

OBJ/735/001

Sir,

My name is Charles Turpin. I come originally from Mid-Wales, but have been living for the past 20 years in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, where I am eligible for citizenship and married to a Luxembourger, Mme Rolande Weydert. Our address is 22 rue Jean-Pierre Biermann, Luxembourg-Ville.

My wife and I come to the Shropshire/Mid-Wales border area for a 2-week walking holiday in August of each year, because we consider it to be amongst the finest hill-walking country anywhere in Europe or indeed the world.

I am a solicitor by training, and now work as a translator into English at the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg. I am sufficiently well paid to take holidays anywhere in the world, and took advantage of that two years ago by going on a 3-week walking holiday in New Zealand. I spent one week walking on the Banks Peninsula, near Christchurch, one week in the Mount Cook area, and one week in the Queenstown area, walking the world-famous Milford Trail and Routeburn Track. It is an area of outstanding natural beauty in the ordinary sense of the English language, and attracts tourists from all around the world, making Queenstown a lively and prosperous place.

But the simple fact is that I could have saved my money, because New Zealand, while similar to Mid-Wales in some ways and different in others, is no more scenically beautiful than Mid-Wales is. Moreover, the New Zealand mountains and grasslands have something of a brownish tinge to them, whereas the hills of Mid-Wales and Shropshire are gloriously green.

It is currently still possible – just -- for my wife and me to have a holiday as good as the New Zealand holiday by simply coming to Mid-Wales. But if the current windfarm and pylon proposals go ahead, we will switch the holiday to our second favourite European hillwalking destination, the Czech Republic. I will also no longer be able to recommend Mid-Wales as a holiday destination at my workplace, where I mix daily with people of 28 different nationalities.

Given the difficult transport connections, it is not often that I come to Mid-Wales other than for the annual walking holiday. The last occasion that I came midweek outside a holiday period was 12 years ago, when my father was dying. I accept of course that my parents must die and that I must die, because it is the ordinary course of nature. What I do not accept, however, is that the Shropshire/Mid-Wales landscape and community must also die, which is what these proposals effectively amount to.

Sir, I do not know what you are going to decide, but what I do know is that I would find it difficult to live with myself in future years if I failed to come before you today, despite the inconvenience, to state my objection.

I wish to conclude with three brief observations from a European perspective.

My first observation is that I find it incredible and indeed scandalous that landscape of this world-class quality has not been given protected status as a National Park or AONB. With the possible exception of Mafia-ridden Sicily, I can think of no other developed European country in which such landscape would not enjoy appropriate protection.

My second observation is that the hillwalking potential of Mid-Wales has not been developed to anything like the extent it should be. For example, when I go walking in the Czech Republic, I get a wooden walkway every time I cross a boggy patch. At Nant-yr-Eira last year, by contrast, I was over my knees in mud and had to carry the dachshund to save him from drowning. Signposting is also way below the standard found in other European countries.

I notice that Powys County Council has not submitted evidence regarding tourism or the economy. This countryside is a tremendous asset which can be developed to increase its economic value still further. As a practical first step to developing Mid-Wales's hillwalking potential, I would suggest that, once the existing wind turbines have gone, since the landscape can never be entirely restored, the access roads should be used as the starting points of well-laid, well-marked hilltop trails, and that the sites of the turbines themselves should be used to provide walkers' lodges with car parks.

My third, and final, observation, simply as a person who reads the newspapers, is that EU energy policy itself appears now to be in the process of change, now that gas supplies from Russia are coming to an end. Practical concerns of energy security and energy self-sufficiency are increasingly forcing new and better-performing energy sources onto the agenda.

Sir, it would be a bitter and tragic irony if the landscape and community of Shropshire and Mid-Wales were to be sacrificed on the altar of yesterday's energy policy, just when that policy was coming to an end.

Thank you for allowing me to speak.