

Some readers may remember MSP Mike McKenzie's eulogising ode to wind energy titled, 'The answer is blowing in the wind'. So he will be pleased that Loch Awe side is now beleaguered by three huge wind farm applications at various stages of planning – Upper Sonachan (Ecotricity); Balliemeanoch (Sgurr Energy) and Blarghour (Coriolis Energy). Each will be determined by the Scottish Government due to their sheer scale and size. E.ON intend to test wind speeds in Inverliever Forest near Dalavich prior to yet another application. Whether more are 'waiting in the wings' is as yet unknown.

The wind industry and the Scottish Government make idealised claims about wind power which invite close examination:

Decarbonisation

UK communities outwith Scotland now have the final say on whether wind developments should proceed. We don't.

The economy, infrastructure, businesses and homes cannot be powered when the wind doesn't blow or blows too hard; the country needs conventional power generation as back-up. Cockenzie is now being dismantled and Longannet will follow soon, leaving two ageing nuclear generators and half a gas plant at Peterhead.

The National Grid has been forced to introduce an emergency scheme that pays large businesses to cut electricity usage; this had to be implemented last week and is paid for by further levies on our energy bills.

In addition, as a direct result of our chaotic energy policy, banks of polluting diesel generators have been put in place at costs of up to 50 times average power prices, again paid by consumers. It is estimated that the costs will be in the region of £463m, with emissions of several million tonnes of CO2 a year.

These subsidies also attract solar developers who are building diesel generation on their sites to maximise their returns, compounding costs to the consumer. Very recently, due to high winds causing extra energy production in excess of what the National Grid could take, Scottish wind farms have received more than £5million so-called 'constraint payments' paid for via a subsidy added to consumers' electricity bills. Older generation plants have been utilised to cope with the crisis.

Subsidy cuts

Damage to the economy and job losses are bandied about by the industry and repeated by politicians.

There is no detailed data on either alleged 'loss'. Would the money accrued by foreign developers stay in the country? Where is the hard, factual, economic evidence on jobs – in precisely which sector; full time/part time; which locations? How many jobs are lost in other

industries due to high electricity costs because of subsidies and green levies on bills, and the covert knock-on costs levied from one industry to another? Our steel industry is fighting for its very survival, due in large part to high energy costs, not just cheap Chinese steel.

Political parroting of wind industry figures is commonplace and yet Inverness-based Mackay Consultants revealed that electricity customers were ultimately billed for three times the amount required to help build them.

Health effects

Noise and water contamination: Despite peer reviewed reports of 73 health professional experts and acousticians worldwide, denials about adverse health impact evidence already in existence and emerging continues. Adverse effects are well documented by many eminent people around the world, including Mike Stigwood, whose ground-breaking research into amplitude modulation and other noise impacts on residents up to 10km from wind farms provides some of the strongest scientific evidence to date for the true environmental cost of wind farms (<http://scotlandagainstspin.org/2013/12/wind-farms-noise-sacrifice-rural-minorities-mike-stigwood/>). Effects are regularly reported at www.waubra-foundation.org.au and www.wcfn.org.

An alert was sent to the British Medical Association to help inform authorities and members of the medical profession about their role in public protection and human rights issues. See www.windsofjustice.org.uk for this and access to the Request for Action on wind power and water contamination issues.

The Australian Senate Inquiry this year listened to hours of testimony from witnesses who had been adversely affected by noise, and read hundreds of submissions before making hard-hitting recommendations.

Safety

If turbines are 'harmless', why are they being removed from school grounds due to potential danger to children and staff? As turbines become larger, so metal fatigue becomes a major issue, and close proximity to our roads becomes highly relevant. See submission 117 to the Australian Senate Inquiry on wind power http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Wind_Turbines/Wind_Turbines/Submissions

Benefits/disbenefits

Targeted farming communities are mostly unaware of disbenefits. A report at <http://fairwindenergy.org/testimony.html> is one of many global examples.

Schools welcome the industry speaking about the technology's advantages. Is information ever



Christine Metcalfe and fellow wind farm campaigners.

given on adverse health, environmental or financial effects? Does anyone discuss children in China having to grow up in toxic villages to provide heavy metals for wind turbines and other equipment? Where is the balance in respect of what our children are led to believe?

A cross-party issue at the heart of all present and future needs should

be a beneficial energy policy for our country.

It is possible and necessary to retain basic ethics of supporting the wish to change damaging environmental behaviour, while accepting that it must be accompanied by a healthy scepticism on any emerging questionable dogma, or hijacking of original principles.

CONCLUSION

For the electorate and people suffering from turbine impacts, inescapable facts remain. Those paid to represent us have no right to impose an energy policy that is harmful to our physical, mental or economic health or the environment in which we live. We, conversely, have a right to reject the rapid imposition of policies based largely upon weak/unproven theories, ideologies, or political expediency, which disproportionately benefit the few to the detriment of many.

As speculative wind power applications rise throughout Scotland, vested interests mask problems relating to energy production technologies which have the capacity, through excessive implementation, to cause the opposite effect. Before imposing an energy policy upon a population, claims relating to emission savings and benefits must be first proven – and that it is being done without inflicting actual or indirect harm. This includes full transparency of plans

and compliance with International Treaty legal obligations. If we do not insist that those in power act in our best interests via the rule of law and compliance with treaties involving human rights and aspects involved, we are risking a loss of democracy.

Scottish Government denials of adverse impacts upon tourism and visitor numbers, evidence of people suffering harm and of plummeting property prices, show an inability to accept that in reality all those things are happening.

'Wilful blindness' is an apt description of the status quo. Unbiased politicians unafraid to depart from party lines are few. If any exist with a capacity for serious research, will they please step forward to assist colleagues who don't.

