

# BOLT

## Birdsedge and District Opposition to Large Turbines

### Are we NIMBYs or WIMBYs?

***Birdsedge and High Flatts residents say: It's not a question of 'Not In My Back Yard', but more a question of 'Why In My Back Yard?'.***

When a large development company puts in almost four years of research, planning and preparation before news of a proposed wind farm leaks out to residents living within 500 metres of the site, you have to wonder whether they're trying to pull a fast one on the locals. Of course, they know the law and they're sticking to it. No one says you have to let people know your plans in advance, even if your plans are likely to have a major effect on their lives. It was only when the test mast and anemometer appeared on top of Castle Hill, Birdsedge on 2009 that the village residents began to stir and ask questions.

Well we may be last out of the starting gate, but we have some pretty searching questions to ask. And the main ones are:

- Why, when the European guideline is for these very large turbines to be at least 2 kilometres from housing, is a company even considering erecting four or five wind turbines at distances of between just less than 500 metres to just over 900 metres from a modern housing estate, a school, a church, a village hall, older terraced housing and listed buildings and a main road?
- Who will be making money out of this project at the expense of our quality of life?
- Will the erection of four or five very large turbines benefit the village in any way?
- Why won't we get a reduction in our electricity bills if we sit back and let this project through unopposed?
- How come it will actually cost us money to support turbine subsidies?
- Why is any company intending to use very large turbines (over 400 feet tall) designed for offshore on a land-based wind farm project?
- Will the erection of wind turbines cost-effectively reduce CO2 emissions locally, nationally and globally?

And those questions are only the beginning. Most of us in the village would probably admit to being fairly green in our outlook. We recycle, we think about our carbon footprint and we even admit to liking the wind turbines on the Royd Moor site which is a suitable and safe distance from the village. We have no objection to offshore wind turbines – especially when they are erected offshore.

It's only when there is the prospect of four or five industrial structures approximately 4/5ths of the height of Blackpool Tower looming above *your* village that you start to ask questions about wind turbines in general as well as the local plan in particular. Will wind turbines really stop global warming and save the world? Will they really eliminate the need for coal-fired and nuclear power stations? Will they save taxpayers money? Sadly the answer to all those questions is no.

The Ecologist Dr John Etherington in his book *'The Wind Farm Scam'* (ISBN 9781905299836) argues that wind farm technology is a wholly counterproductive and undesirable response to the problems of climate change and electricity generation. Dr. Etherington is a former Reader in Ecology, a Thomas Huxley Medallist at the Royal College of Science and former co-editor of the Journal of Ecology. In addition to ecological and social concerns, his essential points are:

- the intermittent nature of wind power cannot generate a steady power output, a fact that necessitates back-up systems from coal and gas-powered plants that significantly negate any reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. And in fact during the recent cold spell, through December and January 2009 – 2010, when demand for power peaked, there was not enough wind to operate turbines at all. Excessively cold weather is often associated with low pressure and still air.
- wind power is being excessively financed at the cost of consumers who have been neither consulted nor informed that enormous subsidies are being paid from their bills to support an industry that cannot be cost-efficient. The profit to developers of wind farms comes from subsidies paid by the taxpayer.

Without these subsidies (that come out of my money and your money) wind farm schemes would be neither cost effective nor attractive to developers who are only on it for the profit. Because of European directives energy companies are forced to buy a certain percentage of energy from renewable resources at a two or three times its real value in order to save a paltry amount of CO2 emissions – and all that so that the British government can meet its quota.

Lord David Howell, former Secretary of State for Energy: "*Extensive wind farm developments will be seen in due course to have taken public opinion for a colossal ride...*"

Who has the moral high ground? Is it even possible to object to wind turbines and hold your head up in public? Yes it is, despite Energy Secretary Ed Miliband recently saying, "*It is socially unacceptable to be against wind turbines,*" Just who is he trying to kid? We should all be outraged that, more recently, Huw Irranca-Davies, DEFRA minister for marine and natural environment, supported the fast-tracking of wind power through the planning system by allowing developers to finance local projects. Such action is contrary to the government's own 2007 policy set out in "*Delivering Community Benefits from Wind Energy Development: A Toolkit*" which contained the categorical statement that: "*To put it simply, planning permission cannot be 'bought'.*"

Proponents of wind power justify the impact on landscape, ecology and community by the need to tackle climate change through reduction of carbon dioxide emission. In 'The Wind Farm Scam' Etherington points out that, "*the saving of CO2 proposed by government's own 2010 target for electricity generated by renewables is a minute 0.04% of the global total*". Paradoxically then, as wind turbines proliferate, we'll need to build more CO2-emitting power stations to back up hugely subsidised wind farms. Does that make sense to you?

Those are some of the general considerations which explain why wind farms are not the panacea we all hoped they would be.

Here are some of the other area specific and technical reasons why we don't want our village to be ringed by four or five structures that are more than four-fifths the height of Blackpool Tower.

- Visual impact on an area of outstanding natural beauty
- Visual Impact on the skyline from the Peak National Park
- Looming presence over the villages of Birdsedge and High Flatts
- Cumulative effect of this wind farm combined with others planned in the surrounding area – some over the border in South Yorkshire, but all visible from Birdsedge and High Flatts
- Proximity to a residential community, being only 500 meters or so away from houses, and a church and 600 metres away from a primary school, a well attended village hall and a bus route with passenger stops.
- Proximity to rural roads used by horse riders, cyclists, walkers, dog-walkers, runners and hikers as well as local and agricultural traffic
- Potential dangers caused by ice being flung from the blades in winter (heavy chunks as large as 2 feet across having been reported in Lincolnshire). From a very large wind turbine the 'throw' could be up to 700 metres. (And we are in the same area in which accumulated ice brought down Emley Moor mast in March 1969, so don't say: *It will never happen.*)
- Potential dangers caused by debris, (turbine parts) due to mechanical failure, as has been experienced in Scottish, American and European wind farms and even (twice) in a turbine in Sheffield.
- Potential Sun /Light flicker/strobe effect caused by such large blades at times of low sun causing major annoyance for residents in the shadow (most of the village) and also a driving hazard at times of low sun (much of the day in the winter time). Flicker not only causes annoyance which can affect wellbeing, promote feelings of irritability and anger (leading to aggression), but can also cause migraines and other health hazards. For some people, flashing lights can trigger potentially lethal epileptic seizures.
- Potential noise disturbance to the school and dwellings across the whole frequency spectrum (the swish swish swish of blades for instance).
- Very low frequency noise (that low rumbling noise you can barely hear but you feel it in your body) in particular is associated with health hazards such as anxiety and depression; aggravation and aggression; insomnia and/or loss of quality in sleep; lessened concentration

and a general malaise. This affects not only humans but wild and domestic animals and birds. No amount of double glazing will keep it out of your house, it travels through wall unimpeded.

- Potential harm to domestic animals, horses, cattle and sheep on the surrounding grazing land – and on your pets whose hearing is more sensitive than yours is.
- Potential damage to wildlife - bats, badgers and birds etc. as well.
- Damage to a potential Iron Age archaeological site (never dug)
- Potential for a mid-air accident as there is a local airstrip within 1 km of turbines (which will be in the flight path of the only runway)
- Wind turbines may cause interference with television signals requiring adjustment or replacement of aerials or installation of cable/ satellite.
- Massive disruption to local roads for many months during construction including the enlargement of junctions in order for the extra large vehicles to turn to reach the site.
- Massive industrial construction in a greenbelt area

If we are NIMBYs, we are NIMBYs for very good reasons.

If you live in Birdsedge, High Flatts, Cumberworth, Upper Cumberworth, Sovereign, Gate Foot, the top half of Shepley and parts of Ingbirchworth, you probably live within a 2 km radius of where these enormous turbines are likely to be sited unless we all do something together, NOW.

If England had adopted the European recommended standoff of 2km your homes would not be threatened with low frequency noise emissions, loss of visual amenity and potential loss of monetary value. Once the official planning application goes in we'll have a few weeks (at best) to respond and object. If we don't get our ducks in a row now we may not be able to fight effectively.

We'd love it if these offshore wind turbines could be planted – well – *offshore!* Seems to make sense really.

If you have skills which might help our campaign and you wish to get involved, please contact Steve Ashley on 01484 606533.

For more information visit our website: <http://www.birdsedge.co.uk/bolt.htm>

If you wish to write a letter to planning officials in Kirklees to object to the development of wind turbines you need to send a letter in your own words to the following three people. Each letter is worth 250 signatures on a petition, but form letters don't have the same impact – it has to be in your own words. You can however use our objections list as a guideline. Object to all or just one of the points in it. Ask that you be kept informed of any plans, either now or in the future, to develop a wind farm project.

Please note that as yet no formal plans have been submitted to Kirklees, so in your letter you must not object to the 'plans' but to the '**potential plans**' to develop a windfarm in the Birdsedge area. (If you object to the plans they'll simply tell you 'there are no plans', and that – strictly speaking – is true.) Please, when you write your letters, make a copy of each one and give it to any one of the BOLT committee. At the Park Head end of the village your nearest committee member is probably Jacey Bedford at 10 Park Head. At the school end of the village then Steve Ashley at 7 Highfield Avenue is probably your nearest drop point. Or post to: Steve Ashley, 7 Highfield Avenue, Birdsedge, Huddersfield, HD8 8XT

Thank you for your support. Please don't delay. Write now to:

Jonathan Barrett, Head of Planning,  
Kirklees Council, PO Box B93, Civic Centre 3, Huddersfield, HD1 2JR

Cllr Mehboob Khan, Leader of Kirklees Council  
The Leader's Office, Crown Court Buildings, Princess Street, Huddersfield, HD1 2TT

Cllr Peter McBride, Chair of Planning Committee  
18 Netheroyd Hill Road, Fixby, Huddersfield, HD2 2LP