

Wind Turbines - an Industrial Intrusion on Silloth

Wind Turbines, are they ruining the countryside or saving the planet?

The debate about wind farms is a contentious one, it is a debate that has divided communities and even families. We are constantly being told by the media that the natural world is in danger of extinction due to harmful emissions and it seems that the Government's answer to this problem is to ignore the most damning culprits and instead erect as many wind turbines as possible in an effort to be seen as 'green'. And to go along with this misguided and dangerous policy, we are expected to disregard our heritage of England's most scenically beautiful countryside.

The reality is however, that if you were to pepper the whole of our countryside with turbines you would in fact reduce greenhouse gases by nil because wind is an unreliable source of energy. In order to ensure that a steady supply is maintained to our homes, our hospitals, our schools etc., conventional power stations must remain open. In order to match the output of one coal powered station it would be necessary to erect 1,728 turbines and to replace the output of one nuclear plant it would be necessary to erect 1,026 turbines. In May 2002 the UK had 9 coal fired power stations, 11 gas fired and 15 nuclear power stations. In order to supply just 10% of the UK's power needs 22,700 turbines would have to be commissioned, and that doesn't take into account that our energy consumption is steadily rising at the rate of 1.5% per annum.

Heavy reliance on wind power would bring significant implications. If consumption were to peak on a day or during a period when the British Isles was covered by an area of high pressure, there would be no wind and the result would be widespread power cuts, bearing in mind that if the wind reaches 55 m.p.h. turbines have to be shut down to prevent damage, and at wind speeds of less than 30 m.p.h. output is considerably reduced.

While consumption of energy continues to increase so will CO2 emissions. However, the Government puts little effort into conserving

energy – if only every household replaced the conventional electric bulb normally used with a low energy bulb, another power station could close and 1.5 million tonnes of CO2 would be saved. Approximately 1,628,000 homes in the UK have no roof insulation. The annual output of a 750 kW turbine is 1.64m units and by insulating 485 houses you would save that amount of energy per year. Which begs the question : why is VAT charged on electricity and gas bills at only 5% and on insulation materials at 17.5%?

If there is a danger from global warming why did the UK Government impose a moratorium on the move to relatively clean gas-fired power stations and offer instead a large cash subsidy to the coal industry? Cars are our fastest growing source of CO2 and air traffic is also a serious contributor.

It may be that we are being duped into believing that the problem is being dealt with by the

tale wind "parks" in the countryside. The reality has been an abrupt awakening. Wind power stations are no parks." She went on to point out that in Denmark turbines are treated within the planning process in the same way as motorways, industrial buildings, railways and pig farms!

The National Trust on 19th May 1999 issued a statement denouncing the "false hopes and flawed solutions" offered by many "green energy" schemes, particularly wind farms. "In a world where commercial decisions are dominated by the global market place, wilderness is too easily under-valued. In the present context of concern over climate change and the drive for clean energy, we are offered a new resource – wind power. We have to be certain that, if we exploit the wind, loss of the wild is not too high a price to pay."

On a local level, Silloth nestles in surrounding countryside that is relatively unblemished, and which also includes a designated AONB

Low Houses. Should these applications be approved, along with the Hellrigg proposal then it is clear that our coastline will become a 'sea' of wind farms. Whilst many argue that wind farms have no detrimental affect on tourism, it is hard to see how such extensive desecration of our coastline could fail to have an impact on tourism in the area.

Local amenities will undoubtedly be spoilt – quiet country lanes will be taken away from tourists and the community alike for industrial giants that have no place in our countryside and offer nothing in return. Wind farms are a white elephant! The energy they output is minimal and they do nothing to contribute to reducing CO2 emissions.

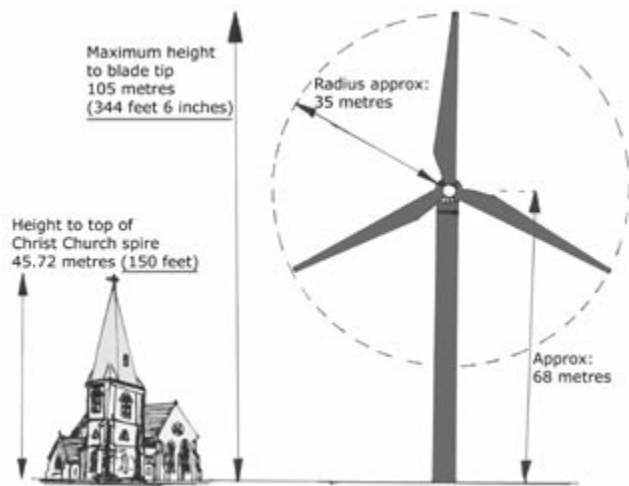
If the thousands of these huge structures are erected that would be required to reach the targets set in the locations such as those proposed to date, then there will be very little of our landscape that will not be blighted. In 1996 the Countryside Commission warned that England's scenic countryside is in danger of becoming a "wind farm wilderness."

Is this what you want? Are wind farms worth harming the environment, the landscape in which we live and very possibly our livelihoods. Renewables will provide a small increase in energy supply – but not a replacement and the detrimental effects far outweigh the insignificant and unreliable amount of energy they will produce.

If you feel strongly about these planning applications, please write to : Mr. R. Outhwaite, Planning & Development Manager, Allerdale Borough Council, Allerdale House, Workington, Cumbria CA14 3YJ and please quote the following two Application Numbers: 2/2004/0841 and 2/2004/0843 (Hellrigg – Park Head Farm Silloth).

Please note that the decision date for both applications is imminent so any objection should be forwarded as a matter of urgency.

For more information about the Silloth-on-Solway Action Committee contact: David Montgomerie on 016973 31396 or 31062.



commissioning of more and more wind farms, while in fact the more thorny and less popular political issues are being avoided.

Whatever the view as to the aesthetics of wind turbines, there is no doubt that they are industrial and an intrusion into the countryside. They are large and noisy machines and at 344 feet high are as high as a 30 storey office block. Were an individual to apply for planning permission for a luxury home in the middle of a National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty there is no doubt permission would be refused. The Editor of Wind Power Monthly – the magazine for the wind industry wrote: "Too often the public has felt duped into envisioning fairy

– Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and a National Heritage site. The area is currently under threat from two identical Planning Applications under consideration. The applications, from NPower Renewables are for six turbines to be sited at Park Head Farm, Silloth, (Hellrigg). The proposed site at Hellrigg sits immediately outside an AONB, but will obviously have visual impact from within the AONB and over the surrounding countryside.

Permission has already been granted for a wind farm at Bothel and applications are imminent for both Edderside and Allonby. A further application from NPower Renewables is currently under consideration for the High Pow site at Bolton

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