

Powys Area Ramblers Council of Wales Cymru  
Final Written Representation in respect of the following :-  
The Mid-Wales Conjoined Wind Farms Public Inquiry

23<sup>rd</sup> December 2013

Application by SP Manweb plc for consent under Section 37 of the Electricity Act to install and keep installed a 132KV overhead line connection from the proposed Llandinum Wind Farm to Welshpool Substation .

1. We have considerable concern about the high to medium visual sensitivity this overhead line would have on a section of the Kerry Ridgeway Regional Trail [KRRT] and adjacent rights of way if consent is given . The section [ hereafter called 'section' ] includes the Black Gate [ GR 310703-285336 ] where two bridleways and footpath intersect the B4355 , the designated visitor carpark at the start of the Kerry Ridgeway Trail further south on the B4355 and a point about 500m along the trail route [GR 311146-284722]. Our reasons for concern are as follows.

2 The KRRT is a very valued public route which can be enjoyed by walkers , cyclists and horse riders . It stays above 1,000ft and there are superb panoramic views , particularly in the section described in point !.

3. The KRRT is 15 miles long and is the oldest road in Wales dating back before the Dark Ages . The section of concern is part of the Montgomeryshire Historic Landscape Area rich in archaeological sites such as the Iron Age Cross Dyke and the Bronze Age burial mounds called “ Two Tumps “ . An overhead power line here could impact negatively on the cultural heritage .

4. Powys County Council commissioned a “ Landscape Character Assessment “ in which the section is in an area described as “ ..broad open expanse of upland grazing with dominant skies and a high degree of wind exposure “ Such landscapes , along with panoramic views , make the spirits soar and are to be treasured ! In the updated ES SP Manweb document this section would have a high to medium visual sensitivity for PROW and road users here . This will be considered in point 5 next .

5. In pages 130 and 132 of the updated ES SP Manweb document two viewpoints 70 and 71 [ accompanying photomontages ] are described in terms of likely visual impact .

Viewpoint 70 [GR 310703-285336] is at the point on the B4355 Black Gate where two bridleways and a footpath intersect . The proposed overhead line would be visible over 125m to the south-east and would have a high to medium visual sensitivity for users of the KRRT . The ES says that away from the road , the absence of manmade features and the vegetation imparts an open and remote quality.

Viewpoint 71 [ GR 311146-284722 ] is at the western end of the KRRT about 500m from the original start at the Cider House . Visual sensitivity for users here is high since the line would be 630m at closest point forming a new manmade feature within a highly rural landscape particularly east of the B4355 where it crosses a hillside , but often hidden by hill crest and trees . The line would be an obvious man made feature . The potential effect would be moderate [ significant ] .

[ continued...]

Page 2.

(6) SP Manweb have a statutory duty to 'preserving natural beauty'. Ramblers see the term 'significant', in respect of adverse impact of the line on the landscape within the section, as crucial in considering mitigation measures. The Draft SOCG, prepared by SP Manweb, agrees [ P8 ] that the overhead line [ during operation ] is likely to have " moderate [ significant ] adverse effects on the landscape...including the open hillside below the KRRT". Viewpoints 70 and 71 are said to be " typically viewpoints where the proposed overhead line would be in the foreground / or skylined " Ramblers Cymru policy [ OBJ/649/PLA/SOC/APP1 ] states on P2 point 7 that an objection will be made " to schemes that would have a detrimental impact on the Welsh landscape and walking environment such as to outweigh any carbon reductions or other benefits ". The walking environment P1 point 1 includes " areas visible from rights of way, permissive footpaths, access land and the National Trails Of Wales "

The SOC on behalf of PCC [Session 3 The Grid ] P9 Public Rights of Way 9.1 states that "PCC consider that the current application will have an unacceptable impact on PROWS, including the Kerry Ridgeway, particularly in the region of Kerry Hill, Black Gate and Cider House ".

(7) Powys Ramblers Council consider that the 132KV line MUST go underground in the section described in point 1. In the SPManweb updated ES Vol 5 [ P.16 section sec.8.4.3 to 8.4.4] we read that SP/Manweb, after much deliberation about undergrounding a section between the A483 near Old Neuadd Bank to Cae betin Wood, decided that " benefits do not clearly outweigh the impacts, in particular, it is noted that the serious concerns in landscape terms remain even within the Llandinam Scheme ". It seems that the financial cost of undergrounding from the A483 to Cae betin Wood might reach £13+ million. In the PCC [ SOC Session 3 GRID ] section 6.1 it says that Council will accept the landscape and visual impact providing the section of the route from A483 to Kerry Hill is subject to undergrounding. In the NRW amended SOC section 4.2 it is argued that SPManweb have not minimised the adverse landscape and visual impacts from this line construction and should further consider undergrounding through the Registered Historic Landscape and in the vicinity of the Kerry Ridgeway. The Alliance states in the [ Landscape and Visual sections 3.1 and 3.2 ] that the overhead line will be very prominent and will have significant adverse effects as in the vicinity of Kerry Hill and feels that SPManweb have not given sufficient consideration to alternatives such as going underground.

[ continued ]

Page 3

8. There could be a serious cumulative adverse impact on the landscape if the Neuadd Goch Windfarm [ Planning Application P/2012/0040 ] gets consent . The proposed site is at Old Neuadd Bank [ GR 310325-283696 ] and would consist of 9 turbines each 126m high .It is one of a number of smaller windfarms not yet determined by PCC.

SP/Manweb state in Vol. 5 of their updated ES that this windfarm is vital to any deliberation on undergrounding of the line between the A483 and Kerry Hill.

In document OBJ/649/002 Energy and Planning Policy of Powys Ramblers Area Council point 10 the basic concern about cumulative scale is discussed .The Council find it very difficult to understand how inquiry matter 4 on the cumulative impact of windfarms can be properly considered when only the DECC applications are before the inquiry .

Powys Area Ramblers Council object to the present proposal which has all of the 132kv line overhead. We urge that a condition for granting planning permission is that a section of the line must go underground between the A483 and Cae betin Wood.

Annette Prince Footpath Secretary Welshpool Group within Powys Ramblers Area Council .