

Appendix 6.2

Extract from Times Online – members of the public answer the question “Are you in favour of Wind Turbines?”

The question posed and all the responses posted on the website are reproduced below – providing an illustration of the public attitudes to windpower.

Question:

“Despite the rejection of a proposal to build Europe's biggest land-based wind farm on fells in the Lake District, many of the 162 wind farms now at the planning stage are for rural areas in northern England, Wales and Scotland. Are wind farms defacing Britain's countryside? Or are they much-needed sources of renewable energy and essential in tackling global warming? Read the article and tell us what you think of them. Send us your view using the form below. Your replies will be posted here.”

Responses:

“Any practical application that provides the earth with much needed energy, that does not require man upsetting the ecological balance anymore than he has already, must be embraced. Great Britain is one of the windiest places on the planet - we should be harnessing as much of it as quickly as we can. Let's not cowtow to the nimbys.

Sarah Hunt, Yeovil

There is now no turning back from the quest to utilise more sustainable energy sources. Energy from wind turbines will no doubt be part of this. The question people need to ask themselves is if I am not prepared to live without my tv, fridge, washing machine, home computer etc; and the uk wants to retain its industries and offices which require vast amounts of energy to function, then whats the price I am prepared to pay? A solution is to develop wind turbines which are aesthetically pleasing. Its not the turbines which are the issue but their design. Our countryside is not the natural environment we think it is but has been shaped by man. As such wind turbines aren't destroying the environment merely adding to the landscape.

John Lumbard, Richmond

Because wind turbines are not generating electricity all the time, there has to be sufficient conventional generating to act as back up. These generators cannot be simply turned on and off when the wind changes, so where is the saving in greenhouse emissions? It could be argued that wind turbines are expensive, unsightly, inefficient and ultimately worthless.

Tony Furlong-Osborne, Lowestoft

People in this country need to wake up. We use a lot of power but our current sources are dwindling. We either have to use less power or find other ways to produce the same amount. What would people say if they knew the kind of lifestyle changes required in a world with less electricity? I think wind farms are the only way forward. Nuclear, which I should imagine this government will usher in under cover of political darkness at some stage in the next five years, is a dangerous option but one which can easily be put to the back of the mind. Wind farms are right in front of you, a constant reminder of man's depletion of natural resources. Never mind the so called "aesthetic" issues, it's the psychological ones that we should deal with.

Frances Roberson, Croydon

I have to say that I'm not convinced about the need for large-scale wind farms to supply domestic/urban energy needs, as there are many other alternatives available - renewable energy sources with proven performance in Europe. Probably the best example is the city of Barcelona in Spain where legislation has been introduced that requires all new buildings to be fitted with renewable energy systems, and all buildings undergoing significant refurbishment to be also

fitted with r. e. s. In the UK these systems have been available for a number of years - though seemingly not widely understood by the general public or the plumbing and heating industry. For a wider understanding of these systems and the benefits they can bring to the average household, you need only go to www.solar.org.uk. Here in Cyprus, there is a government subsidy programme to encourage householders to fit photo-voltaic solar panels to their homes - which are then connected to the national grid to provide energy to the national power company; used efficiently this programme can even generate income for the householder. The technology exists and its performance well proven - as Barcelona demonstrates so very well. So why not in the UK?

Bryn Heapy, Neo Chorio, Cyprus

In 100 years time we have public objections to wind turbines being demolished. Windmills are now regarded as worth preserving, I feel this will eventually be the case with the turbines, I like them. They are like a piece of modern art, well designed and very elegant.

Donald Jones, Taunton

There are now smaller versions of wind turbines costing around £1200 and generating 5KW of electricity. The size means that they could start to be used on some of our blocks of flats, with height above the ground - in this way being unobstructive and efficient. I understand they are more efficient than solar. As a small developer, I look to utilise this type of technology together with GeoThermal (or heat exchange) as a way to provide power and heat to new buildings.

Colin Warburg, Southampton

Are grandiose projects with capability for controversy diverting us from a more positive approach? Opening nuclear power stations is high in the minds of politicians - lots of photo opportunities and rich grounds for sound bites on topics that few are qualified to speak with authority. Funding spectacular wind farms on prime land has huge capacity to get politicians on TV and radio chat shows, either as for or against, where the loudest voice wins. Is the alternative a careful study of the options, putting forward these options in a way that all the people of the country can understand, too difficult a task? There are many options for our future energy production where a vote of all the people, based on presentation of the facts and understanding of what the decision means for us would be a welcome addition to our democracy.

Jim Ballantyne, Sandhurst

I live within ten minute's drive of three small wind farms, plus there is one being built offshore of the island of Walney, and another across the Duddon estuary at Haverigg. I personally think they look great, you see them from miles away slowly turning in pristine white, they have no chimneys or unsightly pylon lines leading from them, there are no smells or obtrusive noise, there is no waste product to last for thousands of years. The odd thing is that they take me back to my childhood and Windy Miller, and the windmills on the Fylde. We've been using wind power for centuries, why not now?

Tony Holden, Barrow-in-Furness

We are surrounded by very tidal waters and I am surprised that use of these for hydro electrical purposes has been totally ignored. Wind turbines do have their problems. A few miles west of Palm Springs there are some 3,000 of them up the rising land to north and south of the gap through which the wind blows each day. Many of them have black oil seeping down their masts onto the ground; many make rather loud noises. It should not be forgotten that they are not as constantly efficient as we have been told nor as cheap to run. Maintenance must be ongoing.

James Stuart, Chorley

I was home recently in Burton Latimer, Northamptonshire, for a family event and saw the Wind Farm they have there at Burton Wold. There are ten wind turbines and these provide electricity

for 10,000 homes. They looked graceful as they turned in the wind and I was positively mesmerised while I watched. I can't believe why anyone would want to complain about something so environmentally safe and so beautiful to see.

Judith Dovkants, Swansea

It is far too easy to dismiss the impact on the environment of these turbines during their manufacture. They have also proved to decimate bird populations in the USA and the numbers required to provide a meaningful amount of electricity renders the idea preposterous. That is, of course, assuming the right conditions prevail for them to be operation in the first place. Demand for electricity doesn't drop with the wind.

Hamish Hossick, Glasgow

I hear that the nuclear option is going to cost £4.5 billion. Now set aside that major construction projects like these have a history of coming in at least twice the cost, and go with this figure. It seems to me that for just less than this £4.5 billion we could equip over 15 million homes with solar panels at £20K per home and a small wind turbine @ £5K plus some 10% contingency. Why doesn't the government do the sums and offer us an alternative?

Adrian Reid, London

How can you spoil bracken or heather deserts? Some people have a strange idea of beauty. The need for clean energy far outweighs romantic and misguided ideas. The wind generators are themselves an awe inspiring sight.

Dave Madley, Alfaz Del Pi, Spain

I agree it's a shame to disturb the natural beauty of our countryside but we must be responsible for our use of energy. The use of home devices is a very good one but there are many people (even with a grant) that cannot afford them. I also wonder how many of the people against wind farms have home devices to help in conserving energy?

Caitlin Barrow, Edinburgh

The visual impact of a wind farm seems to depend to a great deal on the type of landscape in which it is situated. The first I ever saw were in the hill-and-dale countryside of the Erzgebirge, to the southwest of Dresden, in 1995. I even photographed a view incorporating some of the structures. Not displeasing to the eye, in small clusters. But in a different context they can look horrendous. By 2000 Spain was getting in on the act, planting huge clusters of them on top of high mountain ridges. Plenty of wind, yes, but despoiling some of the wildest, most savage upland landscapes in Europe. Examples include those on the borders of Navarra and Aragón to the south of Sanguesa, and the hideous bunch on the Sierra de Ojen, overlooking the Straits of Gibraltar to the east of Tarifa. In mountain areas - those where rainfall is plentiful at least - why not instead develop more mini-HEP schemes, such as those that used to exist in parts of northern Spain in the early 20th century? Or even chains of small water-mills (we have at least half a dozen ruined examples in our valley alone) which could generate electricity for local users? In our part of mountainous Asturias (with a reputation for high winds as well as high rainfall, and hundreds of microclimates) there are as yet no wind farms to blot the landscape - thank goodness.

Mike Bent, Oviedo, Spain

If the government were to direct town planners to only approve new homes with solar panels designed and built into roofs, then the energy needs would be drastically reduced and cost would not be prohibitive.

Geoffrey Baldock, Bucknell

I am against wind turbines due to their inefficiency, they do not work when there is no wind, or too much wind, and since they are located in parts of the country (the North and Scotland) that

offer suffer gale force winds they are inactive around a third of the time. The large scale introduction of solar panels and mini wind turbines on the majority of UK buildings would likely be a far greater contribution to sustainable energy than these enormous white elephants.

Darla Danya, London

I am in favour of these devices but there are clearly negative visual issues associated with them. I am not myself directly involved in this industry but it strikes me that the construction of very large wind turbines to supply individual communities is akin to the beginnings of the computer industry. Initially we had very large mainframe computers supporting various associated terminals. Now we have the PC where all the necessary kit is present in an individual hard-drive. A quick scan through the web shows that there are numerous domestic turbines, solar panels, sewage digesters etc. etc. which can be bought off the shelf. My question is why are we even talking about wind farms when your average house can support all the technology at present? The government should not be wasting money assessing sites for wind farms, they should be initiating a series of grants to allow householders to install presently available clean technology. All new-build houses should also be required to have these technologies and planning regulations should be simplified to ensure that the cost is not knocked on to the house buyer.

Derek Sinclair, Dundee

I've never understood why these turbines can't be painted green to blend in with the landscape. At least then they would look a lot less obtrusive.

Marcus Batson, London

At last some sense. It says it all that a monstrosity of this size would supply only 110,000 people. I walk a lot in mid-wales and to get a photograph without one of these eyesores (usually stationary) is now almost impossible. The damage to our precious countryside is absolutely criminal.

John Ralph, Worcester

Most of life is a trade off, one thing against another. There is always an evaluation - conscious or otherwise - of the benefits against the drawbacks. Where wind farms are concerned, if the machinery was invisible, most people would welcome the idea of using a natural source such as the wind to contribute to our energy production. So, the question is; does the benefit of doing this outweigh the unsightly erection of large numbers of wind turbines across areas of natural beauty - a question not to be taken lightly. Most of us love to see an old, wooden windmill but a whole field of them? However, unless we are prepared to reduce our energy requirements, we cannot afford to ignore the potential of wind farms so they have to go ahead; carefully planned and erected, blending in where possible with the surroundings.

Tom Edwards, Bromley

I have yet to be convinced that large-scale wind farms will not have an impact on wind - and by extension weather - patterns. Why is solar energy being overlooked in all this? Solar panels do not require cloudless skies, and as such could still be viable in our climate, could be installed on existing buildings, and are not going to impact our climate.

Dominic Graham de Montrose, London