



# WILD LAND NEWS

Winter 2009

No.74

Magazine of the  
Scottish Wild Land Group



scottish  
**wild land**  
group

Registered Charity No: SC004014

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***Magazine of the Scottish Wild Land Group***

Winter 2009: Issue 74  
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Front cover: Loch Hourne and Ladhar Beinn by K Brown*

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***Comment***

## ***Three New Major Hydro Schemes proposed***

***By Geoff Moore***

On 20 October I went to a presentation by Scottish and Southern Energy for the proposed new hydro scheme at Kildermorie, at Ardross village hall. Described to the press as a “small dam” I imagined it wouldn’t be in a wild area; perhaps it would be above Loch Morie; but was shocked to see it is quite a large scheme in the heart of the major wild area between Loch Vaich (an existing hydro reservoir with other hydro infrastructure to the north and south), Strathcarron, the Struie road between Alness and Ardgay and Ben Wyvis. This scheme will industrialize the heart of this area; in terms of area and quality of wild land this is in the top 30 in Scotland. The dam is to be near the 45 easting of OS sheet 20 on the Abhainn na Glasa, and all major streams in the catchment downstream are to have intakes with new access tracks; particularly Loch a’Chaorainn to the south. They hope to start construction in spring, 2011. Many people will already know that this same company recently industrialized the heart of another top 30 wild area: Glen Doe; initially described in the media as “the last major hydro scheme in Scotland” but this soon changed to “the first major hydro scheme in Scotland since the Sixties”.

Posters showed output figures: 7.5 MW

power output, and 31 GWh of energy produced per year. The maths suggests it will only be operating for half the year. One of the 3 company reps came up to me to chat. I pointed out that the common figures used for the number of household equivalents of power produced are based on a household using around 2KW (a rough average); but it would be more relevant to use a peak value of, say, 10KW, because the generation companies need to be able to cover peak times for example when millions turn the kettle on between TV programmes; and he actually agreed, blaming the government for that figure. And in this way the public are being led to believe that Glen Doe can power a city the size of Glasgow. From my walks in that area pre-hydro it was obvious that there is not enough flowing water in that catchment to maintain this indefinitely—indeed he said that at that rate the reservoir would empty after about 6 days.

I also mentioned that we are yet to hear the authorities announce that any coal fired station can now close due to all the “renewables” and that therefore all these “renewables” are in addition to, not instead of, conventional powerstations. Again he actually agreed, admitting that no coal fired station will close due to “re-

newables”, but that they will be on full load less often.

He also revealed the proposed (up till recently confidential) sites for the 2 Great Glen hydro schemes: Loch nam Breac Dearga (OS 26, Balmacaan Estate above L Ness). A wild unspoilt place as I remember it from 2007. And Loch a’Choire Ghlais (OS 34, the NE corrie of the NE of the 2 Loch Lochy Munros). Both will be pumped storage schemes. From what he said, these are needed to complement windfarms for when there’s no wind! Another case of “in addition to” not “instead of” (windfarms). He said that if these schemes get the go ahead, there will be “a conveyor belt” of other hydro schemes.

As expected, he reiterated the opinion that these schemes are needed to combat global warming. Companies inherently exist to make maximum profit, therefore in my opinion they are only using this as propaganda; I would guess they are far more interested in their remuneration. And wind turbines appear to be very lucrative! The following figures are obviously not completely accurate, but give a rough idea. A typical power output figure given for a turbine is 1MW. I have been reliably informed that for every £30 worth of electricity produced by wind (free energy) turbines, you and me (the taxpayers) subsidize them by an extra £45(!).

If we use an estimate that the turbines operate for half the time, and that a unit of electricity (1KWhr) is approximately 10p, each turbine earns the company around £1.1 million per year- not a bad little earner!

As for these structures combating global warming, even the companies building them admit that when a windfarm is constructed, all the extra CO2 released during construction (mining and processing the iron ore, manufacturing the turbines, road haulage, destruction of the peat beds) takes 15 years to be “paid back” by the clean electricity produced. When many scientists are predicting that a catastrophic acceleration of global warming could be imminent, with the rapid melting of huge ice sheets in Antarctica and Greenland, should we really be adding more CO2 to the atmosphere?

*By Geoff Moore*

## ***Beauty To Denny Pylons: The Case For by Campbell Slimon***

Moving from the Borders, my grandfather took the tenancy of Crubenbeg farm in 1928 when the pylon line was being constructed through Drumochter, which was part of the farm. My father took over the neighbouring farm of Breakachy in 1951, when the power line coming over the Corrieyairick and through our arable land, three hundred yards from the farm steading, on its way to Keith was being erected. But it was 1963 before we were connected to the mains, forty five long years after suburbia. Yet, now it is suburbia who objects to the line being simply upgraded, albeit on a much shorter route coming through our Parish.

In this article I concentrate on C.R.A.P. (Cairngorm Revolt Against Pylons) and illustrate why the acronym is appropriate. However, I have to say that their campaigning was highly efficient. How else would they get eight and a half thousand signatures for a community of three hundred souls? Judging by the car stickers, it was not the indigenous population that were signing.

Incidentally, the original boundary line for the Cairngorm National Park excluded both Laggan and Dalwhinnie. It was a farmer led campaign, through FWAG (Farm Wildlife Advisory Group) that presented a petition to the Scottish Parliament, when I and two fellow Laggan farmers travelled to Edinburgh with it. If 'sustainable development' had not been

built into the aims of the National Park, then the crofters and farmers would not have signed the petition and we would not be in it, as generally, the big sporting estates were against it. Renewable energy is sustainable development if it is anything. We were included following a decision by the Rural Affairs Committee at its sitting in Kingussie.

The proposed route followed the existing line coming over the Corrieyairick. However, coming through Laggan there were a number of properties virtually underneath the present line, but now the minimum distance has to be two hundred metres from the cables. So to achieve this aim the route was to be taken along the valley floor. At the well-attended local meeting, the Laggan residents asked for a more appropriate route. (No one from Ardverikie Estate attended this meeting. One presumes because the proposed line was not going through the estate, they saw no reason to get involved.) It was my wife, Sheena, the local councillor at the time who suggested the alternative, avoiding Laggan altogether by heading straight to Dalwhinnie from Garvamore six miles upstream from Laggan. This route was nine miles as against the up-to-fifteen of that proposed. Everybody appeared to be happy.

The first two miles, approximately, was owned by Alcan (now Rio Tinto) then a mile and a half by Ardverikie, a mile and

a half is in Laggan Community Forest and the remaining four miles are on Ben Alder Estate. Ben Alder wished the line to be realigned to the North through commercial woodland rather than following a right of way and past a keeper's house. This was done. L.C.F. were concerned about archaeological sites, but were co-operating, and Alcan had no objections. Only Ardverikie were strongly opposed, in spite of the fact that they depend on hydro-electricity to maintain the Estate's viability and their own power-line ran along this alternative proposed route to their Dalwhinnie transformer. Would it not make economic sense for Ardverikie to tap into the line on site?.

The impression given by CRAP and the maps produced were highly misleading. CRAP stated the route was going through the centre of the Cairngorm National Park. It was not. The proposed line runs parallel to the south-western boundary at one mile distance and some thirty-five miles from Cairngorm. About a third of the length, three miles, would be in commercial woodland and most of rest commercialised landscape. In fact, the spokesman for C.R.A.P. admitted that it was the best possible line that had been chosen.

CRAP never mentioned that if the application were to succeed, two hundred and twenty pylons, along thirty six miles, from Dalwhinnie and Garvamore, going right into the heart of the National Park, at Boat of Garten would be replaced with a low voltage wooden pole line. Nine miles of admittedly much bigger pylons, but set further apart, as against thirty four

miles. CRAP's motto 'NO PYLONS in the CAIRNGORM NATIONAL PARK' would be more appropriate if they had backed the application!!

No film companies would ever come to Laggan again, if the application were to succeed, was their argument. 'Monarch of the Glen' was shot right down Strathspey, often the pylons were in the background in rural scenes and sometimes very close but behind the camera. I have travelled along 'The Desert Road' in New Zealand where part of the 'Lord of the Rings' was filmed and there are three power lines running alongside.

At the C.N.P. planning application meeting in Laggan, C.R.A.P. produced a survey stating that a large majority of visitors would not return to the Park if the application were to succeed. Has anyone observed cars doing U-turns on the A9 at Dalnamein, at the south of the Drumochter Pass where the pylons come into view? Again, they ignored the fact that at present, the motorist passes under the line ten times coming through Drumochter, whereas with the new line it will only be twice. I don't know how many people have said to me that it was only when they saw the hideous 'NO PYLONS' signs, that they were aware of them running alongside. By coincidence, I heard on the very day of the meeting that a small house site in Laggan, facing North and directly at a pylon two hundred yards distant and with water supply and drainage problems, had sold as a retirement home (for approximately £100,000) to someone from England.

C.R.A.P. also used the human health argument. There are conflicting opinions. I know it is not conclusive, but a neighbour lived virtually under the line in Etteridge farmhouse for seventy five years and her husband, Johnny, for sixty years. Both had their full health and faculties till they died within a week of each other in their mid-eighties

It is interesting that C.R.A.P.'s publicity concentrated on the already 'industrialised' Drumochter Pass and not the wilder, remoter Corrieairick Pass. To my mind it shows their 'Nimby', attitude. In fact, the objections for the latter were miniscule in comparison. They used the 'Park' as an excuse. If the line were to be moved a mile or so to the West, it would actually be in wilder, more scenic country, crossing Loch Laggan, but out of the 'Park'.

My attitude has been that, if the line is coming, why not seek some planning gain to make life easier in this low income, high cost community. The neighbouring glen receives an income of around £100,000 per annum from their wind-farm. Giving assistance to young struggling families and the elderly with the supply of a minibus and travelling expenses where there is no public transport. Facilities for the community normally found only in bigger towns, such as a pavilion, dug-outs and mower as well as drainage for their shinty pitch.

Planning gain could help to do up derelict buildings like the Kingshouse at Garvamore and, of course, the seriously eroded Wade road over the Corrieairick

and several Wade bridges. It would benefit this glen and the tourist industry. To see what can be achieved one has only to go up past Garvamore, the last occupied house on the upper Spey. Half a dozen shepherd's houses which had been standing derelict for nearly a century, have been brought back to their former glory. This in spite of one being across the unbridged Spey and the remotest, Shesgnan, fourteen miles from Laggan Bridge at the end of a two-mile 4w.d. track. The renovators are what are locally known as 'The Bothy Boys' from the Central Belt. The hard graft and personal cost and time could only be achieved because of the deep love they have of this "Wild place" and yet having spoken to some of them, they have no problem with a new bigger line crossing above them. Further planning gain might be achieved by linking the Sustrans route from Dalwhinnie to Wolftrax, the mountain-bike centre at Laggan, underneath the line and so over the Corrieairick.

A previous Laggan doctor used to say that "the rain that falls on our backs is worth millions of pounds to those in the South". He was referring to the Hydro works of Alcan. Not a penny does Laggan receive. I suggested to Highland Council that a Way-leave payment per pylon, similar to that paid to landowners, be paid to the Communities that the line passed through. Highland Council agreed to take the suggestion up with the Councils further South, however, they declined to support a Community Way-leave, as needless to say did C.R.A.P. Personally,



*Editor's note on**Campbell Slimon's article.*

I would like to have seen the old drove road over the Corrieyairick modernised to a drive road. When my father was in the Inverness-shire County Council, as Roads Convener, in the 1960s they looked seriously at a road through Glenfeshie to Deeside. What a boon for tourism that would have been; to be able to drive from Royal Deeside to Loch Ness, through the Cairngorm National Park, in a couple of hours, following the trails of the drovers, reivers and illicit whisky traders.

Tom Johnson, the Secretary of State for Scotland, who was responsible for the big hydro-electric schemes of the 1940s, when speaking in the House of Commons said "I wish people would not regard the Highlands as some kind of Garden of Eden. That there are other attributes than simply landscape."

Whether the Power Line is needed at all, I am not qualified to comment, but with the Glendoe Scheme coming on stream, with enough wattage to power Glasgow, and reports which state that Britain could be the new Saudi Arabia with its potential of wind, tidal and wave power, I say: "Bring it on!"

*by Campbell Slimon*

In the spirit of starting a healthy debate, my ideas for the Coireyairick (perhaps Coire Dhaireach- coire of the rutting?) are rather different.

The original purpose of the road was to suppress the Highlanders militarily, a policy so effective that the native population can barely muster a platoon these days (and such a force would be in Afghanistan anyway, suppressing the locals, militarily...): surely it is now time to rewild the Pass, uproot the roadbed, and let the sheep graze peacefully on this redundant symbol of post-'45 cleansing. Even better, the road could have a battery of turbines along it, with a competition for local schoolchildren to name them, perhaps giving a broken clan name to each one, so the descendants of those people scattered to the Colonies can have something tangible to visit on their next Homecoming? Jestng apart, there is a more serious technical argument against upgrading the Beauldy-Denny line, a case eloquently made by Prof Andrew Bain- contact Grant for a copy and read it in full...

## ***Distributors Sought!***

Helpful people are required to assist in distributing copies of Wild Land News around outdoor shops and other likely venues.

Your Steering Team has Scotland reasonably well covered, but south of the Central Belt, Fife, the West Highlands and south of the border

are untouched as yet. Please contact the Membership Secretary if you would like to help. You will be sent a supply of magazines, which sell well in shops and at climbing walls (“donation to the rescue team tin” works the best); also, copies can be left in doctor/dentists’ waiting rooms, cafes, inns and hotels in walking/climbing areas, B&Bs and other rural businesses where walkers and outdoor enthusiasts tend to congregate.

SWLG is a membership organisation, and we always require new members to increase our collective voice in opposition to the other side- this method of recruitment suits our limited funds and volunteers are hereby asked to form a disorderly queue.

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## ***SWLG t-Shirts are now available. SUPPORT YOUR FAVOURITE CHARITY***

Choose either the new logo OR the Wild Land News cover you prefer, printed on high quality white cotton!

All sizes available, including women’s fit and children’s.

Help recruit new members to the cause for only £18 (inc. postage). Cheques (payable to Scottish Wild Land Group), and full details of your requirements, specifying which cover image you want - consult your back issues - should be sent to the Membership Secretary, address on inside back cover.

Allow 28 days for delivery. Please don’t send cash. Credit /debit cards can be accepted by post or telephone.

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## ***Environmental Thocht for the Day***

From Private Fraser, Perdition Platoon, Company B, The Royal Scottish Regiment.

“We’re aa doomed, doomed I say”.

(If only all contributors could be so concise. Next issue: Paris Hilton discusses the impacts on deep-peat bogs during wind turbine installation. Ed)

## NewsNewsNewsNewsNews

**GlenDoe Hydro** £160 million, 1 or 2 deaths on site, 28 miles of hill roads carved (allowing access for the soon-to-be-announced wind turbines on Meall Caca...a wonderful name for a wonderful project) and 1,500,000 tonnes of rock blasted and shifted for the dam *alone*.

Everything was going to plan, when an unhelpful landslide forced the operators to drain the reservoir and stop the flow of profit. Oh dear. After the fanfare of the contractors “working in harmony with nature”, and this is how She pays them back! Rumours of a Control Order on Nature, for Her anti-social behaviour towards humble investors, will be followed up most diligently.

**Neart nan Gleann** Or, the power of propaganda from the glens: if you have ever added up the total electricity produced by these power schemes (according to the press releases), and wondered why we need any more...now we know. When the developers HQC say the “Glen Doe turbine is designed to produce up to 100MW- enough energy to power every home in a city the size of Glasgow”, they are either lying or obfuscating.

An SSE spokesman admitted to one of our correspondents that the reservoir would empty itself *in 6 days*, if the turbine ran at full power. The system is designed to run for some 4 hours per day, at times of peak load (and peak profit?), as a back-up to coal and nuclear baseload, so- how green is their valley?

**The future’s bright green** The hydro schemes of the 1950s were needed to provide back-up for the shiny new nuclear powerstations (they were to produce a special type of electricity which would be so cheap it would be free; don’t mention the warheads) during downtime, apparently. Rumours of the next hydro schemes have just been solidified: read Geoff Moore’s article for details and locations. An SSE mannie admitted that these developments are needed as back-up for the intermittent windfactory output. Are we destroying

the environment as we attempt to save it, or is this just business as usual for myopic humanity?

**Power exports** A member reports that 1459MW of electric juice gurgled southwards, in December 2008. Further enquiries indicate that the National Grid estimate some 50,000 GigaWatts are produced annually in Scotland, with 30% of them being exported. Who actually takes the profit from the sale of all this wattage?

Meantimes, the West Highland Free Press reports regularly that some two-thirds of the population of the Western Isles suffer from “fuel poverty”. Let them drink cheap booze to keep warm, until the Scottish Government joins up the thinking on that one too.

**Nuclear power** Another member reports that, on a random day, Scotland derived 65% of her electricity from the two (rather elderly) nuclear power stations. Their average daily input is c.37%. During last winter’s prolonged high pressure system, the blades on the turbines at Edinbane in Skye produced barely a spasm of power for weeks, at a time when the cold weather meant much higher demand from consumers.

Shrewd investors (I couldn’t possibly name names) have got shares and directorships in both industries, and don’t suffer from “fuel poverty”.

**Funicular goes a funny colour- into the red** Largely unreported by the respectable ‘papers, but noted in Private Eye no.1240 (10/7/2009), p.29, Europe is looking for some refunds of grant aid, after irregularities were found in 27 out of 40 “big spending projects” audited. Highlands and Islands Enterprise had to nationalise the mountain railway in 2008, to keep the white elephant out of the graveyard a while yet. Alan Blackshaw has resigned from the local enterprise board and stated publicly that he reckons “the eventual cost  
*cont p14*





to the public purse will be around £50 million” plus the same amount again to remove it when it, er, runs out of steam. Jobs for the boys at both ends, eh? All aboard the gravy train! Why does the public purse only get the losers, when we could nationalise the “renewables” dripping roast? The Swedish state owns Vattenfall, and EdF is 85% owned by the French Government.

Gordon Broom’s brother is rather high up in EdF, so why doesn’t our subPrime Minister follow foreign example and stop flogging our assets to the lowest bidder? Having sold our gold at the bottom of the market, one supposes there’s not much else of value left in this Septic Isle.

**Loch Rannoch Amusement Park for Lonely Billionaires** SWLG didn’t object to this one, as it isn’t really wild land anymore. Cornishman, ach I’ve forgot his name again, but he’s a fine fellow, wants to have an exclusive resort where seriously wealthy individuals can relax in the company of only such as themselves, with no “gold-diggers” allowed anywhere near. A 7-storey crannog-style restaurant in the loch, to disrupt the arctic char; plastic surgery clinic; golf course...lots of Caledonian remnants cut down... There have been many objectors (the JMT website shows their good one, in the “campaigning” pages), but this type of development seems to be most favoured by our elected representatives, so we shall see if the lure of caddying jobs for a handful of grateful locals will swing it in whatisname’s favour.

**Mair golfing balls** The ongoing stoosh in Aberdeenshire, anent the proposed “best golf pitch in the world” just gets worse, with anti-development local councillors being denounced as “scoundrels who have to be stopped” by the astonishing mouthpiece George Sorial. Will 4 households be evicted by compulsory purchase, thus proving that “Scotland is open for business” (A. Salmond)? The SWLG didn’t object to this one either, and I shouldn’t be giving Donald Chump the oxygen of even more publicity, but he seems to be descended from

Somerled, to judge from thon authentic bow-of-the-birlinn windswept hairstyle, so we should really give the guy a (tax)break and see if he can put the best wee country on the map at last. The deposed council leader’s motion to oppose compulsory purchase was defeated by 55 votes to 6, so bullying seems to get results in a democracy.

**The bottom line?** It was reported in the Herald, 23/5/09, that Scottish and Southern Energy carries a net debt burden of £4.8billion. Expect ever-higher electricity bills, and endless “green energy” taxpayer-subsidised construction projects, as they attempt to fill this bottomless pit. Do the directors get bonuses?

**Fluctuating promises** SSE pledged to straighten the notorious “distillery bends” section of road near the Glen Ord whisky factory, as part of their community contribution to offset the disruption caused during their Fairburn windfarm construction project. £700,000 was committed, but had to be dodged due to a legal wrangle over land - now SSE will only do temporary straightening to allow their turbine lorries through, then restore the bends to their original condition. Local communities tempted by the blandishments of developers might wish to note this. [www.north-star-news.co.uk/news/fullstory.php/aid/4256](http://www.north-star-news.co.uk/news/fullstory.php/aid/4256) **Update...** Our Ross-shire observer got an email from Ross Easton, of SSE, stating “the works will be tarred and permanent”...time will tell.

**RED ‘X’**

If there is a red ‘X’ on the address label of your envelope, then please read the beginning of “Comment” to find out the significance, if any, of this mark.

## AGM 2009

All members are hereby invited to attend the Group's Annual General Meeting, which is to be held at the Royal Hotel in Bridge of Allan (north of Stirling) on Saturday the 12th of December. The Royal is at the west end of the main street, and is conspicuous on the left as one approaches from the A9 roundabout.

There's easy parking, and regular trains to the station nearby. Wealthy landowners arriving by helicopter should contact our Treasurer about landing fees.

We have the room from 1-4pm, and as there is to be some socialising (and a slideshow contrasting Scotland with Norway) afterwards, we should really get on with the AGM by 1.30, so please arrive promptly! We have negotiated a reduced rate of £45pppn (B&B) for any members who need accommodation- please contact the hotel directly, stating you are a member of SWLG and are attending the AGM.

Non-members are also welcome, but will not be able to vote on any matters which may arise. If you have any questions for the Team, but can't attend the AGM, please feel free to contact us.

With so much happening to Scotland's wild land at present, we would appreciate a decent turn-out by members so a debate can be held on the best way to harness the energy of our volunteers in countering the many threats we face!

## Book Review...

Over the "summer", a book arrived for reviewing. Fortunately, I was off in Norway with the author and never found the time to read it, but I am reliably informed that it's quite good (as these things go).

It's called 101 Best Hill Walks in the Scottish Highlands and Islands, and is not all obsessive about Munro heroics. Good shot of me on top of the Cobbler and a handy Gaelic translation section at the back. Ideally sized for the top pooch of your rucksack, and cannily priced at £9.99, the guide features concise text, a photo and an "innovative" (it says so on the back cover) 3D mapping of every walk...the author has 40 years' experience of the hills, and every walk seems to have been thoroughly researched, so the book can be recommended to novices and experienced walkers alike.

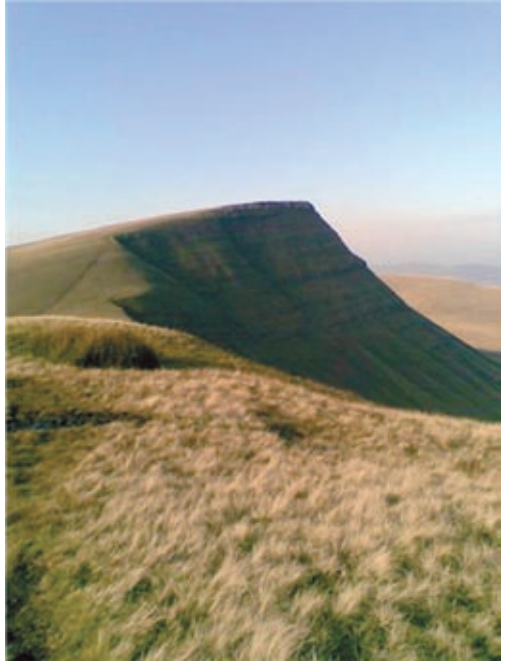
But not by me (as I prefer to be lost in the hills) and as the author is my esteemed brither, there can be no nepotism here.

*ISBN 978-1-905769-16-2, [www.fortpublishing.co.uk](http://www.fortpublishing.co.uk). Available from most outdoor shops, and highstreet booksellers.*

## ***Wind farms in rural Wales: Community benefits?***

***by Max Mundy***

Given that this is the magazine of the Scottish Wild Land Group many readers will be surprised to find an article on Wales. Recent issues of *Wild Land News* have featured concerns about new wind energy projects north of the border. This brief article considers the economic impacts of commercial wind in Wales, in terms of genuine local economy effects. In Wales and Scotland wind developers have worked to show the wider economic benefits associated with these developments, with these set beside what are sometimes considered to be negative environmental impacts. In what follows the issues of economic impacts are examined from a Welsh economy standpoint with the hope that some of the conclusions will be of wider and more general interest.



Commercial wind energy projects are expected to drive Wales and the wider UK economy towards sustainable development targets. At the same time there are concerns that derived 'global' environmental benefits are achieved at the cost of significant 'local' environmental costs. For Wales these issues have become acute. At the end of 2006 Wales had an estimated installed onshore wind energy capacity of around 300MW. However, planning guidance from the Welsh Assembly Government in 2005 actively sought the development of 800MW of new on-shore capacity by 2010, and with the expectation of higher levels of on-shore wind by 2020. Much of the new development was planned to be in 7 Strategic Search Areas (SSAs). These are all upland areas,

much of them in the National Forest Estate. Forestry Commission Wales (FCW) has recently managed a procurement programme to find developers that are to go forward to gain necessary planning permissions. At the time of writing the procurement programme is near completion. In the qualification process FCW has sought information from developers on expected local economic impacts, and has expected prospective developers to engage with communities through consultations. There is the prospect of a series of community benefit provisions tied to the energy produced from the planned wind farms.

The rationale for community benefit provisions linked to wind farm developments



has not been clearly stated by developers or local or national government. Such provisions are not part of the formal planning process, and developers have been keen to avoid describing these provisions as compensation. One possible context for these provisions is the lack of more 'conventional' economic benefits accruing to affected communities from wind power schemes.

Limited local economic impacts connected to what is, after all, a capital intensive form of power generation, should be no surprise. It is here useful to outline some of the project economics which lead to this conclusion. Compared to conventional alternatives such as coal fired generation, much of the cost of wind power projects is up front due to the nature of the key input. Wind energy project performance links to load factors (the time during which the generating turbine capacity is actually being used), and with this connected to average wind speeds. In Wales, as in Scotland, relatively high average onshore wind speeds makes schemes potentially more viable. Scale also impacts viability: the lifetime project costs per kilowatt hour fall significantly with project size. Turbines mounted at greater elevations mean higher wind speeds and with a greater area swept by blades. Larger turbines of course mean that more infrastructure is needed at sites (and possible greater visual impacts). For Wales upland locations provide the higher annual average wind speeds, but to this must be added greater construction costs and related grid connection issues. Scale advantages are not limited to the development phase of wind energy with economies also available in operational (for example mainte-

nance) and managerial economies.

How then might the rural economy benefit from large scale wind energy? Economic benefits might include an increase in construction activity due to site development, the installation of infrastructure, and use of specialist services and subcontractors. There is also the potential for incoming workers to spend money on locally produced goods and services; this is potentially significant for larger sites with contractors present for many months making use of local accommodation services. However, when one examines the existing and expected locations of new projects on the Welsh Forest Estate then it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the *local* supply side is very limited. The majority of wind energy projects developed thus far in Wales have needed significant imports of goods and construction labour from non-rural parts of Wales, and often from the rest of the UK or overseas.

For example, typical project development phases comprise feasibility assessment and planning, wind turbine installation, grid connection, and other infrastructure development (generally new access roads). Estimates vary but constructing a wind farm involves a capital investment ranging from £600,000 to £1 million per MW installed. How far can projects make use of the genuinely local supply base? Welsh evidence would suggest that local (and indeed regional) sourcing is quite limited. Inevitably, the turbine is the key element of spend. These are imported, but with some of the manufacturers having representative offices in Wales. The turbine installation and grid connection involves specialist teams, and the turbine manufacturer will be closely involved in

the installation for warranty reasons. Regional inputs are normally limited to civil engineering i.e. around one fifth of total investment, and not inconsiderable. Other development costs and planning can involve consultants based in Wales, but many business services tend to be purchased by the headquarters of whoever the developer is; to date often a foreign or domestic multinational enterprise located outside of Wales.

What about job prospects during operational life of the wind farm? Welsh evidence suggests this is quite limited. For example, even the Cefn Croes wind energy project near Devil's Bridge (at 59MW, the largest so far developed in the region) needs just 4 on-site technicians (who do live locally), and with the turbine manufacturer having set up an office with a manager in Aberystwyth. On the basis of current employment trends in wind developments across Wales, the operation and maintenance activity associated with the seven planned new wind developments on the Welsh Forest Estate might only be associated with new jobs in the hundreds. The very reliability of modern turbines will reduce local job prospects because of high levels of automation. Fundamentally, wind energy has not been a way of bringing significant new job opportunities to rural Wales, and developers need to qualify any stated aims in these respects.

Further benefits may come from the payment of rental and other related income to local landowners. These payments have a potential role in sustaining local farming and rural communities. Another impact relates to rates paid by wind power projects. In the BWEA analysis *Onshore*

*Wind: Powering Ahead* (April 2006), benefits of wind energy (planned on shore developments to 2010) in Wales were estimated to be around £277.8m of which £24.8m was business rates.

Balanced against a lack of economic impacts in more conventional terms is the steady evolution of community benefit provisions. Recent research (see Cowell et al., 2008) examining the form and operation of community benefit provisions attached to wind energy projects in Wales showed that most on-shore wind projects had some form of community benefit provision. Indeed provisions have become somewhat routine. Most common to date has been the formation of a fund to support activities in adjacent local communities. It is accepted that the issue of the affected 'community' surrounding a wind energy project is contentious. It is estimated that around two thirds of projects currently operational in Wales have made funds available, and with committed funds usually linked directly to the installed capacity of the turbines and varying between £500/MW to £5000/MW/annum. The financial scale of community benefit provisions has tended to trend upwards through time.

Community funds differ in administrative structure but with wind project developers closely involved. In the Welsh case monies are used as grants to local activities, such as community facilities, sports and social clubs, churches, play schools, local events, training and environmental/habitat enhancement. Education is one key theme with some community funds giving bursaries for local students going into tertiary education. Another is sustainable energy projects, for example subsidising

technologies like low energy light bulbs, or providing them free, as well as running schemes to increase awareness and take-up of energy efficiency measures.

To conclude, genuinely local economic benefits deriving from the placement of large commercial wind energy projects in the rural economy of Wales are fairly limited. This is one context for community benefit provisions which undoubtedly do provide some welfare enhancements. The evidence from Wales suggests where communities have benefits in terms of provisions it has been mainly a developer-initiated process, and then with some debate over how far local communities could benefit more from the wind resource. Part of the debate has focused on the potential for higher levels of community ownership of wind projects.

On the face of it community ownership would seem to lead to higher returns when compared to community benefit schemes. For example Community Viewfinder (2007) suggests that wind energy can generate average net profits upwards of around £60,000 per MW of installed capacity per annum, in comparison to the £500-£5000 per MW typically offered in community benefit provisions in Wales. In Wales, as in Scotland, there has been the suggestion that the returns from community ownership could increase the prospects for wind projects to generate wider long-term economic welfare benefits for communities. However, community ownership can have a downside in terms of financial risks to the local community were the project not to perform as expected, or with changing electricity prices. Moreover, the lower numbers of community owned wind projects in

Wales as compared to European states such as Germany and Denmark points to very different industry and institutional conditions that encourage local ownership (including attractive feed-in tariffs for electricity generated from renewables, and generous tax incentives). Direct community ownership of wind energy is uncommon in Wales (i.e. just 3 instances in schemes developed up until 2007).

For communities facing large scale wind projects it is important that the potential local economic benefits and scale of any community provisions deriving from this type of power generation infrastructure are understood. Moreover, the development of community benefit provisions from the wind project developer should be placed in the context of the expected financial performance of schemes over their lifetime, and might be placed on a more transparent footing in terms of underlying rationale.

*Max Munday*

## ***Wild Land research Institute launched at the University of Leeds***

***by ?***

The new Wildland Research Institute (WRI) was launched at the University of Leeds on the 21st October and was attended by the SWLG's co-ordinator Rob Mc Morran, along with 50 or so professionals, including various representatives of key agencies, NGO's and research bodies. The institute is a unique UK-based research group which will specialise in research and policy development relating to wilderness and wildland. The aim is to address the research requirements, strategies and policies for a transition to a greater presence of wild landscapes and natural processes in the UK, Europe and the rest of the world. The institute will have a dedicated core team of around 20 interdisciplinary researchers and upwards of 100 associates working on the different dimensions of wilderness and wildland.

Current work includes a reconnaissance survey of wildland in Scotland, contracted by the John Muir Trust and Scottish Natural Heritage, and the Institute has strategic links with national and international bodies including the UK Wildland Network and Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute in the USA. The institute will also publish a new journal - *Wilder Horizons* - which will include a mix of peer-reviewed research papers, feature articles, letters to the editor, announcements and book reviews.

Steve Carver, Director of the Institute, explains in the first edition of *Wilder Horizons* that "the idea for both the institute and the journal have been a long time in

gestation, but we believe the time is now right for this development, with interest in all things wild increasing among scientists, politicians and conservation professionals as well as the general public". Steve has written for *Wild Land News* about wild land mapping in Scotland (see WLN72) and the SWLG is excited about the prospect of working with the WRI in the future. Steve is a long-term advocate for wild land conservation and re-wilding and a highly experienced and distinguished researcher, who has been working on research projects on wilderness and wildland in the UK and further a field for over 20 years.

The establishment of the institute represents a major step forward in terms of the recognition of the importance of wild land areas, not just in the UK, but across Europe and the world. The future work of the institute will no doubt make a major contribution to increasing the knowledge base around wilderness and wild land, supporting more effective policy related decisions at different levels and significantly raising the profile and standing of the entire wildland and re-wilding agenda. The importance of this development for the conservation and enhancement of Scotland's wild areas should not be underestimated and many eyes will be eagerly following the work and progress of the institute in coming years.

For more information about the work of the institute visit [www.wildlandresearch.org](http://www.wildlandresearch.org)

## Letter to the Editor

Let me corroborate your editorial description of the *modus operandi* of windfarm developers, especially their deployment of "Scottish Renewables" (WLN 72) tactics, with my observation of how a potentially major project has slipped under the radar here in Lochaber.

Only the bare minimum and legally mandatory information has been made publicly available. I was not aware of the 'rigorous local consultation' one day information display in the entrance foyer of Lochaber College, Fort William, of this proposed windfarm which happened about 2 months ago, until too late. Nevertheless I asked about any planning application at the Fort William Planning Dept; there was no application and the staff were unaware of any potential application. I knew there was a serious effort to site a windfarm on Druim Fada because I was aware of the environmental impact study taking place at that time, plus the occasional presence of surveyors wandering about on the hill, and the siting of a 50m anemometer mast there. Totally unconnected to the windfarm the Highland Regional Council Planning Dept, Inverness sent me, about 10 Feb., notification of a proposal to redraw the Lochaber Local Plan, changing the designation of a defined area of land surrounding Corpach and Annat from 'open land' (Council policy forbidding any development) to 'mixed use': a catch-all designation encouraging development of business, housing, social amenities like shops or schools. No mention was made of any possible windfarm.

I called in again at Fort William Planning Dept.: still no windfarm application. 2 weeks later I received a neighbours' notification letter from North British Windfarm Ltd., giving me notice of their application to site 4 turbines near my house. No mention was made of the size of these turbines, the only technical detail be-

ing 'commercial windfarm'. Another trip to Fort William Planning Dept. revealed nothing new. I phoned up North British Windfarm Ltd and they were happy to tell me each turbine would stand 120m high to blade tip and be rated at 2 to 2.5 MW. There appears to be zero communication between North British Windfarms Ltd and Highland Region/Lochaber Planning Dept.

I considered the possible siting of a windfarm with 120m turbines clearly visible from a huge swathe of Lochaber to be of public interest so I copied my neighbours' notification letter and delivered it by hand to Stewart Taylor, the Lochaber News local paper resident journalist, asking him to use his discretion whether or not to print something in his newspaper. 3 issues later they had not printed anything about this windfarm. No planning application notice appeared in the regular Planning Applications column in the Oban Times until 12 March, which was worrying as my neighbours' notification stated that details of the application could be viewed at Corpach PO or Fort William Planning Dept. for a period of 14 days following the date on the notification, which was 23 Feb 09, so readers would not be able to view mandatory details of the application. Lochaber News *did not publish the notice*. Nowhere have I read of the date by which objections to this application should have been lodged.

Two more anemometer masts have been sited much higher up on Druim Fada for 3 or 4 years now, one at each end, no applications have been lodged to my knowledge to site turbines near these masts - I suspect the 4 turbines proposed at low level are the precursor 'softeners' for a much bigger future application - what is Scottish Renewables' tactics regarding Trojan horses? My view about Druim Fada

windfarms is I am not going to object because Druim Fada is not in my view wild land, and I am pro-renewable energy. However I am concerned about the way in which this application is being pursued.

Roger Boswell, Annat, Fort William.

### **Recent developments**

Notice of the Druim Fada windfarm planning application appeared in the Oban Times (OT) on 12 March 2009, giving a deadline for comments and objections of 9 April 2009. No notice was printed in the other local paper, the Lochaber News (LN). In the following weeks nothing concerning the Druim Fada Windfarm appeared in either local paper. Nobody seemed to have noticed the notice.

Late in the day, this windfarm application came to the attention of the Fort William Community Council, who successfully secured an extension to the deadline for comments of 1 May 2009. At last the press and public started taking an interest, several articles appeared in the OT, LN, and P&J. Highland Council's relevant Area Planning Committee, viz Ross Skye and Lochaber Planning Committee, held a Public Hearing on 26 August 2009 to decide on what to do with North British Windpower's planning application. This committee comprised 4 local councillors from Lochaber and 5 non-local councillors from Ross. The hearing involved a site visit followed by a public meeting in the local village hall, Kilmallie Hall which was attended by about 80 members of the public. I wish I'd been there but I was away in Wales looking after my best friend, my 87 year old Mum, so I missed the debate, but I read about it, sounded like a good old Scottish Stramash or is that a Boorach? (I'm from Wales). The decision went 6 votes to 3 in favour of the windfarm. Surprising result as about 3 years ago the anemometer applications relevant to this windfarm were refused by the relevant

planning committee and were only built as a result of appeal to the Scottish Office. All 5 Ross councilors voted for the windfarm as did 1 local councillor, Eddie Hunter, the remaining 3 local councillors voted against. Had Eddie Hunter also voted against the Scottish Office would have had a difficult job upholding this decision in the face of unanimous local opposition.

Work will begin in 2011 and in a couple of years Druim Fada, at an altitude of about 150m up the south side, close to Annat and Corpach, will be blessed with 4 off 80m turbines, with blade tips reaching 120m, each generating 2.5MW when the wind blows. The developer, North British Windpower say they have no plans to extend the scheme, despite siting 2 other anemometers much higher up and further afield on Druim Fada. The real reason for siting just 4 turbines low down and close to Corpach is the availability of a high voltage high power electric cable or feeder which terminates at the now redundant and demolished Arjo Wiggins Pulp and Paper Mill site. Installing a short feeder from here to the windfarm won't cost much. North British Windpower will still coin in the market ROC (Renewable Obligation Certificate) price for all the electricity this windfarm generates, they will make a killing.

For further details get wild with Andrew Shaw, Managing Director or Graham Irwin, Director, North British Windpower, Lochside House, 3 Lochside Way, Edinburgh Park, Edinburgh, EH11 9DT; tel: 0131 452 2018, email: nbw@nbwindppower.com.

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**Notes**

This edition of Wild Land News (WLN) is designed and edited by Jayne Glass. Individual articles do not necessarily reflect the views of the SWLG Steering Committee. We welcome any general enquiries about wild land in Scotland as well as any comments you may have about the content of WLN. We are also keen to hear about any local developments in wild areas which you think might concern the Group. Please contact Rob Mc Morran, the Co-ordinator, in the first instance. We also welcome contributions for WLN (articles, letters, photographs etc). Please send any contributions to editor@swlg.org.uk or contact us if you would like to send hard copies.

If you would like to join SWLG, please complete the membership form below and return to the Membership Secretary with the correct payment. It is also possible to join SWLG via our new website (www.swlg.org.uk). If you have any enquiries about bankers' orders, Gift Aid, generous donations and any other financial matters, please get in touch with Tim Ambrose, our Treasurer.

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