



## Adroddiad

Ymchwiliad a gynhaliwyd ar 16-19,  
23/09/08

Ymweliad â safle a wnaed ar 23-25/09/08

## Report

Inquiry held on 16-19, 23/09/08

Site visit made on 23-25/09/08

**gan/by Stuart B Wild MRTPI MCIM**

**Arolygydd a benodwyd gan y Gweinidog  
dros yr Amgylchedd, Gynaliadwyedd a  
Thai, un o Weinidogion Cymru**

**an Inspector appointed by the Minister for  
Environment, Sustainability and Housing,  
one of the Welsh Ministers**

Dyddiad/Date 17/03/2009

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Erection of 16 Wind Turbine Generators and associated development

Mynydd Y Betws

Ammanford, Carmarthenshire

S147 Application for an Order of exchange Common Land

S194 Carrying out of works on Common Land

### **Addendum Report**

## Inspector's Conclusions

1. In respect of the appraisal of the scheme itself I confirm that where reference is made in my report to the Mynydd Y Gwair wind farm it is in respect of considering the possible cumulative impact if both schemes were to be built.
2. This appears in paragraph 59 and 60 where the Penlle'r Castell Ancient Monument lies immediately to the south of this application site and immediately to the north of the Mynydd Y Gwair site. If only Mynydd Y Betws were to proceed then the effects on the setting of this monument would be that much less significant. This proposal, on its own, would not result in unacceptable harm to the setting of this monument. The other paragraphs in respect of ancient monuments are not directly affected by the Mynydd Y Gwair proposal.
3. In the section on landscape and visual effects at paragraph 77 I am considering both schemes together. If only Mynydd Y Betws were to proceed then the effects would be that much less. This is particularly the case for the view from Castell Cennen and the high ground within the Brecon Beacons National Park discussed in paragraph 76. Even though this proposal would be significantly closer than Mynydd Y Gwair to the National Park boundary and the communities along the valley floor to the north of Mynydd Y Betws, this proposal on its own would not result in unacceptably harmful visual and landscape effects to these viewpoints, because of the relatively small size of the turbines within the large scale of the surrounding landscape.
4. In the overall conclusions at paragraph 91 I confirm that this proposal is, on balance, acceptable when considered on its own merit and assuming the proposal for a further wind farm at Mynydd Y Gwair does not proceed. I reach this conclusion because the benefits from this proposal in respect of providing additional renewable energy in accord with Westminster and Welsh Assembly Government targets outweighs the limited amount of harm which would be caused to the landscape and visual setting of the wind farm and its surroundings.
5. In respect of the development plan policies most relevant to this proposal, where a conflict can be identified most of these matters are covered by the recommended conditions. The main area of conflict is between the general support for wind farm development found in policy UT6, taking into account the various criteria, and the objectives of protecting the setting of scheduled ancient monuments found in policy BE1. Hence my reference in paragraph 8 to attaching most weight to these policies.
6. The development plan is the Unitary Development Plan (UDP). Three strategic policies are relevant to this proposal which are CUDP14 – renewable energy; CUDP9 – landscape/environment; and CUDP10 – amenity/open space. The more detailed policies affected are covered in the Council's report (Doc CD6) between pages 22 and 33. I shall consider them in the same order as that report.
7. The main policy is UT6 which states that it is the policy of Carmarthenshire County Council that proposals for wind turbines, wind farms and groups of wind turbines will be permitted provided that the following criteria are met in full. These cover (i) significant adverse impact on the quality of the local

environment, sites of nature conservation, historical or archaeological importance, agricultural value, designated areas of landscape value, species of nature conservation and ecological value; (ii) detailed design being sympathetic to land-form, contours and landscape features; (iii) highway safety and demands on public services; (iv) ancillary works, buildings and structures kept to a minimum and sited unobtrusively; (v) proposals should not lead to a significant adverse increase in risk or nuisance to, and impacts on the amenities of, nearby residents, or other members of the public arising from wind turbine operation, shadow flicker, safety risk, radio or telecommunications interference; (vi) no turbine should cause demonstrable harm to the amenity of any residents; and (vii) new connections to the grid should accord with policy UT2. The effect of the proposal on these criteria are generally considered under the topics below.

8. In respect of landscape and visual effects UT6 criteria (i) and (ii) are particularly relevant. Policy GDC8 is concerned with the siting and design of development. Criteria (i) suggests avoiding prominent skylines and ridges and (ii) suggests integration into site contours. By its very nature a wind farm requires a location likely to conflict with these objectives. The effects on the setting of the wind farm are part of the balance to be struck as mentioned in paragraph 4 above. Policy GDC19 refers to the retention of landscape features and GDC20 provides for landscape design schemes. The limited harm to these aspects is, in my view, overcome by recommended conditions 5-7.
9. Noise considerations are covered by policy UT12 concerning pollution risks. No doubt some residents would hear the turbines under certain wind and weather conditions but the relatively small amount of harm would be overcome by recommended conditions 11-17.
10. Policies EN3, EN5, EN6, EN8 and EN9 are concerned with ecology and wildlife matters. Recommended conditions 5, 6, 7, 21 and 25 would overcome the limited harm to these aspects. In addition recommended condition 26 would exclude turbine 12 from any permission because of its effect on blanket bog habitat.
11. Policy T3 covers highway matters. These matters appear resolved in that the improved access has been approved within the adjoining planning authority. In my view there would be no unacceptable harm to interests of highway safety either during the construction/decommissioning phases or the operational phase of the proposal.
12. On matters of archaeology policy BE1 applies to scheduled ancient monuments and BE2 gives similar protection to those of local and regional importance. The test is that development which adversely affects a monument will not be permitted whereas the test in UT6 refers to a significant adverse effect. The proposal of this scale obviously affects the setting of ancient monuments in the area but the significance of that effect is again part of the balancing exercise. I conclude that the adverse effects are, in some limited cases, quite significant, given the proximity of the turbines to some of the monuments, but that even in these cases the benefits of the proposal outweighs the level of harm.

13. Hydrology and hydrogeology were matters of concern at the inquiry. Policy UT8 covers surface water run-off and policy GDC15 refers to previously developed land. In this case this policy is relevant because of the extensive mine workings under the site. These matters are covered by recommended conditions 21, 22 and 25 which would, in my view, overcome any resulting harm.
14. Electromagnetic interference and air safeguarding are matters covered by policy UT6. These are addressed by recommended conditions 19 and 20.
15. Land use, access, amenity and safety are all matters generally covered by the criteria in policy UT6. Obviously there would be effects under these headings as a result of this proposal, however, under these headings I consider that the harm would be relatively insignificant. Again the significance of any harm found under these headings is part of the considerations to be balanced in reaching a decision on the proposal.
16. My conclusion on the development plan policies aspect is that the recommended conditions would meet the objectives of a number of the UDP policies. For the avoidance of doubt I place greater weight on the objectives of policy UT6 than policy BE1. I consider that this proposal is generally in accord with policy UT6. In so far as there is unresolved conflict with any other elements of the UDP, I consider that the benefits of the provision of renewable energy which will result from this proposal far outweighs any harm to the objectives of the policies affected.
17. A list of reasons for the recommended conditions is attached.

*Stuart B Wild*

Inspector

#### LIST OF REASONS FOR CONDITIONS

1. Statutory time limit
2. & 3. To ensure 25 year temporary period for permission and subsequent decommissioning and reinstatement of the site.
4. To prevent any disused/derelict wind turbine causing visual intrusion or danger to the public.
5. 6. & 7. To ensure the minimum disturbance to the habitat and ecology of the site.
8. & 9. In the interests of visual amenity.
10. To ensure minimum disturbance to ancient monuments and to provide the opportunity to record any features exposed by the development.
11. – 17. To control noise emission from the development to protect the residential amenity of the occupiers of neighbouring dwellings.
18. & 19. In the interests of residential amenity.

20. To warn low flying aircraft of the presence of the wind farm.
21. To ensure that the development does not result in unacceptable harm to residential amenity, highway safety, natural habitats or ancient monuments.
22. To ensure the stability of the ground, particularly in close proximity to the turbines, in the interest of public safety.
23. To ensure that unnecessary fences do not restrict access to the open common land.
24. Statutory requirement to restore access rights to minor parts of the site where such rights are lost or obstructed as a result of the implementation of the permission.
25. To allow for minor re-siting of turbines to avoid such problems as unstable ground, unexpected ancient monuments, sensitive habitats etc.
26. Turbine 12 and its associated access track would be unacceptably harmful to the blanket bog habitat.