

THE FORESTRY COMMISSION

When New Labour came to power in 1997 their manifesto stated:

'We favour a moratorium on large-scale sales of Forestry Commission land. We recognise that the countryside is a great natural asset, a part of our heritage which calls for careful stewardship.' (Editor's emphasis)

'Careful stewardship' of this *'great natural asset'*, *'part of our heritage'* does not however extend to vast tracts of Forestry Commission land in Mid Wales.

The Forestry Commission hold around 7% of the Welsh landmass – 320,000 acres of forests, woodlands and open moorland. Since devolution in July 1999, this land is held *'on behalf of the nation'* by the National Assembly for Wales. It is therefore owned by the public. The forest estates are managed by Forest Enterprise Wales – an agency of the Forestry Commission, which is Wales's single largest land 'owner'.

The Cefn Croes uplands are 16 miles away from FE Wales Headquarters in Aberystwyth, and are managed by FE. Part of the land is sublet to the Agricultural Development Advisory Service (ADAS), a private company formed in 1997 and formerly the Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food (MAFF) Experimental Farm, based at Pwllpeiran in Cwmystwyth, the village nearest to Cefn Croes. Subsequent to the approval decision for Cefn Croes, Cambrian Wind Energy, a sister company of the developers, the Renewable Development Company (RDC), has leased part of the land (2003).

The land was formerly part of Thomas Johnes' demesne or estate. He was an MP and revolutionary late 18th century landowner, experimental agriculturalist, forester and owner of the fabled Hafod, a magnificent house and picturesque landscape garden close to the Ystwyth river and within sight of Cefn Croes. The landscape of the Johnes' estate is a Grade 1 Historic Landscape, Welsh Historic Monuments Executive Agency of the Welsh Assembly (CADW). This designation takes into account the need to protect the historic integrity of the landscape within its wider context. It is also on the register of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS). The first ICOMOS principle is:

'The environment has an intrinsic value which outweighs its value as a tourism asset. Its enjoyment by future generations and its long term survival must not be prejudiced by short term considerations.'

In the 1970s the land was regarded by the Countryside Commission as of 'National Park' quality – an area made famous by George Borrow in his *Wild Wales* – home of red kites, in the shadow

of Plynlimon Mountain, the geographical, cultural and spiritual heart of Wales, in the 600 million years old Cambrian Mountains.

In 1995, Manweb, the regional electricity distributor, was seeking suitable sites for wind turbines under the Non Fossil Fuel Obligation (NFFO) contracts. John Morgan, the then FE director, was approached and agreed to pursue the 'expression of interest'. At the time FE Wales was experiencing serious financial problems due to a down-turn in market prices for its primary product: low grade soft wood poles, suitable mainly for pulp. Good quality timber from Scandinavia and Russia was flooding the market. The rental income, promised by the developers for 25–30 years usage of the land must have seemed very attractive at the time. There was however no public consultation at this juncture.

In 1997, further approaches were made by RDC and Renewable Energy Systems (RES) under NFFO 4. RDC's initial contract was for 38.4 MW and RES's for 30 MW – both of which individually would have been small enough for local planning decisions. However, under NFFO5 RDC gained a further 16.4 MW, which took their installed capacity over the 50 MW threshold therefore taking the decision away from the Local Planning Authority (LPA) and allowing the application to be decided by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) in London, under Section 36 of the 1989 Electricity Act. These initial proposals were allowed to proceed to planning and anemometers, which measure wind speeds were erected as a preliminary move towards site selection for the biggest wind power station in the UK, with the largest individual land-based turbines, on public land without any prior public consultation!

In early 2000, RDC commenced a series of exhibitions locally, to persuade the people living in the villages of Cwmystwyth, Ponterwyd and Devil's Bridge that the proposed wind power station was acceptable and would deliver community benefits. When people realised that it was to be on publicly owned FE managed land, there was an outcry of rage and disbelief. We started to question FE about their motives, and the legality of this major change of land use.

In March 2000, we tried to obtain details of the boundaries of the land, restrictions to the development, the lease with ADAS and the amount of money promised to FE by the developers. A simple request to FE headquarters in Aberystwyth for sight of the Forestry Act 1967, which governs forestry policy, or details of its full title and ISBN number, was answered thus: *'I am sorry, we do not have the information you require here at Victoria House. May I suggest you enquire at the local reference library.'* This negative response heralded the difficulties we would experience in extracting further information from FE and FC.

Details of estimated income from the turbine rental were not given, being deemed 'commercial in confidence'. This money will come from the developers to the National Assembly and will presumably be passed directly or indirectly to FE either as annual funding or to defray their

debts. Either way, it is income to a publicly funded body and one must question the reason for this reticence. Surely the amount could now be disclosed as the 106 agreement with the NAW/FE as co-signatory has now been signed, and no more developers are bidding for the contract? It is thought to be around £200,000 per annum. It will be interesting to try to identify the revenue in the annual accounts.

Requests for the Forestry Commission's annual report met with a promise to send one, but none arrived. A copy was finally sent from headquarters in Edinburgh following another request. The Forestry Acts were finally tracked down to the book stacks in the National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth, which also stocks some of the accounts and annual reports.

Forest policy is determined by the Forestry Acts of 1967 with additions in 1981 which gave greater powers to the Commissioners in respect of the sale of its holdings

'Part 1. 1.2 The commissioners shall be charged with the general duty of **promoting the interests of forestry, the development of afforestation, and the production and supply of timber and other forest products in Great Britain.**

Forest Dedication agreements:

5.1 The provisions of this section shall have an effect with a view to allowing land to be devoted to forestry by means of agreements to the effect that the land shall not, except with the previous consent in writing of the Commissioners, or in the case of dispute, under direction of the Minister be used otherwise than for the **growing of timber or other forest products.** (Editors emphasis.)

The author spent many fruitless and frustrating hours trying to find out whether the Commissioners in the late 1990s had given their '*consent in writing*' to the major change of land use which an industrial-size power station would involve, – or in the event of dissension and '*dispute*', were they overruled by a Minister? If so, which Minister and when? Letters were sent back and forth between Dr. Bob Farmer, Director of FE Wales in Aberystwyth, David Adamson, Area Land Agent FE Wales, Dr. David Bills, Director General of the Forestry Commission and Dr. Bob Macintosh, Chief Executive of Forest Enterprise in Edinburgh. An initial unhelpful silence led on to evasive answers, and referrals back to previous correspondence. Letters directly addressed to the Scottish contingent were referred back to Dr. Farmer for an answer. Surely these public servants, paid from the public purse, should be more accountable to taxpayers? We were asking important and specific questions relating to a major change in forestry policy, taking place in the absence of any enabling legislation or public consultation.

It seemed important to discover how the Forestry Commission had decided to proceed with industrialisation on a huge scale on its land – a development apparently far removed from its original remit, and the strapline on every official sheet of notepaper which proudly states:

'Protecting and expanding Britain's forests and woodlands and increasing their value to society and the environment.'

Requests were made to elicit the content of 'verbal briefings' given by FE Wales to Christine Gwyther, Minister for Rural Affairs at the National Assembly in 1999 and to see the minutes of meetings at which Cefn Croes was discussed. Nothing was forthcoming and the meetings were apparently un-minuted.

It seemed extraordinary that the Commissioners had allowed this to happen. On questioning whether there had been any dissension, or whether there had been complete agreement amongst them, we were eventually told that there was consensus, and that Government Ministers were also in agreement. No supporting documentary evidence was provided to prove this. Having been told that no changes were needed to the Forestry Act to enable this industrialisation one campaigner was referred to FE's Corporate Plan 1998-1999. Tucked away in FE's Corporate Plan 1998-1999, page 16 'Managing Non-Forest Assets':

'Non-forest assets are large areas of non-forest land generally managed for agriculture, landscape or nature conservation.'

'We seek to develop commercial opportunities, with regard to minerals, renewable energy projects, sporting licence and permission and where appropriate, the sale of land with development potential.'

This was the first time any reference in forestry documents had been made to '*renewable energy projects*'. In the context of forestry, most people would interpret '*renewable energy projects*' as relating to timber products e.g. fuel logs for wood burners, growing willows for short rotation coppice, using brash and forest waste for bio-mass or converting hard woods to high quality indigenous charcoal, to reduce imports.

This was certainly the interpretation of '*renewable energy projects*' in the Strategy Document for Forestry Policy from the National Assembly published in 2001. Simon Hewitt, FC's Chief Conservator for Wales was the author of 'Woodlands for Wales'. In a press statement to the 'Cambrian News' on March 27th 2003 he said: '*The Assembly's aims include providing environmental and social benefits to local communities, supporting learning and health, **developing renewable energy based on wood**, and maintaining and improving the physical and biological resources in Welsh forests.*' [Editor's emphasis.]

The Forestry Commission's Corporate Plan for Wales 1999-2000 does not make any reference to '*renewable energy projects*', the Cefn Croes proposals, or any other wind developments. It does refer to '*improving the appearance of our woodlands in the landscape*' and under 'Promoting Sustainable Forest Management' states '*we will seek to integrate a wide range of woodland objectives, some of which are complementary and some where tensions exist*'. Could this be a coded reference to wind turbines?

The FC is very sensitive about its image. It knew that there would be public uproar about using the land it held 'on behalf of the nation' for an industrial development. It made strenuous efforts to prevent this knowledge becoming widely known.

Dr. Farmer had admitted to Kaye Little that there had been no public consultation in advance of the planning application for Cefn Croes being submitted. FE and FC pay lip-service to public consultation in all their glossy publications. Dr. Farmer lamely put the onus of responsibility for public consultation onto the developers, thereby attempting to excuse FE for its failure to consult.

A golden opportunity for public consultation was missed during the stakeholders consultation prior to publication of 'Woodlands for Wales'. This was carried out in 5 locations throughout Wales. However, Ceredigion – the site chosen for a major departure from forestry policy was not selected for any consultation – the nearest venues were Carmarthen and Builth Wells – approximately 50 miles and 30 miles from Cefn Croes. Therefore, FE's plans could not be discussed locally. This consultation exercise would have been an ideal opportunity to discuss the use of forest lands for wind power stations and to ask representatives what they thought of the Cefn Croes proposals. FC organisers ducked out.

A ring of silence had been thrown around the decision by FC to allow the application to proceed through the planning process. Local employees were instructed not to voice personal opinions about the application. 'Good news' stories about FE's activities proliferated in the press, but letters from campaigners about what FE was doing behind the scenes were not published. Autumn Foliage Walks, tree planting by children, Community Woodlands (Tir Coed), extensions to the walks from the foothills of Plynlimon to the Severn and Wye valleys, new mountain bike trails, red kite feeding stations – all were promoted in the glossy pamphlets and via frequent press releases. The literature from FC and FE for public consumption (and its grant applications), stressed the value of conservation and landscape. Wind turbines were never mentioned and there weren't any to be seen rising above the trees or despoiling the skyline in any of the photographs.

When challenged, Mr Hewitt appeared unhappy about being associated with Cefn Croes '*.....something that FE have sought to distance themselves from whilst the normal democratic and licensing processes take their course*'. However this 'distance' did not prevent an FE employee from attempting to influence the decision of Ceredigion Council at the July 11th planning meeting.

David Adamson's letter of July 10th is here quoted in full:

'10th July 2001

FOR CEREDIGION PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING 11TH JULY 2001

Dear Sir

CANOLBARTH FOREST DISTRICT

CEFN CROES WINDFARM

Forest Enterprise has seen the Planning Officer's report and would like to make the following observations...

The Forest Enterprise was approached some years ago to allow a windfarm development to take place on its land at Cefn Croes.

In respect of Government policy it is the requirement of the Forest Enterprise to maximise the returns (Social and Environmental) that it can obtain from its estate. The Cefn Croes project in its opinion would afford the opportunity for significant environmental and habitat improvement and employment.

Forest Enterprise is committed to taking forward socially and environmentally beneficial projects such as (Nant yr Arian Mountain Biking Centre). The windfarm will help bring forward other similar projects.

The visual influence of the wind turbines will be mitigated. Forest Enterprise insisted the turbines and blades were positioned so as to minimise or totally negate their visual impact on the main arterial trunk route A44 through Mid Wales.

The Forest Enterprise supports the project and it believes there would be a positive output that would flow from a successful establishment of this development. While Forest Enterprise supports the proposal it realises that this is within the context of its own estate. It acknowledges the important role that County Council's Planning Committee has in the planning process in assessing the suitability of the scheme within the broader Ceredigion context.

Yours faithfully

CD ADAMSON MRICS

Area Land Agent'

This is a damning letter. It clearly shows that FE was not content to allow the *'normal democratic and licensing processes to take their course'*.

The National Assembly, which found itself owners of the land was disingenuous in claiming that it too was content to leave Cefn Croes's fate to *'the democratic system of controlling development'*. A letter from Carwyn Jones's secretary, Rural Affairs Department (NAW) stated:

'In general, it would be quite wrong for the Forestry Commission, as a Government Department managing some of the Assembly's land, to usurp the role of the Local Authority by deciding whether or not such developments should go ahead.'

Further 'In the case of Cefn Croes, the Commission on behalf of the NAW agreed to lease the land to the developers if, and only if, the development was granted planning permission. This does not mean that the Commission or the NA support the scheme.'

In effect the owners/managers of the land didn't want to assume responsibility for the decision. This placed an enormous weight of responsibility therefore on the LPA. Surely, the fact that the FC and NAW did not stop the proposals proceeding to planning indicates tacit approval?

Of further interest, especially in the light of the NAW's response to the DTI in October 2001—which came from the Steel and Energy Sector *'Responsibility for the planning system and the Assembly's views on the proposed wind farm lie with the Minister for the Environment, Sue Essex.'*

Again, there is an apparent attempt to deny responsibility by NAW's Rural Affairs Dept, which oversees forestry policy. The NAW's response to the DTI only fleetingly refers to **the land that it owns**.

'The National Assembly's Farming and Rural Conservation Agency has commented on behalf of National Assembly agricultural colleagues stating that such a proposal only affects very poor quality land grade 5. The proposal would therefore not significantly affect the long term national agricultural interest.'

There is no mention anywhere in this response to its ownership of the land, the Forestry Commission or forestry policy.

Further letters in late 2001 to Sir Peter Hutchinson, FC Chairman in Edinburgh, remained unanswered. After several reminders, a response came in Feb 2002 from Lord David Clark,

formerly a Labour MP, announcing that Peter Hutchinson had retired in Nov 2001 and he had taken over. The letter reads:

'Thank you for your letters of 5 and 25 January and 7 February to Sir Peter Hutchinson about the proposed wind farm development at Cefn Croes. Sir Peter retired in November and I have succeeded him. I apologise for the delay in replying and also for my acknowledgement postcard having passed through our system without being stamped.

I note that you have already corresponded with David Bills, our Director General, Simon Hewitt, our Chief Conservator for Wales and Bob Farmer, our Territorial Director for Wales and I am afraid there is little I can add to what they have already said.

You say, again, that the proposals appear to conflict with the Commission's remit under the terms of the 1967 Forestry Act. As confirmed to you by Bob Farmer in his letters of 25th September and 20th November 2000 and David Bills in his letter of 12th December 2000, the Forestry Act 1967 allows Commissioners and Ministers to manage land in various ways. There is no need to change the Act to accommodate a renewable energy development. Turning to your point about the 'Woodlands for Wales' strategy document. Simon Hewitt explained in his letter of 7 September 2001 that this is the Welsh Assembly Government's strategy for forestry in Wales, and this encompasses all forests and woodlands, not just those managed by Forest Enterprise.

You will know that, on 10 December 2001, Brian Wilson, the Minister for Energy gave consent for the windfarm to be built. I hope the above helps to clarify the position with regard to both the Forestry Act 1967 and the 'Woodlands for Wales' strategy document.'

*Yours sincerely
David Clark'*

Lord David Clark was incorrect in stating that Brian Wilson had given consent for the wind 'farm' to be built. What Mr Wilson had actually said was that he was 'minded' to approve. Only his SoS could formally give consent – which she did in May 2002. Is this another example of 'jumping the gun' and further confirmation that the decision had been made well in advance of the final announcement in order to comply with a pre-ordained policy?

On March 9th 2002, Ian Shaw, FE Wales new Area Land Agent wrote: *'there is no major policy change. Improvements in technology as an example, when in the public interest, have been happening for decades, and in turn will impact on the approach to the development'*. This is a fine example of 'civil-service speak' at its most pompous!

Just after the submission of the planning application for Cefn Croes to the LPA in July 2000 a press release from Clive Thomas, Canolbarth Forest District Manager, was distributed to the 'Western Mail', 'Cambrian News', Ceredigion Planning Department and the NAW. It claimed:

'Well planned windfarm proposals like Cefn Croes, which respect the site, habitat and local people, allow large landowners, such as FE Wales to manage its land asset for more than just growing timber.

'We have a significant track record in Canolbarth Forest District of delivering environmental and social programmes. There are wide ranging plans for improvements at recreation sites such as Nant yr Arian, Hafod and other Ystwyth valley sites which already offer a wide range of activities which are enjoyed by increasing numbers of visitors.

'Restoration plans for significant areas of endangered upland Oakwood and management plans for a large number of heritage sites hidden in the forests of Ceredigion have also been drawn up.

'And there are many more conservation projects which we are anxious to complete, with plans too for a new mountain biking centre which could potentially pump thousands of pounds into the local tourist economy. The funds from the Cefn Croes project will help us to push ahead with this program of work which can deliver tangible benefits for the area.'

The press release also referred to the annual income from the scheme, for 25 years to *'help fund local benefits'* (without specifying what these might be) and *'also enable the agency to apply for Objective 1 match funding'*. Objective 1 is European money for deprived areas. The press release promoted the idea that conservation projects, recreational projects, mountain biking centre, habitat restoration, are all dependent upon the rental income from wind power stations. It is known that money for the biking centre was already available, and this project was already proceeding! (It was completed in May 2003 with triumphant publicity and leaflets referring to the 'stunning scenery'.) We question the claims that the Cefn Croes proposals were *'well-planned'*, *'respect the site, habitat and local people'* and could *'potentially pump thousands of pounds into the local economy'*.

At the same time in July 2000, Canolbarth District's Conservation Officer, Michelle Bromley wrote a draft document titled *'Cefn Croes Wind Farm – Conservation and Heritage Management'*. This described *'environmental improvements to the Cefn Croes area that*

Canolbarth Forest District would wish to implement should the wind farm application be approved'.

There are worthy objectives to *'where possible, enhance the value of archaeological sites within the project area'* (not described). *'The wind farm represents a real opportunity to clear substantial areas which could be readily restored to heath, bog and flush with the associated benefit of notable species.'* It is not made clear why this could not be achieved by conifer felling alone which was already being done under the Mynydd-y-Ffynnon project. (See subheading below.)

Worries were expressed about disturbing the hydrology of the area (rare upland bog) and the black grouse population. It was hoped that there would be an increase *'in habitat for water voles and otters'*. Again, it is unclear why these considerations were dependent upon the erection of turbines, and would not result from timber clearance alone. The environmental impact of the massive generators and infrastructure of the power station was in effect dismissed. This document pre-dated the formal approval decision by nearly two years, strengthening our suspicions that behind the scenes the outcome was already known.

Another interesting Forestry document, which studiously ignores any reference to the Cefn Croes wind power station, is the Canolbarth District Forest Design Plan. Visits were made to the Nant-yr-Arian offices to view the sophisticated computer generated images, which show what the areas will look like after felling of conifer coupes, and replanting with deciduous trees, or allowing natural regeneration. Land form details are generated digitally and vegetation and other features are superimposed in colour.

However, the proposed tree felling to make way for the turbines, and the turbines themselves, were not included. Neither were the access roads, substation, pylons, overhead cables, and other paraphernalia of a large industrial site. Why was there no acknowledgement of the profound visual impact that this development will have on the large area of 1850 acres – 2.9 square miles (7.9 sq. km)?

A letter from Dr Farmer's office dated May 6th 2001:

'Although the draft revised Forestry Design Plan makes reference to the proposals at Cefn Croes, it was not prudent to incorporate these ahead of their consideration by the DTI, therefore I am able to confirm that the Forest Designer was briefed to develop a revised Forest Design Plan based entirely on forestry related issues.'

So the landscape designers were specifically instructed not to produce plans showing what the area will look like after felling and construction of the wind power station – only as it might

appear without the development. Why was FE spending its money on preparing The Conservation and Land Management document two years before planning permission had been granted yet refusing to acknowledge the presence of turbines on its Forest Design Plan? Was it because the Conservation and Land Management Plan was an internal document and the Forest Design Plan is for wider distribution outside FE?

Recent discussions with Terry O'Keefe in the Dolgellau office confirm that there is no intention to portray the turbines on the revised Forest Design Plan. During a telephone conversation with Kaye Little in July 2003, Mr O'Keefe said that FE was content to rely on the developer's photo montages.

It is interesting that, apart from Simon Hewitt, who in March 2003 was promoted to become Director for Forestry, Wales, all employees involved in the initial consultation and development process for Cefn Croes have left FE. John Morgan retired, and is now a strong opponent of the development, which is much larger than the initial proposals. Alec Dauncey, former District Manager, left to pursue a political career, and is now employed on a community woodland project in the Ystwyth Valley. His successor, Clive Thomas, was relocated to Devon. David Adamson, Area Land Agent, who appeared quite happy about the use of Forest Estate for any commercial purpose has retired. Canolbarth District, which was the headquarters for the administration of Cefn Croes has disappeared completely under reorganisation. It is now administered from Welshpool in Powys, where the new Territorial Land Agent is based. The Forest Design Plans are now in the charge of Terry O'Keefe in Dolgellau, and responsibility for the grid connection route is being dealt with in Abergavenny. It is as if Canolbarth and anyone responsible for Cefn Croes in the early days has been air-brushed from forestry history.

ADAS and the Mynydd-y-Ffynnon Project (Mountain of the Springs)

Part of the area of the Cefn Croes uplands sub-let to ADAS has been the site of an innovative agri-environmental scheme during 1997-2000 – the Mynydd-y-Ffynnon project – widely heralded as the way forward for hard-pressed hill farmers, and uplands management. It should be remembered that during this time the Cefn Croes proposals were proceeding to the planning stage. This scheme has been funded from the public purse, to the tune of about £500,000 from a variety of bodies – the largest single contributor being European 5b monies. The key objectives of the scheme were:-

‘...to develop an integrated system to manage the uplands of Wales for environmental benefits and enhanced landscape’ (Editors emphasis) [This was on the front cover of the Final Report dated January 2001]

The project was heralded as 'The Source of a New Vision for the Welsh Uplands' and also to develop a design for 'multiple use of the Welsh upland landscape through planned integration of woodlands and husbandry, with landscape and conservation value'.

It sought to address the damage to upland ecosystems caused by inappropriate afforestation, and 'production orientated agriculture' i.e. too many alien conifers and too many sheep. Any lay-person might think that the solutions would be simple: cut down the conifers and replant with native hardwoods or allow natural regeneration, and reduce stocking ratios – in particular exclude sheep where heather regeneration and tree re-growth is required. But Mynydd-y-Ffynnon had a big grant from Europe, and funding from other partners – CCW, the Development Board of Rural Wales (now the Welsh Development Agency), FE, FC, Prince of Wales Trust, RSPB, Royal Commission for Ancient and Historic Monuments Wales, University of Wales Lampeter – all public bodies or charities. Steering committees had to be formed, consultations take place, surveys undertaken and reports written.

The project was the responsibility of Dr. John Wildig, Chief Scientific Officer of ADAS. He was reluctant to enter into correspondence regarding the inconsistency of ADAS receiving public monies for a project that promoted landscape values, whilst its landlord, FE Wales, was planning to cover the area with mammoth machines. During a meeting at ADAS Pwllpeiran (spring 2003) he maintained that ADAS had known very little about the plans. This is inconceivable as FC's Simon Hewitt and Clive Thomas from FE had both been on the Steering Committee for the Mynydd-y-Ffynnon Project.

References were made to the economic value of increasing 'green' 'cultural' tourism to the area and attracting the 'higher income' 'more discerning' visitors. At a public meeting in Cwmystwyth, sharing a platform with Professor David Austin of Lampeter University, Dr. Wildig was asked to justify the destruction of the very landscape that they hoped would attract such people. He was visibly uncomfortable and would not answer the questions. He would have been fully conversant with the Cefn Croes proposals at an early stage and throughout the development process, but like many ADAS and FE employees preferred to adopt an ostrich mentality.

It aggrieved us that public and charitable funding was being used in support of numerous local tourism initiatives (e.g. Pentir Pumlumon, Headwaters of Wales) and through schemes like Mynydd-y-Ffynnon, which would be severely compromised by the erection of turbines. Our Member of the European Parliament (MEP), Eluned Morgan, was contacted in the hope that she could prevent this misuse of grants and questions were asked regarding the amount of funding, restrictions of same, monitoring of the project and other conditions. At one stage the accounts were reported as 'lost'! It appears that European funding is not administered very carefully. Eluned Morgan shares an office in Cardiff with fellow MEP Glenys Kinnock, whose

husband, Neil Kinnock, ex Labour party leader, is the European Commissioner. He was approached separately to try and enlist his support for the campaign against the turbines, as he was known to be fiercely opposed to wind turbines. He had in the past made speeches on the issue and in support of the Darmstadt manifesto (ref. Bibliography). He refused to become involved. Perhaps he has changed his mind and now loves wind turbines as they have proliferated in Wales and become larger.

The development of the UK's largest wind power station on Forestry Commission land sets a precedent and is obviously important for future development of this kind – not just in Wales, but throughout the rest of the UK where Forestry Commission have massive holdings of public land.

It remains unclear how this policy change was pushed through. Did it emanate from New Labour Ministers? Why were the meetings not minuted? Why the reliance on 'verbal briefings' – which of course cannot be checked and validated? Without minutes, any voices of disagreement from Commissioners unhappy with this industrialisation of forestry land are effectively silenced. Why has there been no public consultation – and is what the FC has done legal?

A repeat of the above saga is about to unfold regarding the Camddwr Trust proposals for 165 400 foot turbines on lands above the famed Cistercian monastery at Strata Florida, the scenic drover's road between Tregaron and Abergwesyn, the remote Soar y Mynydd chapel and Lake Brienne. Once again, FE Wales is giving its usual evasive answers as to its involvement in the scheme, and failing to provide provisional maps or any other information.

Maps have been seen from another source and it appears that more than half of the turbines will once again be on publicly owned Forestry Commission lands. Is it time for the Forestry Commission and Forest Enterprise to replace its famous twin tree logo of a 30 foot deciduous tree and 40 foot conifer with a two turbine logo, one at 300 feet (Cefn Croes) and one at 400 feet (Camddwr)? This suggestion was put to Mr Hewitt but he was not amused! In the absence of any publicly stated reservations we must assume that he is fully compliant with all of the changes which are taking place.

If the Forestry Commission concentrated on its core remit, redefined as growing 'the right trees, in the right place, for the right reasons', the extra trees would absorb far more CO₂ than wind turbine will ever save.

We always maintained that Cefn Croes was a test case, and if approved would set a precedent, and so it has proved.