



CPRW Montgomeryshire Branch

Response to Bryn Blaen Windfarm planning application: P/2014/1102 (6 turbines situated north of Llangurig)

1. Planning Policy

There is a presumption in Tan 8 that windfarms outside of Strategic Search Areas should be below 25 MW and community type developments. Bryn Blaen is not a community development and therefore does not satisfy that criteria.

2. Visual and Landscape effects

Proposing only six 100m high turbines is seen by the developers as an attempt to minimise the effects but such incongruous moving structures in this upland location will still have a major impact. Uplifting, tranquil and expansive views will be affected over large areas of Montgomeryshire and Radnorshire and the area affected is as great, if not greater, than many much larger windfarms in planning in Montgomeryshire as can be seen from the ZTVs.

The area visually affected is not only exceptionally valued by residents as a beautiful place to live but also for sustainable outdoor recreation. Such activities are also enjoyed by large numbers of visitors with the Prince Llywelyn Cross Wales Ride for equestrians, the Sustrans National Cycle Network 8, 81 and 818 routes, the Wye Valley Walk and Severn Way long distance paths and Glyndwr's Way National Trail as well as many PRoWs and local lanes. These will all be seriously impacted.

It is obvious from Viewpoint VP1 that Prince Llewellyn's Ride would be severely adversely affected. The loss of visual enjoyment and security for the riders is contrary to sustainable development.

The ES acknowledges the significant affect on NCN Route 8 at some locations. What it fails to point out is that in those locations between Llanidloes and Rhayader Route 8 (Lon Las Cymru) is also Route 81 (Lon Cambria). Thus both the North to South Wales NCN route and the East to West Wales route would be badly impacted. These are important 'Challenge' and 'Discover' routes designed to promote the best of Welsh landscapes and sustainable tourism. Therefore the effects, for example as seen in Viewpoints VP 2, 3 and 13, cannot be considered as commensurate with that provision.

The Wye Valley Walk is significantly affected both by the windfarm itself and in a sequential cumulative progression with operational Bryn Titli and Mynydd y Gwynt (presently in the determination process). Bryn Blaen alone will have a major impact (see Viewpoints VP 3,5,10) but sequentially with Bryn Titli and Mynydd y Gwynt it will be immense.

The ES implies that Powys Countryside Services will remove any objection to the scheme in exchange for £17,500 for PRoW improvements. CPRW believe this is a totally unacceptable policy for this or other windfarm schemes in Powys. No such payments or 'improvements' to other PRoWs can begin to compensate the loss of safe enjoyment of an unspoilt landscape from public paths in the vicinity of the windfarm. Any such 'sell out' policy must be endorsed by the full council of elected Members prior to implementation.

3. Residential amenity

There are at least ten isolated residential dwellings 1 km or less from the proposed development. There is no proper analysis or photomontage depiction to demonstrate how these residents would be affected. It is not in the public interest for these residents and their

properties to have their amenity degraded such that it would lead to rural depopulation in this area. The wellbeing of rural Wales depends upon isolated properties remaining favourable locations to live and work.

Viewpoint VP 6 shows the effect on the setting of the village of Llangurig with the industrialisation of the hill behind which frames the village. This is entirely unacceptable for this Conservation Area which legally requires 'special regard'. The historic and cultural importance is extremely high as St Curig established his monastery here in the 6th century as his missionary base for Mid Wales.

The Consultation report shows that when responding to the question as to whether Bryn Blaen was a good site for a windfarm. 52% of respondents 'strongly disagreed' and 16% 'disagreed'. Thus 68 % believed it was not a suitable site.

4. Cultural Heritage

As the ES points out the development would have a severe effect upon the setting of the Domen Glw Cairn Scheduled Ancient Monument. As by definition this is a monument of UK national importance such severe degradation should not be countenanced.

5. Ecology

According to the ES the site is predominantly peat based and there appears to be a mosaic of different peat depths and important peatland vegetation. In addition to the disturbance that will be carried out to these important habitats, the avian ecology of the site will also be considerably affected over the life of the windfarm.

According to the ES the bird strike rate p.a. will be:

Lapwing 1.39; Red Kite 6.84; and Golden Plover 43. These are all major at risk species and the rates are considerably higher than those cited for much larger Powys windfarms. This is again indicative of the complete unsuitability of this site for a windfarm. It is further of note that Curlew are attempting to breed at Bryn Blaen.

6. Transmission

The ES appears to suggest that windfarm output will go to a proposed substation at Mynydd y Gwynt windfarm although neither have a connection agreement. The Mynydd y Gwynt application is predicated on obtaining a connection via the Carno 3 windfarm to the Cefn Coch Hub. Carno 3 has not even been before planning committee so the possibility of a connection for Bryn Blaen is highly tenuous.

7. Planning Balance

Although the capacity of the windfarm is proposed to be 15 MW it is important to consider that the average output of the development over a year will be only 15MW x a load factor of 30% i.e. 4.5 MW. CPRW request that all the deleterious effects on the county of an incongruous industrial development in a remote and lovely location as enumerated are weighed in the balance against the provision of such an insignificant output.