

28 February 2014

Mr Chris Banks
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Dear Sir

MID WALES (POWYS) CONJOINED WIND FARMS PUBLIC INQUIRY
OBJECTION TO THE CUMULATIVE EFFECTS

This letter is to enter an objection to the cumulative effects in mid-Wales of wind farms and power lines, on the general ground of their adverse macro impacts on landscape, as follows:

- 1 The accumulation of wind turbines, wind farms, and their attendant power lines has disproportionate scale effects on landscape:** shifting the visual character and human experience of the landscape across wide areas, even regions.
- 2 These scale effects in turn erode the wider social benefits of landscape beyond the immediate visually-affected localities:** these benefits are therapeutic, especially for pluralist, predominantly urban, societies. They are contextual, providing a framework for individual livelihoods, economic sectors (not just tourism), and Welsh (and British) identity. Landscape amounts to a national asset, already recognised as deserving protection, with justifiable, but **limited**, exceptions.
- 3 The relatively short-term criteria used for assessment of individual proposals over-ride the evolution of landscape for which protection is otherwise sought:** landscape is moulded over time by local cultures, through generations of continuing husbandry, in practice often by individual family farms and businesses. Current dynamics include for example, encouragement of farm diversity (towards tourism, environmental protection – but in the face of imposed wider degradation?). Criteria like economic return on investment, public sector “business cases”, or visual impact assessments taken at a point in time, do not sufficiently respect the longer time-scales that give landscape its social benefit. This is especially so when such criteria are applied narrowly and incrementally (such as power lines from Llandinam to Welshpool - see for example “Valuing the social benefits of avoiding landscape degradation through overhead transmission lines”, Navrud, Ready, Magnussen and Bergland 2008.)

4 **In evolutionary terms, there is a risk that the claimed benefits of distributed onshore wind power are not sustainable:** they rely on taxpayer subsidy to generate economic returns, appear to be technologically static (versus for example, potential use of venturi effects?), and are increasingly controversial. Confidence in economic renewal from wind power and associated industries is lessening, and on-shore wind turbine subsidies are to be scaled back (HM Treasury New Infrastructure Plan 4 December 2013, strike prices p50). Is the removal of disused, rusting pylons to be a future landscape problem?

5 **As a result:**

- **wind farms and power lines cumulatively risk degrading the collective memory of the appearance, experience and evolution of landscape in mid-Wales. This is to the detriment of Wales and the United Kingdom nationally, for a benefit that is increasingly controversial.**

- **Incremental decisions defined by individual applications are not leading to the balanced judgment, between conflicting social and economic outcomes, that is defensible over time to all parties, and especially to those for whom the directly experienced costs greatly exceed benefits that are, at best, remote and intangible.**
Such a judgment may lie beyond planning decisions alone, but the establishment of the Conjoined Public Inquiry is a welcome recognition by The Secretary of State and the Welsh Government of the wider ramifications that are now becoming apparent.

I confirm my willingness, subject to availability, to read the above objection at a meeting. My interest in mid-Wales arises from restoring, since 2004, a local Tudor Township House (Listed, but not itself presently affected by wind farms, address above), and earlier family connection.

Yours faithfully

Brian Morris