

OBJ/416/001

Statement on behalf of Llandyssil with Abermule Community Council

Proposed 132kv connection line (SPMW)

Introduction

I am making this representation as Chair of the Abermule and Llandyssil Community Council and wish to present a statement on behalf of the Councillors and the community. We wish to comment on the impacts arising from the 35 km transmission line from the proposed Bryn Dadlau sub-station at Llandinam to the existing Welshpool sub-station.

The impact of the proposed Mid Wales Windfarm and Connections Project has been a matter of considerable and on-going concern to residents. Our Community Survey¹ indicated that 94.5% of residents were opposed to the Llandinam line and only 4.3% in favour. Comments elicited by the survey indicated that an unobtrusive single pole line or undergrounding may be more acceptable although over 98% strongly opposed any further windfarm development in Mid Wales.

There are a number of issues the Council would wish to raise:

1. Cultural Heritage

1:1 Incredibly the scheme effectively runs through and joins up three areas of outstanding historic Landmap aspect, Kerry Hills, the Upper Mule, Cefn y Coed hills and the Vale of Montgomery Registered Historic Landscape. Together these make up an area of which Scottish Power ManWeb consultants, Gillespies, state²:

'The overhead line passes through one of the most important pre-historic, and later, landscapes (or more correctly groups of landscapes) in the region. For this area it is possible to construct a convincing narrative of the history of the landscape development since the last glaciation ten thousand years ago'

¹ Full details will be provided as an appendix to the Cumulative submission of the Community Council

² SPEN ES 2009 Ch 8 8.4.8 (p.100)

1:2 The richly varied and culturally significant landscape defines the area. The Community Council find it completely unacceptable that the setting of significant assets in our community, such as the Henfron Moated Site, will be compromised and the cultural heritage value greatly diminished..

2. Landscape.

2:1 The quality of our local landscape is high. Residents particularly enjoy the open, unspoilt and panoramic Cefn y Coed hills which provide the setting for Llandyssil. This is an area in which, over the last 5 years the Community Council has worked hard to establish a number of scenic circular walks on footpaths and quiet lanes for the benefit of local people and visitors alike. The dominant feature in this largely unspoilt rural scene will become the transmission line as it skylines on the Cefn y Coed Hills and obtrusively crosses the Llandyssil valley at right angles.

2.2 The line will Impact on important views from Kerry Ridgeway and the well known and ancient Drover's Road. This is an area much loved by local people. Looking from the toposcope on Two Tumps would offer a proximate view down onto the transmission line running right across the superb vista.

2:3 SPMW predicate landscape acceptability in the Kerry Hills on the existence of windfarms desensitising the area to industrial scale development. The Community Council consider this a specious argument where expansion of windfarms in SSA C is not assured even should Llandinam Repowering be consented.

2:4 An important part of the integrity of the landscape is the wooded character. The Council note with some concern that 76 mature trees and an unspecified number in 63 tree groups will be felled and many others lopped. Although SPMW's replanting scheme is to be commended, these fully grown broad - leaved trees take tens of years to replace and have a high attrition rate. This is highly significant in terms of visual mitigation and biodiversity implications.

3 Consultation

3:1 Consultation events have provided limited information and have caused confusion as to actual routeing and the type of pole design to be used. Viewpoints for photomontages appear to have been selected to ensure equipment such as the highly intrusive corner posts are obscured and the impression of impacts minimised. This has not assisted public understanding of the scheme as compared with the wireframes.

3:2 There was no consultation event held at Llandyssil despite the line impacting significantly on the community.

4. Design

4:1 The Community Council believe that significant landscape and visual benefit could be achieved through undergrounding in an area of highly valued landscape. This has not been considered although underground routeing along lanes would be an easier and less obtrusive possibility in this area.

4:2 Initial consultation documents showed a single 'trident' pole line. In a subsequent iterations this became a double pole then, days before Local Planning Authority determination, reverted to a single 'trident' pole. The present application is again for a double pole with a highly unsightly arrangement of conductors.

4:3 The impact on the landscape is not just an aesthetic point. There are economic implications where it impacts on the perceptions and enjoyment of the many visitors to Montgomery and it's environs. Businesses in our community such as the Smithy, the Goetre and the Fron Fraith static and touring Caravan Parks, pubs and restaurants, country hotels, bed and breakfasts and the village shop all rely substantially on the visitor economy. These facilities promote themselves extensively on being ideal for exploring, walking and relaxing in beautiful Mid Wales.

4:4 Transmission lines are not temporary structures. The windfarm has a 25 year planning application unlike the transmission line. To all intents this is a

permanent change to the landscape and greater weight must be given to this consideration.

5. Benefit

5:1 We are mindful that the power source is variable and intermittent and will provide on average less than 30 MW to the Grid so the overall benefit is very small for the proposed scale of this engineering project of line and windfarm.

5:2 As previously expressed³, the Community Council does not agree that there is any mandate for acceptance of a windfarm landscape. Local people demonstrated their engagement with their landscapes through the democratic process when the elected members of the County Council unanimously rejected TAN 8 and the implications of a windfarm landscape in their resolution following a full and public Council debate.

The Community Council would respectfully request that the Inspector takes into account that the proposed Repowered windfarm at Llandinam would be consented against the wishes of the vast majority of our residents and that we do not consider that sufficient attention has been paid to the design and routing of the transmission line to minimise impacts in a very special landscape.

³ Llandyssil with Abermule Community Council presentation to this Inquiry at Dolfor