!

I appreciate you taking the time to read my letter.

Yours sincerely,

Barbara Jessop