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A statement by Susan Newham, resident of Newtown made on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2013

I am concerned about the scale of wind farms and pylon routes proposed in Mid Wales and about the impact on the environment and the communities in this area.

I am not fundamentally opposed to renewable energy sources, but the thinking behind renewable energy schemes has to make sense. I do not believe that these wind farms are being proposed by organisations with a "big picture" approach to problem solving. In many cases, projects are being peddled by those who have a financial or other interest in their implementation.

The wind farms proposed will have turbines of up to 146 meters tall, which is catastrophic in a place like Mid Wales. Traditionally depending on an agricultural base and more recently on manufacturing and service industries brought in by the Development Board for Rural Wales, Mid Wales is struggling economically. Many companies attracted by low rates and business support by the Development Board have now gone elsewhere. Tourism is one area where the area can hold its head up, and one which offers real opportunities for future economic growth. Visitors to the area come because of its tranquility and unspoilt environment. Covering vast areas with turbines and pylon corridors will spoil views that have been changed little over centuries, and that vandalism will never be undone. Once you draw a moustache on the Mona Lisa with a marker pen, there is no turning back!

My feeling is that energy producers have found themselves under increasing pressure to source some their energy through renewable means and have looked around for the easiest way to do so. Mid Wales is an easy target, because its hills are considered suitable for wind turbines, but more importantly- and I cannot stress this enough- because there are fewer people living there to complain!!

Those same energy companies could site wind farms around major cities, where the power will be close to where it will be used, but they are not considering that because the outcry from residents would be too great. Powys has one of the lowest densities of population in the UK and therefore is an obvious choice, particularly if some of those who might be opposed to the plans can be bought off by promises of making money by selling or renting land for turbines or pylons. Considering the smaller population of Mid Wales, the outcry against the plans has been astonishing. To say that people feel strongly about this is understating the issue.

Even the most optimistic estimates suggest that wind turbines produce energy for 30% of the time. In addition, a small percentage of the energy is lost in transmission, with the loss increasing with distance transmitted. If all applications go ahead, the energy produced will be perhaps 0.6 percent of the total energy consumption of the UK, probably less. What we need is not bigger wind farms covering more and more of our country, but a more joined up approach which looks at the common sense of the issues and judges schemes on their effectiveness.

I am concerned about the environmental impact of filling large areas of environmentally sensitive upland and valleys with huge slabs of concrete, not to mention the access roads to make such sites possible. Wales is a wild and biodiverse area, and any large scale inroads into previously undeveloped areas will have an impact on fragile habitats and protected species.

As a resident of Newtown, I often hear local people, and business owners in particular, complaining about the traffic congestion on the A483. At a public meeting in Newtown on 19<sup>th</sup> July 2012, between residents and officers of the Welsh Government, the anger of local people about traffic congestion was clearly expressed. They talked about how visitors, and even local people wishing to shop, are making the decision to go to other towns or take a different route. This has had a very

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detrimental effect on the economy of the town. Imagine adding to those traffic woes a large number of additional HGV's and abnormal loads carrying turbine components. The effect on both Welshpool and Newtown, and in fact Mid Wales as a whole, will be to create years of traffic misery and further stagnation of the economy.

In the report commissioned by the Welsh Assembly Government and carried out by Capita Symonds, published in January 2011, the possible adverse effects of increased HGV traffic related to wind farm construction were outlined.

This is section 4.1 of that report.

**Adverse Effects**

4.1 Any significant increase in HGV traffic flow over and above the existing HGV flows may potentially trigger a series of negative impacts such as the ones below:-

- Deterioration/damage and premature failure of the existing highway assets (both the
- trunk and county road networks) including wear and tear on the carriageway
- pavement, buried chambers, culverts and pipework, adjacent structures (especially
- older masonry structures, some of which are of dry stone wall construction) and
- areas of embankments which may already be showing signs of distress;
- Increase in the overall proportion of slow moving traffic, with consequent adverse
- effect on journey time reliability;
- Potential delays to local and tourist traffic which may have adverse economic
- impact;
- Noise and dust pollution along the affected routes, which will impact on local
- residents;
- Intrusion to third party property (e.g. in Welshpool);
- Other environmental impacts on flora and fauna.

Mid Wales is an area of real natural beauty. It does not have the protection in law afforded to the National Parks in Snowdonia or the Brecon Beacons, but should be protected nevertheless. If it did not have those two even more outstanding areas to the north and south, I am quite sure that Mid Wales would have been designated as a National Park or an Area of outstanding natural beauty by now. If you visit the website [www.midwaleswind.co.uk](http://www.midwaleswind.co.uk) you can see a map showing the concentration of wind farms and proposed wind farms in Mid Wales. The proposed wind farms will change the face of Mid Wales forever, blighting rural communities and producing less than 1% of the electricity required.

I strongly urge you to turn down these proposals and to propose a full review of renewable energy sources and projects, which takes into full account their effects on communities and their effectiveness. Huge impacts for very small gains are not a proportionate response.

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