

## **OBJ-670-001**

### **Mid Wales (Powys) Conjoined Public Inquiry (CPI) into 5 Wind Farm Applications and a 132 kV Overhead Power Line Connection.**

#### **Session 4 – Cumulative Effects**

#### **Witness Statement re. Local Economy and Tourism**

31 March 2014

Barry Smith

I live in Foel and moved there in 1988 with my wife to set up a small business providing accommodation to groups of walkers, cyclists and others interested in enjoying the beauty and tranquillity of the area. Our small enterprise provides B&B accommodation and guided walks and rides to these visitors and relies entirely on the attractiveness of the surrounding countryside. All our guests are astounded by the wonderful views and how peaceful the area is. Over the last 26 years we have attracted over 5000 visitors, many of them returning again and again to experience the footpaths, bridle ways and national trails which run through this area. Our establishment is close to the Glyndŵr's Way National trail and benefits greatly from this location.

The impact of the foot and mouth disease outbreak in the UK in 2001 had a marked impact on the rural economy resulting from a sharp decline in rural tourism and recreational activity. The breadth of the impact of tourism related expenditure is indicated by the fact that the Tourism Satellite Account research (2007) found that while approximately 40% of spending is on accommodation and food, sectors traditionally associated with tourism, around 36% is on goods and services outside the identified tourist industries. In this way tourism also helps to sustain rural businesses and services that may not otherwise be viable.

Findings from Visit Wales' 2009 Visitor Surveys show that the natural environment was the most important attraction to Wales for 73% of staying visitors and around 58% of day visitors to Wales. The survey also found that a high proportion of visits to Wales are return visits and that most visitors' information is based on previous experience and/or word of mouth recommendation. This highlights the importance to tourism of people's experiences and therefore Wales' reputation as a destination. It is important therefore that key tourism assets, such as National Trails, are of high quality and give the visitor an enjoyable experience.

Research into "The Benefits to Businesses of the National Trails in Wales" was commissioned by CCW in 2006. This study found over a third of accommodation providers located on or near a National Trail describe the Trail as 'very important to the profitability' of their business. On average, accommodation providers attribute 36% of their turnover to the National Trail with each business employing on average 3 full time people. Shops of all kinds were most likely to benefit from proximity to a National Trail, followed by pubs/inns and café/restaurants in roughly equal proportions. National Trails are a highly marketable attraction and are a flagship walking product. Accommodation enterprises such as ours, with good access to the National Trail, have been able to use this market advantage to develop and grow.

Opened in 2002, the Glyndŵr's Way National Trail is one of only 3 National Trails in Wales. Glyndŵr's Way passes through 135 miles of diverse and varied upland and lowland rural landscapes, and this character is reflected by the National Trail website description of Glyndŵr's Way, which states: "Along the Trail are some of the finest landscape features in Wales including the tranquil Radnorshire Hills, the shores of the Clywedog Reservoir and heather clad Plynlimon. There are

spectacular views over Cadair Idris, Lake Vyrnwy, the Cambrian Mountains and Y Golfa. The route reaches its highest point at Foel Fadian from which, on a clear day, views stretch out along the majestic Dulas valley to Machynlleth and the sea. It is a major recreational asset that provides an important means for people to access, appreciate and enjoy the distinctive visual and sensory qualities of this landscape". Long-distance routes are important tourism and recreation facilities, both in their own right and as a means of linking other attractions. A user survey in 2002 revealed that 82% of walkers were attracted primarily by the quality of the scenery and landscape through which the National Trail passes, with scenery, peace, quiet and tranquillity, views and solitude all cited as specific qualities enjoyed most by users

If these developments are given permission to go ahead, future users of the National Trail will walk a cumulative 5 mile section of the National Trail within the boundaries of the Llanbrynmair and Carnedd Wen Wind Farms. In the western cluster of proposed wind turbines, travellers on Glyndŵr's Way will pass between 11 wind turbines and close to very tall monitoring masts. In the central cluster, travellers will pass between and close to a further 3 turbines. This will have 'significant' adverse impacts on the amenity value they should reasonably expect to enjoy along a National Trail. The experience of travelling along these sections of the route will change from that of being in a remote and tranquil open rural landscape, devoid of large man-made vertical elements, to that of being within a wind farm landscape. The cumulative impacts on these and other locations along Glyndŵr's Way would be 'significant' and adverse. The developers have not given sufficient consideration to the 'significant' adverse cumulative visual impacts upon the users of Glyndŵr's Way which will have a negative impact on the numbers using the route.

**Closing Statement**

The development of these wind farms and associated overhead power lines would detract from the enjoyment by our customers of the scenic quality provided by this area for their outdoor recreation. Our visitors are attracted by the beauty and tranquillity of the surrounding countryside. In the last few years, since the initial application for these developments, we have discussed with our visitors the effect that such an industrialisation of the area would have on their willingness to return to our venue. The vast majority have said that it would have a negative effect which, therefore, would have a significant detrimental financial effect on our business. Travellers to our venue will also be severely disrupted by the HGVs and increased traffic during the lengthy construction process. This is bound to have a significant effect on visitor numbers over an extended period and will place the viability of our business in question which would seriously struggle to survive as a consequence.

Signature

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