

Environment and Sustainability Committee

Inquiry into Energy Policy and Planning in Wales

EPP15 -Paul Butler

There are at present proposals to build a number of windfarms in Montgomeryshire. The total number of turbines if all proposals go ahead would be around 800 in a relatively small area. Some of these turbines are the largest ever built, over 600 feet tall, that's nearly 200 metres, 20 seconds for Usain Bolt but most of us would regard it as quite a long way to sprint. To begin with, the roads in the area will need to be widened and in places probably strengthened to accommodate the huge vehicles needed to transport the sections of the turbines. Then there will be enormous numbers of deliveries for each turbine. These deliveries will clog up roads as traffic will only be able to move in one direction and will travel slowly. What happens to the movement of emergency vehicles during these deliveries? The main income in Mid Wales comes from the tourist industry, tourists will not want their journeys held up by slow turbine traffic and if the turbines are built may not wish to visit Mid Wales at all, putting many of those working in the tourist industry out of work. If built these enormous structures will have a huge impact on the skyline throughout not only Mid Wales but right up through the Snowdonia National park putting a real blot on the landscape. Where many of these windfarms are proposed there are at present peat bogs. Digging up peat bogs for garden compost is now banned in many areas because of the benefits of peat bogs. Removing the peat and replacing it with concrete bases for turbines and hardcore for roads will greatly affect the drainage in these areas which will then have knock on effects downstream. increasing the risk of flooding in many areas. There will also be an effect on the flora and fauna in the areas concerned. If the windfarms are built, the electricity must then be transformed to the voltage required and then carried to the grid. The cheapest option is using pylons which will themselves disfigure another area as the electricity is carried to England. All of this sounds a bit NIMBYish but the thing that really annoys me is that windpower doesn't really work very well. There is often too little wind or too much wind, the best output seems to be about 23% of their potential and it may not be when we need it most and so other forms of power have to remain working as back up just in case. The windfarm companies would not spend all of the money necessary without the huge subsidies that will be paid (under another name) by the government but of course ultimately by every one of us. How many houses could be given improved insulation, double glazing or solar panels to improve the nations energy saving for the same cost as these ineffective (but to some politicians and the landscape) higher profile turbines? Wave power, tidal power and turbines running from rivers or dams seem to be more reliable and effective types of alternative energy. I hope that the government will think seriously about doing things to solve the energy crisis for the long term future of the country, rather than looking for a high profile quick fix, we've ticked the box solution which will not work and will destroy an area of outstanding natural beauty (even if it hasn't been given that specific designation) forever.

Paul Butler