

LOWICK PARISH COUNCIL WITH BLAWITH AND SUBBERTHWAITE PARISH COUNCIL

Local feelings are running high in the Crake Valley over yet another application for a new wind farm on Kirkby Moor. The present wind farm began operating on the Kirkby Moor site in 1993. Initially Planning Consent was refused by South Lakeland District Council., but they were over-ruled by the Secretary of State. But this Consent was strictly time-limited; after 25 years the wind farm had to be decommissioned and the site restored to its former state.

Since then local landowners have tried on several occasions to persuade the planners to allow more turbines to be erected in the vicinity, but each time they failed. Both of our Parish Councils opposed these applications, and organised a number of Public Meetings to debate the developments, often with the support of national organisations. The most recent one was only a year ago.

And all the time, the old turbines of the Kirkby Moor Wind Farm have quietly whirled away on the heights of the Moor, overlooking the Crake and Duddon Valleys. This wind farm, small by modern standards, was one of the first to be built, back when politicians were only beginning to wake up to the need to find new sources of energy to deal with the impending shortage in fossil fuels.

Yet it seems that now the wind farm's owners don't want to simply shut up shop and go away. Instead they want to 'repower' the site, replacing the 12 small ones there now with six giant machines that will generate far more power, and of course, vastly more income.

We're already contributing more than our share

But little of that will be for the local residents. We already generate plenty of power in this corner of the North West. The sprawling offshore windfarm at Barrow in Furness is one of the largest in the world. Then there's the nuclear power station at Heysham, just across the Bay, and even a new one planned at, of all places, on the other side of the fence at Sellafield. We don't need this 're-powered' wind farm on Kirkby Moor – the simple fact is that it's RWE Innogy and the Holker Estate that *wants* it – and that is an entirely different matter.

The creeping threat to Open Access and Common Land

Kirkby Moor is an endangered Common, and much of the site is a designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). It's very popular with walkers, because it's easy to get to from Ulverston and Barrow and provides stunning views of the Duddon Valley, Black Coombe and the Southern Fells to the north west, north and east, and the unique seascape of Morecambe Bay to the south.

Our Commons are Open Access lands, for recreational use of the public. Erecting perpetually whirling giant industrial machines on such land, purely for private benefit, is entirely incompatible with their peace and tranquillity. Even the existing small turbines on Kirkby Moor are an abrupt intrusion, but the proposed new ones, three times as high, would be far far worse.

If there really is a need for such developments, then amongst the multiplying monsters of the Walney Wind Forest is surely the right place to plant them, not the top of one of the most prominent – and environmentally sensitive and protected - landscape features in this part of the Lake District?

The threat to the future status of the Lake District

Cumbria is one of the most beautiful areas in the world. Some time ago the Lake District failed to gain World Heritage status because of the blight of the Sellafield nuclear waste processing complex. Allowing the Park to become encircled by gigantic mechanical Whirling Dervishes is not going to help our prospects of being recognised for its natural beauty, and finally earning that hugely important boost to tourism.

Our Duty of Care to the public

As Parish Councillors we have a duty to ensure that private interests are not allowed to overwhelm those of the public whom we have been elected to represent. Our responsibilities extend not only to those who live in and close to the Park but also to those for whom the protection of our heritage from insidious industrial despoilation is the legacy that we would leave for our children to enjoy.

So I appeal to you to make sure that your Parish Council takes an active part in responding to these tedious 'Public Consultation' on all proposed wind farms on the perimeter of the National Park. It is time to put down our markers and say "No! Enough is enough!"

A new debate on the Common Interest?

A Public Debate on our views on the expansion of on-shore wind farms in Cumbria is long overdue. This is not just an issue that needs to be resolved by our already hard-pressed Planners. How the landscape and environment in which we live is managed for the future is a matter of principle and the common interest, and as such it falls within the remit of both the Cumbria Association of Local Authorities and the County Council.

With the explosion of proposals for highly controversial developments throughout the County that are being 'justified' by this awful 'Energy Coast' public relations spin and hype, we really do need to reach some sort of agreement on just how much more of this industrial contamination can be tolerated, merely to pander to the Whim of Westminster to have its cake and eat it – as long as that cake is made somewhere safely out of sight of the Great Metropolis itself!

Making a start – right now!

Our two Parish Councils are making a start ourselves next week. We have organised two open Public Meetings, on Monday March 16th at Water Yeat Hall and on Tuesday March 17th at Lowick Community Hall. Both meetings start at 7.30 p.m.. The lead speaker will be Environmental Consultant Doug Cross, who has long experience in assessing the environmental and social implications of development proposals, and will summarise the main points of concern.

But don't just leave it all to us - YOUR voice is essential right now. Your comments to the Kirkby Moor Application need to be received by SLDC by the May 15th AT THE LATEST. You can send them by email, to development.management@southlakeland.gov.uk The Application Reference Number is SL/2014/1220

Please support us.