

England

7 February 2011
Email

Department of the Senate
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia

Dear Sirs

Re: The Social & Economic Impact of Wind Farms

I write as we start our 5th year awaiting a decision on an industrial wind turbine site of nine turbines up to 103m just 750m from our home in Devon, England.

The application submitted was so poor that **we**, the local community, have had to employ experts in the fields of photomontages, landscape, noise and tourism to successfully challenge the so called “facts” supplied by the developer.

We are in a rural community, just over 7km from a National Park from which the turbines on this plateau will clearly be seen. All of the local parish and town councils in the area overlooking the site have objected to its approval, including the National Park Authority, yet we know that the District Council who will make the decision is minded to approve under the pressure of government targets, and would have done so much earlier had we not been able to point out the defects in the application to them.

This application has so far cost our local rural community well over £25,000 to defend our landscape, our quality of live and our living conditions and tourism.

We do not get subsidies or any government assistance to defend ourselves.

The energy company, who have failed to erect an anemometer at the site in all this time, face the prospect of huge government subsidies to ruin our lives.

We know that being down wind of the prevailing weather we will be subject to noise emissions, which may well cause disturbance to our sleep and our health. My neighbour suffers from MS and a peaceful sleep, given the pain she experiences, is already a problem, so what will her life be like after they are erected. To subject her to the possibility of further health issues is of great concern to us all. Yet the precautionary principle is not being invoked despite the evidence, which is emerging on, the adverse health affects to those living up to 2km from a site.

The information on health effects presented to local decision makers and endorsed by government here is from acousticians – not from health professionals who are bearing witness to the problems being created. Too frequently also these acousticians are too close to government to provide an independent view, and these so called “experts” are travelling the world advising on health impacts for which they have no qualifications at all.

We have stopped a project we were to embark on to provide holiday accommodation on our farm; to diversify to provide an opportunity for local goods and services to be bought by visitors to the area. The multiplier effect on a local community of tourism is enormous. Yet with the prospect of being just 750m away from the turbines makes the project uneconomic. No one will want to stay, or certainly never to return if their holiday is interrupted by noise disturbance and the landscape they want to enjoy is blighted by turbines. You never see wind turbines feature in adverts for tourism in the landscape of Scotland or Wales, or the visit Australia adverts seen here!

In addition the value of our house has dropped by 25% according to our local estate agent. To us that is a personal loss of £150,000. This can be multiplied by every property in the vicinity. In addition if we could sell the property the time to find a buyer is likely to be much longer. But why should we have to move from a place we love and call home?

The developer in his application overstated the carbon savings by 100% and we had to go to the Advertising Standards Agency for a ruling, which came down in our favour. Yet the energy company does not even have to produce a retraction, only not to repeat their totally inaccurate claim.

Government tells us that we must have these things because they produce low carbon energy. But no one has taken into account the cost of ramping up and down the firm sources of energy to compensate for the innate vagaries of the wind, which fluctuates constantly and can rise and fall dramatically even over a 24 hour period. Clearly the energy companies could undertake this calculation but it is not in their interest to do so as it would further expose the inadequacies of wind generation.

Too often in the UK we are told of the experiences of Denmark – how great is their wind energy, and how marvellous that it is exported across the continent. Yet what is not so well heralded is that the carbon footprint of Denmark has gone up during the same period of wind generation because Denmark must rely on coal fired power stations to supply power when the wind does not blow at all, when it blows too much or when it blows when there is no demand.

So in the UK we are blighting the countryside, which is a valued asset and providing local employment, for the “pleasure” of paying extortionately for wind energy, which is not proven to reduce carbon emissions by any significant amount. Purchased from abroad and erected mostly by foreign workers there is no local employment and the only local winners are the lazy farmers whose land has been chosen for the scheme, whose children have been singled out in school by other children for abuse. Family members running existing tourism businesses in the area have fallen out with such landowners too, perceiving them as greedy and self-seeking.

The only justification for erecting these giants in such rural areas where otherwise local planning policies would prevent industrialisation is to meet government targets to save carbon emissions. Yet there is no evidence that there are significant savings to be made. The more honest energy companies have stated that 90% back up is required for every

wind turbine; it follows that the more wind turbines then the more firm power stations are needed to provide this back up¹.

Energy analysts have criticised the UK policy in 2007 Professor Deiter Helm commented on the radio that:

The design of renewables policy is essentially a wind policy in this country; is amongst the most expensive renewables policies in the developed world.

It is hard to think how you could design a renewables support policy which could turn out to be so expensive and indeed actually produce so little by way of capacity.

Given the way that current renewable policy is designed and the proposals to give an extra subsidy to offshore, what that effectively means is, these costs are going to stay very high and we the consumers are going to pick up an extra tab for the offshore wind over and beyond the very expensive tab that we are picking up for the onshore wind at the moment."

But nothing has changed!

I draw your attention to the quote from Martin Fuchs' (CEO of E.ON Netz GmbH) speech at the annual Report press conference on 16 June 2005:

- “1. The wind blows when it will.
2. The wind blows as it will – despite increasingly accurate forecasts, it is difficult to predict its actual strength.
3. The wind blows where it will – and sadly, it does not blow where large quantities of power are required.”

I urge your government to think very hard in considering the impact of wind turbines. It must not only be a judgement of the high costs to communities inflicted by them but one also has to balance the benefits which are incredibly small compared to the visual size of the turbines. It is not good enough to just do “something”. One must do something that will make a difference, or it is better to do nothing and to use the investment opportunity elsewhere when it **can** have best effect.

Thank you for reading my submission.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Caroline Harvey

¹ Extract from the Guardian newspaper **The Guardian, 04 Jun 08**

E.ON warns over backup for renewables

Mark Milner

One of Britain's leading energy providers warned yesterday that Britain will need substantial fossil fuel generation to back up the renewable energy it needs to meet European Union targets. The UK has to meet a target of 15% of energy from renewables by 2020.

E.ON said that it could take 50 gigawatts of renewable electricity generation to meet the EU target. But it would require up to 90% of this amount as backup from coal and gas plants to ensure supply when intermittent renewable supplies were not available. That would push Britain's installed power base from the existing 76 gigawatts to 120 gigawatts