

**OBJ/552/001**

CHRISTOPHER PENFOLD

STATEMENT OF CASE

THE MID WALES (POWYS) CONJOINED WIND FARMS PUBLIC INQUIRY  
WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO PROPOSED DEVELOPMENTS WITHIN  
THE SSA C AT:

LLANBADARN FYNYDD

LLAITHDDU

LLANDINAM

AND THE 132KV OVERHEAD ELECTRIC LINE  
CONNECTION FROM THE PROPOSED LLANDINAM WIND FARM TO  
WELSHPOOL SUBSTATION

Sir, ladies and gentlemen, my name is Christopher Penfold and I speak as a resident of the village of Mochdre where my family have lived at The Congley for over 40 years and from which a third generation is now walking the hills which are under threat by these proposals.

My concerns are with all of the proposed developments that are the subject of this conjoined public inquiry; with the permanent degradation of the landscape in which they are intended to be set; with the likely ruination of the livelihoods of the many who, for generations, have lived in the affected landscape; and with the futility of the proposed developments as an attempt to achieve the objectives for which they are designed.

I speak also as a private electricity consumer who, in common with every other consumer of electricity in England and Wales, is being forced by the UK government to pay surcharges on my electricity bills in order to fund the subsidies that make these proposed developments economically viable, and even handsomely profitable.

I am a private individual who has had an acute interest in the development of UK energy policy for over forty years. I was the author of a ten-part drama series which dealt with the politics of energy generation. THE BRACK REPORT, which was made by Thames Television was transmitted by ITV in 1981 when each episode was seen by an average of 10 million people.

It may be argued that the evidence I propose to give to-day may be outside the remit of this inquiry but I would argue that it provides an essential context in which all the concerns of my fellow objectors must be set. Landscape,

visual impact, heritage, noise, health, loss of livelihood, depreciation of private property, transport issues, flooding – all these and more can only be fully understood and assessed in the context in which they are set: namely the absolute necessity of finding a non-carbon means of generating the base-load electricity on which all our lives and livelihoods depend. So, whilst fully appreciating the importance of the trees, Sir, I fear we are in danger of losing sight of the wood and I therefore crave your indulgence for a few minutes of this long-running inquiry, to focus on that context.

I am all too acutely aware that some of the loudest and most influential voices that are currently raised against the proliferation of windfarms come from those who remain sceptical in the face of the overwhelming scientific evidence for climate change. That evidence was bolstered only last week by the latest report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which found that global warming is happening and that our oceans are dying, and that they are doing so as a result of human activities.

I am most emphatically not a climate change denyer and even if we insist on maintaining an open verdict for the time being I would argue that when the possible destruction of the planet on which we live is at stake, it would, at the very least, be prudent to hedge our bets.

The main thrust of my argument is that proposals such as the ones here under consideration are too little and too late and that the measures we desperately need to initiate in order to limit the deleterious effects of carbon induced climate change which now threaten our planet are themselves being undermined by ineffectual and short-term schemes such as these.

So, guided by the principle expressed so succinctly by the Spanish philosopher, Georges Santayana, that "those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it" I propose to give evidence under three headings: PAST, PRESENT and FUTURE.

#### PAST

In 1958 Charles David Keeling persuaded the U.S. Weather Bureau to install monitoring devices at Mauna Loa observatory on the island of Hawaii. It was already understood by then that, thanks to the burning of fossil fuels, humans were adding huge amounts of carbon to the Earth's atmosphere.

Almost all of the creature comforts most of us enjoy today, living as we do in the post imperial phase of British history, are due to the absolutely massive extraction of coal that fuelled the industrial revolution and built the ships that enabled Britain, for a time, to rule the waves and much of the world.

In the village of Llandinam (and ironically in the shadow of one of the windfarms here under consideration) stands the statue of Lord Davies, our Welsh King Coal, as a salutary reminder of our role as world leader in the plundering of carbonized fossil resources – an activity for which we are all too ready now to criticize the Chinese, the Indians and the Brazilians as they follow our nineteenth century example.

In May of this year carbon levels measured at Mauna Loa reached the milestone of four hundred parts per million. The last time levels were this high was probably the mid-Pliocene, about 3 million years ago, when sea levels were 75 feet higher than they are to-day. With carbon emissions increasing at the terrifying rate that they now are, that presents us with the probability that, during our grandchildren's lifetimes they will be saying "Good-bye Cardiff, good-bye London, good-bye New York and good-bye all of the great coastal cities of our world." But if anyone thinks that, in those circumstances, they will be safe living in the high ground of the Welsh hills, they are living in a fools paradise.

We have known this since 1958. My television series, THE BRACK REPORT, was in the making twenty years later and was transmitted in 1981 at a time when the U.K.'s coal-fired power stations East of the Pennines were spewing huge quantities of acid rain all over Scandinavia, destroying vast swathes of carbon-eating trees. The series examined all forms of energy conservation and renewable energy generating technologies and called for action to be taken THEN. NOW is thirty-three years later and what action has been taken has been pathetically small and wrong-headed yet the problem we face is a thousand times worse.

BUT, North Sea oil was then flowing in abundance and, instead of deploying that heaven-sent opportunity to fund research into a viable alternative to fossil-fuel fired base-load electricity generation, the then government chose to use that priceless legacy to destroy the coal industry and much of U.K. manufacturing and to fuel the de-regulated banking boom with whose consequences we are now all too familiar. To all intents and purposes North Sea oil and gas has now gone to waste.

In the process, the National Coal Board research establishment at Grimethorpe was shut down at a time when its development of chimney scrubbers and fluidized-bed combustion techniques were on the point of marketability and which now ought to have been available to limit carbon emissions from the new Chinese and Indian coal-fired power stations which are opening at the rate of one per week.

This is just one example of the kind of short-termism for which the politicians of the day will be hung, drawn and quartered by historians of the future – provided there are any who've still got air to breathe.

And there are others. At the time I wrote THE BRACK REPORT, the first proposal to build a Severn barrage was on the table. It was a scheme that would have used tidal flows to generate sufficient electricity to power an entirely electrified rail network for the United Kingdom. It was rejected at the time because its lead time of fifteen years was deemed unacceptable. That was 35 years ago and last year, this current government rejected it once again for the same reason.

These are just two of a long list of similar and related missed opportunities and I cite them not merely for the sake of crowing over past mistakes but because those very mistakes reinforce the argument for the one last chance opportunity we now have to save the future. Which is certainly not on-shore wind.

#### THE PRESENT

We live now in a time rich in pious but false hope that the winds of an already meteorologically de-stabilised atmosphere are going to save us from these past neglects. They are not, and when we witness the spate of typhoons currently wreaking havoc on the coast of China, the unseasonal snowstorms in the American mid-west or the soaring temperatures fomenting the bushfires now threatening Sydney and Melbourne in Australia, we must surely realize that the problems we have created require solutions much greater than the ones here under consideration.

Pronouncements from Kyoto, or from Copenhagen, are mere gesture politics of the worst kind. And when members of our current coalition government seek to burnish their green credentials by promoting windfarms, they are doing so at the expense of our grandchildren's futures. They are, if you will pardon the expression, merely pissing into the winds of climate change.

These gestures translate into the wasteful bonanza of taxpayers money which the government is now pouring into the pockets of shareholders in the renewable energy outfits whose names are attached to the applications under consideration by this Inquiry, and into those of the local landowners in whom temporary stewardship of the landscape now threatened with destruction currently resides.

Expert energy economists like John Constable have shown how the secondary effect of artificially inflated energy prices will be the continuing contraction of the U.K. economy on which we all depend for our livelihoods – and the further impoverishment of us all.

But the first effect of this disastrous policy has already driven hundreds of thousands of ordinary U.K. citizens into fuel poverty as they are being called upon to subsidise the misguided lunacy of these windfarms.

At an earlier session of this Inquiry I was able to put a question to Mr. Gates, the expert landscape witness employed by VATTENFALL to bolster their case for the proposed windfarm at Llanbadarn Fynydd. If you recall, Sir, Mr. Gates had admitted that only thirteen residential properties would, to use his term, be 'moderately affected' by the proposed turbines but that five of these were owned by individuals who had a pecuniary interest in the development. When I asked him why these five should benefit from a handout of taxpayers money whilst the properties and livelihoods of the remaining seven taxpayers should be catastrophically de-valued, he said that he thought that was a moral question and therefore one that he could not answer. I have to admit that I was a touch non-plussed by that reply, Sir. Indeed there WAS a moral element in the question but if, as members of a civilized society, we allow moral questions to go unanswered, it begs the much bigger question of just how civilized we are? Is it right that these decisions should bitterly divide communities – as they do – into winners and losers on a gravy train we all pay for?

So in my conclusion of evidence in this section on THE PRESENT I'd like to leave you with the thought that current policies are not only counter-productive but are heading us all in the wrong direction and making our parlous predicament even worse.

So what is the alternative? As objectors we have long lived with the obvious and easy accusation that we are NIMBYS which, at its worst, translates as "Anywhere but here". But there actually IS an alternative. I don't pretend that it's going to be easy, but it does call for the kind of vision

that transcends the short termism with which our political process is be-devilled. So if I may, I would like briefly to turn to the future.

#### THE FUTURE

I propose to start from the premise that not one of the present renewable technologies is capable of replacing the role of fossil fuel in generating the base-load requirements of an increasingly energy hungry world.

Wind, wave, tidal and solar may all make small contributions but a determined policy of legally enforceable energy-saving new-build requirements, together with greater support for the wholesale retro-fitting of conservation materials to existing homes, commercial and public buildings, might at least slow down the rate of increasing demand.

Our planners still permit companies like Tesco to build huge supermarket structures in which a 3mm skin is all that sits between banks of energy consuming refrigerators and the outside air. There's one just around the corner and it was allowed to go up within the last couple of years. These are cheap, nasty, short-term structures which are machines for wasting energy. Granting them permission is little short of criminal. As the Scottish MEP, Struan Stevenson recently pointed out, in Scandinavia, if you put up a structure that is less than triple glazed, you get arrested!

There is useful employment for many currently out of work young people in the urgent task of retro-fitting buildings such as these, not only with insulation, but also with photo-voltaic panels which could passively generate the energy these monsters currently consume.

And when it comes to the plethora of subsidy driven applications from farmers, now flooding in to local planning departments, for single turbines like the monster at Dolfor (which professional members of the inquiry will be unable to avoid on their way to the community meeting tomorrow evening), the argument is that they will pay for farm energy requirements – but at the expense of the local community, of course. Yet the same income would be available to farmers if they were to cover the roofs of their industrial farm buildings and maybe an acre or two of unproductive land with zero maintenance photo voltaic cells which would have zero impact on the local environment.

But none of these measures, and certainly not wind, is capable of closing the ever-widening energy gap that now confronts us.

A new generation of power stations driven by nuclear fission may offer temporary relief, but uranium, like oil, is a finite resource which is found mostly in parts of the world that are as unstable and unpredictable as the middle east. It is still a dirty technology, producing long-lasting noxious waste for which we have not yet found an appropriate means of disposal. The unholy quartet of nuclear disasters – the Windscale fire, Three Mile Island, Chernobyl and Fukushima – should give us pause.

And only this week we have learned of the power failure in the Devonport dockyard that came close to causing a meltdown in the nuclear reactors of submarines which would have destroyed the town, together with its population and much of the surrounding countryside.

But I don't stand before you as a prophet of doom although I do believe we stand on the exit threshold from the last chance saloon.

Even more important than the finding of oil in the North Sea has been the recent discovery of significant shale gas reserves along with the means to extract it.

But this is still a fossil fuel whose reserves are also finite, so it can only be regarded as an interim measure to dig us out of the hole we are currently in. We must not permit politicians, yet again, to exploit it as a means of deferring the difficult decisions that must lead us to an ultimate solution.

The energy consultant, Dieter Helm, in his book CARBON CRUNCH, has demonstrated that the fastest way for us to reduce our carbon emissions by half would be to convert all existing coal-fired power stations to gas.

And since all windfarm generating capacity requires the building of gas-fired power stations to provide back-up for those occasions on which the wind doesn't blow, the obvious step is to go for gas, cut out the wind-farms altogether and spend the money currently being wasted in paying the subsidies on which they depend, on serious research for a long-term solution.

What is required here is nothing less than visionary leadership of the calibre shown by John F. Kennedy in his determination to achieve an embargo on the deployment of

Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles and in reaching for the moon.

In Europe, it requires the kind of international co-operation that built, and then re-built, the particle accelerator at Cern which sought and eventually found the Higgs-Boson particle. (And at this point it seems appropriate to congratulate Peter Higgs for yesterday winning the Nobel Prize for physics.)

But the catastrophe we now face makes the menace of Hitler and Nazism which threatened us in 1940 seem like a momentary blemish on the history of a world which is now threatened with meteorological disasters that could terminate the human race.

In 1940 the Allies, under the leadership of Roosevelt and Churchill, rose to the occasion with the international co-operation which resulted in the Manhattan Project.

Arguably the most evil technological feat yet achieved by mankind, it is undeniable that awareness of the awful fate suffered by the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki is what brought world leaders back from the brink of nuclear war at the time of the Cuban missile crisis.

We need even more visionary and committed leadership now to create an international scientific and technological project to build a viable thorium reactor and ultimately to crack nuclear fusion and so enable us to steer towards a sustainable hydrogen economy.

And for anyone who still thinks nuclear fusion is pie in the sky, news broke only yesterday that, at the National Ignition Facility at Lawrence Livermore Laboratory in California, a major milestone has been reached with a laser driven fusion reaction producing more energy than it took to achieve it. Along with the Joint European Torus at Culham in Oxfordshire and the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor at Cadarache in France, huge progress is now being made towards the objective of reproducing the reaction that fires the sun in controlled conditions here on Earth. This is the Holy Grail of energy research and it is now within reach.

So, if I may cite the Gospel According David Attenborough (Chapter 1, verse 1) the Cambrian Mountains are geologically the oldest corner of this beautiful planet. May I therefore ask you, Sir, to discourage the Secretary of State from permitting the applicants here represented to litter them with millions of tons of irremovable concrete and steel, merely for the sake of providing a greedy and



transitory generation of us humans with a few paltry watts of unreliable electricity. Because shale gas may just buy us the time, and one last chance, in which to achieve that elusive fusion objective.

Only then will we be able to look our grandchildren in the face with posthumous eyes and say we were equal to the challenge of saving the future for them.

And, from that future perspective, expensive diversions such as this Inquiry will be seen by our grandchildren as a waste of valuable time and resources unless we achieve a successful outcome. Which would be for the Secretary of State at the Department of Energy and Climate Change to act on your recommendation, Sir, that he should reject all the archaic, ineffectual and destructive applications now before us and instead devote all the resources at his command to achieve a genuinely viable alternative.

Christopher Penfold – October 2013