

SADBERGE PARISH PLAN



NOTES OF THE OPEN MEETING HELD IN SADBERGE VILLAGE HALL ON THURSDAY 18th SEPTEMBER 2008

1. This Open Meeting was held to discuss the issue of Wind Farms near Sadberge.
2. From a head-count, there were 55 people present.

As well as local residents, the following people were present:-

- Brian Jones Ward Councillor for Sadberge & Whessoe
- Adrian Hobbs Darlington Borough Council
- Roy Merrett Darlington Borough Council
- Alan Irvine Pure Renewable Energies
- Adrian Miller Pure Renewable Energies
- Elizabeth Mann Campaign to Protect Rural England
- Peter Wood Seven Parishes Against Local Wind Farms Action Group
- Rob Williams Banks Developments
- Martyn Earle Banks Developments
- Emily Hooson Banks Developments

3. Millie Scaife, the Chair of the Parish Plan Steering Group, welcomed those present and gave an introduction to the meeting.
 - The purpose of the Open Meeting is to enable Sadberge residents to discover the facts, hear the cases for and against wind farms, and come to an informed view about the prospect of wind farms near Sadberge.
 - Sadberge Parish Council has unanimously agreed to support the Action Group in opposing the proposed wind farms near Sadberge.
4. There were presentations by the following people:-
 - Alan Irvine Pure Renewable Energies
 - Peter Wood Seven Parishes Against Local Wind Farms
 - Elizabeth Mann Campaign to Protect Rural England
 - Martin Earle / Banks Developments
Rob Williams

Important note: The notes in items 5 - 8 below are not intended to be a complete record of the presentations. They are intended to give a flavour of what was said.

5. During his presentation, Alan Irvine made the following points:-
 - Wind farm developments are very profitable for developers and offer good income to landowners.
 - The Government wants wind power to (a) reduce CO₂ emissions and (b) provide security of electricity supply. Security of supply is the more important reason.
 - Coal and nuclear power stations are being decommissioned. Gas-fired power stations produce CO₂ emissions.
 - In the longer term, there will be a number of ways of generating electricity without producing CO₂ emissions, including nuclear power, off-shore wind power, micro and embedded generation, hydro-electric, biomass and tidal power. On-shore wind power is something that we can do now.
 - Communities should live simply, sustainably and in partnership. A wind farm can be a community's local power station.

6. During his presentation, Peter Wood made the following points:-

- The Action Group is not against renewable energy, but does not want to see wind turbines in the wrong places, where they would have a large impact on the local environment. This country has wide open spaces that could be used for on-shore wind power, and there is plenty of opportunity for off-shore wind farms. Wind turbines should not be located near where people live.
- The wind farms being proposed in the area near Sadberge typically include 10 - 11 wind turbines.
- Wind turbines are up to 125 metres tall. That is 410 feet.
- It is wrong to create an industrial landscape in a rural environment.
- People within a kilometre of a wind farm can suffer from noise.
- Another issue is "shadow flicker". [A video was shown to illustrate the effect of flicker.]
- The base for each wind turbine contains 1,000 tonnes of concrete and hardcore.
- In some places, wind turbines have killed large numbers of birds and bats.
- Wind turbines affect the primary radar returns of air traffic control radars and affect aircraft safety.
- It can take up to 10 months to construct a wind farm. During this time there would be lorry traffic to bring in the concrete and hardcore for the turbine bases, and large loads bringing in the turbine components. If several wind farms are built the whole area could be affected dramatically for years to come.
- Wind farms affect property values but this is not considered to be a planning issue.
- At present, on-shore wind farms are profitable because of subsidies.
- Very few on-shore wind farms achieve high load factors.
- Off-shore construction costs are higher, but the electricity produced by 9 off-shore wind farms would equate to the production of 92 on-shore wind farms.
- Because wind is intermittent, conventional power stations will still be required as back-up. Denmark and Germany, which have large numbers of wind farms, have not decommissioned any conventional power stations.
- Wind farms in this area would blight the lives of local residents.

7. During her presentation, Elizabeth Mann made the following points:-

- The Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) is in favour of wind turbines in the right places, but will contest wind turbines in the wrong places.
- Wind turbines in inappropriate places have a negative impact on people's quality of life.
- Appropriate places for wind turbines include contaminated, ex-industrial land.
- The "jungle telegraph" suggests that there may be up to five more wind farms proposed for the Tees Plain area.
- Analysis of Ofgem data shows that wind farms in the north-east of England have low load factors.

Elizabeth queried the Wind Farm Background Document's statement that Banks Developments' Tow Law wind farm has achieved a long term capacity factor of 34%. During the discussion, it emerged that the figure of 34% is a forecast rather than an achieved value. The relevant statement will be removed from the Wind Farm Background Document.

ACTION: Alastair Mackenzie

- The wind farm at Cefn Croes has a notice warning people not to go close to the wind turbines in bad weather.

8. During their presentation, Martin Earle and Rob Williams made the following points:-

- The Government's Renewable Energy Strategy is currently out for consultation. It proposes a target of 32% of electricity being generated from renewable sources by 2020, with 13% of electricity coming from on-shore wind turbines.
- The North East Regional Spatial Strategy sets a target of 138 MW of renewable energy generation capacity in the Tees Valley by 2020. The current capacity is about 10 MW.
- Durham already has enough consented wind farms to meet its target for 2020.

- Renewable energy could create 30,000 jobs in the region.
- Wind farms in the north-east will benefit large electricity users and will be a key driver for regional success.
- Wind farm developments typically provide £1,000 per MW to a community fund, and there can be an opportunity for local people to take an ownership stake via a co-operative.
- Banks would be happy to arrange for Sadberge residents to visit the wind farm that it is building at Tow Law.

9. The following points were made during the general discussion:-

- There are 186 campaigns against wind farms. The Government's need to meet its targets is in conflict with local concerns.
- Is there enough wind at the Moor House site? The anemometer has not yet been installed.
Response: Banks Developments strongly believes that there is sufficient wind.
- NEDL is responsible for the wiring to connect wind farms to the National Grid.
- Consumers are paying an extra £400 per year on their electricity bills to fund the subsidy for renewable energy.
- Why not put small-scale wind turbines on all new houses?
Response: Economies of scale make large wind turbines much more cost-effective.
- How many wind turbines are needed to replace one nuclear power station?
Response: We need both nuclear power and wind power. 75% of the UK's electricity comes from fossil fuels, and imported fossil fuels are likely to become increasingly expensive. Spain, Denmark and Germany are ahead of us in using wind power.
- The UK has millions of tonnes of coal reserves. Mining provided employment for a lot of people.
- 25 years is generally seen as a reasonable life for a wind turbine. Planning conditions include decommissioning at the end of this time.
- Wind farms are often "repowered"; i.e. the original wind turbines are replaced by new ones. This often seems to happen after 10 years, implying that wind turbines lose their efficiency at about this age. If we are to have wind turbines in this area, we would want them to be efficient.
- Do the concrete bases need to be replaced?
- Does the vibration from wind turbines affect building foundations?
- Durham Tees Valley Airport and the Ministry of Defence have objected to the proposed wind farms at East and West Newbiggin. Interference with air traffic control radar is a serious issue. Will the developers commit to not going ahead with the wind farms until there is a solution?
Response: Airports and the MOD automatically put in an objection to wind farm development. The developer pays for a radar impact assessment to be carried out. Provided that the results are satisfactory – or suitable mitigation measures can be found – the airport and the MOD withdraw their objections. Safety is a paramount consideration.
- Will the results of the radar impact assessments be made public?
Response: The results of the studies would be commercially confidential. The developer puts up a bond to cover the cost of the mitigation measures.
- A newspaper report says that a lady in Lincolnshire had to move out of her house because her child was unable to study due to noise from a wind farm 930m away. A local estate agent said that her house was unsaleable and she received a council tax rebate. However, impact on property values is "not a planning issue".
- Many groups have successfully fought against wind farms. The Government is getting desperate to get wind farms built to meet its targets for electricity generation from renewable sources.
- If the Local Planning Authority rejects a wind farm planning application then the developer can appeal. However, if the Local Planning Authority approves an application then local people have no right to appeal.
- There have been complaints to the Advertising Standards Agency about green energy claims.

10. A show of hands was taken to determine the feelings of those present. [People from outside Sadberge were asked not to participate in the show of hands.]
 - 28 people indicated that the community of Sadberge should oppose the construction of wind farms near Sadberge.
 - 8 people indicated that the community of Sadberge should accept construction of wind turbines near Sadberge provided that certain conditions are satisfied.
11. The Parish Plan Steering Group will arrange for a wind farms questionnaire to be distributed to all Sadberge homes.
12. In conclusion, Millie Scaife said that it had been a valuable meeting and thanked the speakers for their inputs.

Alastair Mackenzie