

**FRIENDS OF THE EARTH**  
**And other “green” groups**

Friends of the Earth is the UK's most influential national environmental campaigning organisation. We should be allies, and for many years were, sharing common beliefs in environmental responsibility, non-intensive agriculture, local production for local consumption, recycling, animal welfare, integrated public transport and anti-globalisation.

But where the proliferation of massive land based wind turbines is concerned, we who oppose the machines in open countryside and on hilltops diverge sharply from Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace and the national Green Party. Many of us have been members of those organisations and some still are, but whereas we have moved on, their official policies are apparently stuck in an urban time-warp as they continue to trot out the mantra that 'wind energy is clean, green energy and will save the planet from global warming'. (This sentence recurs frequently in the letters of support to planning departments.)

The developers of wind power stations are delighted to have these unlikely bedfellows to promote their cause. It gives them credibility and respectability – they can sit back, calculate their profits in millions of pounds, euros or dollars whilst the naïve 'greens' do their public relations for them.

Part of the problem with groups like Friends of the Earth is that they appear not to understand the science of wind generation (see 'Science and Technology' chapter). The cosy language of 'windmills', 'windfarms', windparks' 'harvesting the wind' may be appropriate for small-scale, community owned, 'off grid' developments, but is inappropriate for the new generation of industrial wind power stations, with ever bigger turbines. General Electric's recent full-page advertisement in 'The Times' claims that the company builds the world's biggest wind turbine. Apparently this is a 5 MW turbine i.e. 3 times larger than those proposed for Cefn Croes. (See diagram Appendix 2)

A 327 foot rotating generator, (producing 1.5 megawatts intermittently) is as high as many English hills. It is a vertical, rotating, man-made structure totally alien and inappropriate in a static landscape of horizontal plateaux or gently rolling hills. This is an objective, not a subjective or emotive judgement and is recognised as such by the landscape architects in their assessments. Even FoE recognise in their Briefing Document 1995 that there is an '*unavoidable connection between the visibility and viability of wind energy*', i.e. the most lucrative wind turbines are sited on clearly visible hilltops.

The infrastructure of wind turbines – the enormously deep foundations excavated into the mountain tops, disturbing hydrology and habitats, then filled with toxic concrete and steel reinforcement, are there forever. They cannot be removed when the superstructures are dismantled. Nor can the interconnecting cable trenches, and the miles of access roads.

The developers, RDC, cynically call the impact of this industrial development ‘a *gentle footprint on the landscape*’. At a public meeting in the Red Kite Café in March 2000, when asked about the removal of the turbines in 25–30 years time, Mr Geraint Jewson said that it would be a simple matter: *‘just a ladder, a spanner and packet of grass seed’*.

Friends of the Earth, in their fierce opposition to nuclear power stations promote the myth that the choice for energy generation is either wind or nuclear. They ignore the need for wind turbines to have constant back-up from conventional power supplies, either fossil-fuel or nuclear generated. They have failed to grasp the science or choose to ignore it. They continue to peddle the lie that acceptance of wind power stations will enable the closure of nuclear power stations. Even the latest DTI Energy White Paper, published in February 2003, recognises that this is not the case.

Ceredigion Green Party was brave enough to accept the science, and reject large land-based wind turbines in inappropriate locations. However, at the recent National Green Party conference in Llandrindod Wells, in March 2003, their manifesto is still vague, and it seems that only Ceredigion, a county with more than its fair share of wind turbines, and already 50% self-sufficient in renewable energy, has exercised the necessary scientific rigour to understand. There persists a lot of woolly thinking about renewable energy targets, but little specific detail because the reality of meeting these targets is thousands of land-based wind turbines across the British Isles, and people do not like grappling with that unpleasant fact.

Quote from Green Party Manifesto 2001:

‘Energy demand should be cut to a level that can be met from renewable sources. A target of 25% of energy from renewables by 2010 should be set. To meet it, incentives should be provided to wind, solar, biomass, small-scale hydro and biogas generation schemes.’

The 2002 Green Party document ‘Moving to Renewable Energy Sources in an energy efficient London’ dodges the issue. Page 5: ‘The role that renewable energy and nuclear energy have to play in reaching the CO2 reduction targets is a contentious debate and one that has yet to be resolved.’

You bet!

Correspondence with FoE on their current wind policies produced copies of ‘Developing Wind Energy for the UK 1990’ showing a photograph of a 330 kilowatt Californian machine (the

turbines to be used at Cefn Croes are 1.5 megawatts – more than 4 times larger!) The preface is illuminating, and even though written 13 years ago demonstrates the developing psychology for overcoming the natural resistance to turbines.

The preface is quoted here in full:

‘Friends of the Earth (FoE) has had a sustained campaign to promote wind energy in the UK, pressing for an energy policy which takes full account of the significant relative environmental benefits of wind energy compared to the problems associated with conventional power sources (principally coal and nuclear). FoE has become increasingly worried by the potential threat to the full development of wind energy of a mismanaged introduction of wind energy to the UK. This danger is in sharp relief to the successful developments that have taken place abroad and is therefore an issue which should be addressed immediately. FoE therefore commissioned Marcus Rand\* of the *Energy and Environment Research Unit*, at the Open University, to produce a report which examines the various problems of wind energy (in terms of site assessment, site impact and in terms of planning procedure and community involvement) and which sets out methodologies which are available to ameliorate them.

The various concerns relating to the physical consequences of installing large numbers of wind turbines into landscape are discussed. Visual intrusion, noise, electromagnetic interference, safety and adverse impacts on wild-life are also studied. Where opposition has occurred the report highlights the determining factors. The report draws heavily on experience obtained from overseas developments and transposes these to the situation which exists in the UK.

The overall emphasis of the report focuses on the assertion that for wind energy to be utilised in the UK, windfarms can and should be developed sensitively and efficiently. This will more readily be achieved by highlighting where conflicts are likely to occur and through the subsequent minimisation of the environmental and community impacts.

It will help local communities and local planners assess proposed projects and offer means of transforming a potentially disliked intrusion into a positive environmental development.

The report is therefore intended for all those involved with the development of wind energy:

- National policy makers
- Windfarm developers
- Local planners
- National and local interest groups (such as environmental and amenity groups)
- Local communities where windfarms are proposed.’

\*Marcus Rand is now the Chief Executive of the British Wind Energy Association.

Although old, much of the document contains thoughtful statements and recognises that the *'technology is not completely environmentally benign, but only relatively environmentally benign'*. Many references are made to the success of wind generation in California, but 13 years down the line, we know that this is a story of failure, not success.

'Most of the best areas for wind energy, due to the high mean annual wind speeds, correlate with areas which have been designated over the last 40 years for their landscape and conservation value. As a consequence, there exists a conflict of interests between utilising of land for wind energy and preservation of scenic and conservation value of the countryside.'

In the section on site impact *'assuming medium and large sized turbines, planners estimate that between 10,000 and 20,000 turbines would be required to provide between 10% and 20% of electricity needs'*. At present throughout the UK we have 1,000 turbines.

Although glossed over by the developers, the British Wind Energy Association (BWEA), and other wind energy supporters, the visual impact of wind turbines is *'the most critical issue now facing the wind industry'*. This statement from Thayer and Hansen, landscape architects (Ref *'Wind on the Land'* 1988), remains as true today as it was 15 years ago.

The 1995 FoE *'Special Briefing on Wind Power'* starts off mildly enough: *'Many of the claims against wind energy are however exaggerated or untrue'*. It then quotes selectively from the House of Commons Welsh Affairs Select Committee 1994, and viciously attacks Country Guardian: *'inaccuracies and misrepresentations'*, the Countryside Council for Wales: *'casual approach'*, *'inaccuracies in their evidence'* and the Campaign for the Protection of Rural Wales (CPRW): *'prepared to base its policy on such exaggeration and misinformation'*.

One of CPRW's disputed claims was the need for a 'spinning reserve' of electricity from conventional sources to the turbines in order to keep them on standby. This is now proven, and recognised by the Royal Academy of Engineering and the Institution of Electrical Engineers in acknowledging wind power's unreliability and need for back-up plant. The IEE *'believes this to be impractical and uneconomic in its own right'*.

CPRW was also criticised for claiming that at least 40,000 turbines would be needed. This was however, correct based on 250kw turbines, which was the average size in 1994. On FoE's own calculation, 15,000 650 KW or 20,000 500 KW machines would be needed - a reminder that the quotation of turbine numbers is only valid if generating capacity is made clear. The new generation of even larger turbines obviously reduce the number needed. Bigger = fewer or smaller = more , that is the equation.

Quote from CPRW's 'Synopsis of the Committee Report' paragraph 13;

'A few days before the Welsh Affairs Select Committee agreed to its report for publication, I wrote to its chairman, Gareth Wardell, expressing my hope that the report would acknowledge that FoE's figures equates [sic] reasonably with that in para 26.8.2 of our memorandum in which we stated that it would require between 30,000 and 40,000 300kw machines to meet 10% of Britain's electricity demand. However my letter (although sent first class) was rather mysteriously and conveniently only received after the Committee had agreed its report. It is further evidence, to my mind, that the Committee was determined to kick the countryside bodies come-what-may, and was not willing to let the true facts get in the way. The contrast between the way the Committee deals with the exaggerations of wind power developers, and Friends of the Earth, both technical experts in this field, and the way they attack our figures, which we did not knowingly exaggerate, could not be greater.'

It appears clear from this that, by 1994, the developers were already in league with FoE, and battle lines against conservation bodies drawn.

Not referred to in the FoE briefing was the Committee statement: '*No-one should imagine that wind energy is a great creator of jobs in a locality: it just is not*'. And from a joint 1988 FoE/Council for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) report: '*investment in energy conservation is between 3 & 4 times as effective in cutting emissions than investing in renewables*'.

The Committee was surprised that FoE had not even read the comprehensive landscape study, produced for Dyfed County Council by Christopher Blandford in 1992, into the impacts of wind turbines on the landscape. (This report is still available from Ceredigion Council Planning Office, Aberaeron at £3 per copy).

The House of Commons Welsh Affairs Select Committee report also states: '*we would be concerned if wind turbine towers became significantly taller than at present, and we do not see that there is any reason for the foreseeable future that they should*'. How wrong they were! In 1994, average turbine size, as at Bryn Titli near Rhayader in Powys was 45 metres base to blade-tip. The Cefn Croes turbines will be 100 metres base to blade-tip, and the next generation proposed for the Cambrian Mountains between Strata Florida and Llyn Brianne by the Camddwr Trust, in excess of 120 metres ie 400 foot.

In 1995 FoE produced 'Planning for Wind Power – Guidelines for Project Developers and Local Planners'. In 2001 a campaigner asked for an updated copy of this, given the rapidly evolving situation and greatly increased number of turbines. She received the same 1995 Guidelines – not very impressive for Britain's leading environmental charity. A letter from Charles Secrett – Director – set out FoE's current policy more clearly: 20% of electricity from

renewable energy sources by 2010 – mostly from wind; *‘the UK’s greatest, readily available and economically achievable energy resource’*. Just because a resource is ‘economically achievable’ is not an environmentally sound reason for accepting it, but rather a developer’s justification.

He continues: *‘On-shore wind farms in suitable locations, suitably approved and supported by local communities will also play a necessary and welcome supply role.’*

His letter then refers to the BWEA’s wind energy/demand study – which calculated additional capacity in Wales for 290 MW of installed capacity. FoE Cymru’s targets would be the same as the BWEA’s recommendations.

Mr Secrett’s letter contained a serious misunderstanding about the Landscape Designations contravened by the Cefn Croes proposals. He mixed up SPAs (Special Protection Area – an environmental designation) with SLAs (Special Landscape Area – a landscape designation). He also wrongly quoted the voting figures of the local Community Councils, saying they were *‘marginally against’* at 4:3. It was in fact 5:3 against. (This is like Dai Lloyd Evans’s dismissal of the Community Council votes as being ‘divided’.) So when is a majority not a majority? Obviously when it goes against what you want!!!

FoE’s current thinking can be found in its response to the 2002 Consultation Review on Energy Policy from the Cabinet Office Performance and Innovation Unit (PIU). Of interest;

‘Point 1: Set new aspirational target for proportion of electricity to be generated by renewables by 2020. (‘Aspirations’ were included in the final Energy White Paper, replacing ‘targets’.)

Point 14: Introduction of a “qualified presumption in favour” i.e. a supportive stance, in planning policy guidance on renewables – PPG 22 (i.e. weaken the planning regulations)

Point 17: “Announce new measures to overcome technological issues cited by the MOD in their opposition to wind farms”

One wonders if this response was in fact written for FoE by the BWEA.

In the section on renewables, it does concede that *‘wind poses problems for security of supply due to intermittency.’* It is however mistaken in saying that peak electricity demand occurs in winter, when the ‘weather is windiest’. Very prolonged cold spells are due to anticyclones with high pressure, when there is no wind, and the temperature plummets on cold, clear, windless days and with hard night frosts.

FoE developed a scenario for meeting reductions in CO<sub>2</sub> emission targets and phasing out nuclear power: this relies on 950 MW of new wind capacity per annum, to a point in 2020

where it would supply 48 terawatt hours. I.e. 18,265 MW of additional wind capacity. It does not specify how this would be done, or where, or the number or size of the turbines.

Cefn Croes will provide an installed capacity of 58.4 MW from 39 1.5 MW turbines. Therefore FoE's wind energy targets for 2020 could only be met by the equivalent of more than 300 developments the size of Cefn Croes. 12,000 more huge turbines. No wonder FoE avoids spelling it out!

It should be pointed out that the Energy White Paper also avoids specifics such as numbers of turbines and locations. Why not if, as they maintain, the public are in favour?

Since New Labour came to power in 1997, FoE have become Mr Blair's favoured environmental advisors. Jonathan Porritt heads up the Sustainability Commission and is the Government's chosen advisor on 'green' matters. FoE Cymru staff members are at the heart of the NAW, being formal consultees and advisors on matters of sustainability and energy policy.

FoE Cymru's most high profile staff member is their energy spokesperson Neil Crumpton. He is the author of the May 2002 Briefing 'Stop Global Warming: Why you should say Yes to Renewable Energy' in response to the NAW Consultation Document from the Economic Development Committee in April 2002. Annex E shows that he was a member of the Reference Group. (NB No independent landscape protection group was included.) Mr Crumpton claims '*some technologies such as wind turbines can generate electricity more cheaply than coal or even gas now, and even more so in the coming years*'. This is simply untrue. (See Science chapter)

Neil Crumpton exhorted FoE members to lobby their AMs for a target of 30% of Welsh electricity demand from renewables by 2010, by returning a mass mailing of pre-printed postcards.

Under the heading 'How 30% of Welsh Electricity demand could be generated by Renewables by 2010' he concedes a breakdown of 15% from onshore turbines and 15% from offshore. He therefore accepts that 'renewables' are in effect 'wind developments' and dismisses the contribution which other less mature renewable technologies could make. He then details the number of large turbines needed for a 7% Welsh target but avoids mentioning how many would be needed a 30% target. Why? There is a presumption that Cefn Croes (which had not been given formal approval at that stage) and the Camddwr Trust proposals (not yet submitted) would proceed. Did Neil Crumpton know something that we were not privy to?

Friends of the Earth Cymru enjoy close links to the Plaid Cymru politicians, Cynog Dafis and the late Phil Williams, most closely associated with the promotion of land-based turbines in Wales. Being based in Cardiff, it is easy for FoE Cymru to exercise influence at the National Assembly, and NAW, wanting to be seen to emphasise its 'green' credentials, actively courts FoE's opinions on a range of matters, without apparently questioning FoE figures.

On a national level FoE is in close contact with the BWEA, and indeed, on occasions appears to act as their mouth-piece. Neil Crumpton regularly appears on public platforms in the company of wind developers, promoting developments.

However, there is some dissension between National FoE and Friends of the Earth Cymru. In a Western Mail article dated February 25<sup>th</sup> 2002 it was reported that several of the Welsh groups that are part of the Friends of the Earth Cymru are likely to be banned as it was '*understood to follow concern among the upper echelons of what is probably Britain's premier environmental campaigning organisation about the activity of some of the local groups.*'

The relationship will not be helped by the recent letters by Neil Crumpton and Cynog Dafis in the Autumn 2002 issue of the prestigious 'Cambria' magazine.

Cynog Dafis wrote:

*'All enlightened Welsh people should support Friends of the Earth Cymru's campaign for 30% of Welsh electricity to be from renewables by 2010. ....It cannot be achieved without the growth of wind energy.'*

Neil Crumpton's long letter included:

*'A British Wind Energy Association resource study (December 2000) using DTI projections estimated that, UK wide the equivalent of an additional 3,800 onshore turbines averaging 1MW rating plus the 850 already constructed would be needed to help meet 2010 renewable targets and Kyoto commitments.'*

These letters provoked a furious and concerted outburst to the letters page against their joint attack on the Welsh landscape, Welsh tourism, and patriotism. In the Winter 2002 issue of Cambria, the editor wrote:

*'The overwhelming response is against ...turbines across the horizon of the Cambrian Mountains, with virtually no correspondence in support.... Many of the letters concentrate on the scientific and economic aspects of wind power on a global scale, quite apart from the views of those who are appalled at the future destruction of the landscape and the effects this will*

*have on our environment – as much on the tourism and recreation industry..’*

A few quotes from a few of the ten letters published:

Dr John Etherington, formerly Reader of Ecology at the University of Wales. ‘...../ *am appalled that we are rushing into this damaging course of action which will achieve nothing but enrich private pockets.’*

Cllr Ioan Richard: *‘The USA (in particular California) and Denmark, are abandoning Wind Power just as the likes of Cynog Dafis, Neil Crumpton, Peter Hain and others seek to destroy our country totally with a plague of inefficient wind turbines.’*

Mark Duchamp: *‘I am surprised and disappointed, that Wales is not seizing the opportunity to differentiate itself from England. Wind turbine-free areas will attract many tourists in a world degraded by visual pollution.’*

Ken Jones: *‘There is still much wild and magnificent country in mid Wales, which urgently needs to be protected as part of the national heritage, by designation as the Cambrian Mountains National Park.’*

Ivor R Russell FRICS, FCIArb, FFB: *‘Wind turbines on land are unnecessary, comparatively less profitable, divisive of communities and an affront to civilised sensibilities.’*

Lyn Jenkins: *‘Visitors don’t come to Wales for the weather, but, for the beautiful, gloriously natural land and seascapes. ....They do not come to view gigantic, modernistic, whirling monstrosities up to 400 ft high and visible from a radius of 25 miles.’*

The above attacks on the views of Neil Crumpton and Cynog Dafis, demonstrate that both are discrediting Friends of the Earth and Plaid Cymru and bringing these organisations into disrepute. Between January and March 2002 letters from Kaye Little to Charles Secrett, current Friends of the Earth Director, drew his attention to the activities of Neil Crumpton, acting as a ‘Trojan Horse’ in order to give credibility to the developers claims.

Armchair urban-based environmentalists frequently appear to have a limited understanding relating to country matters, and an even scantier appreciation of fine landscape. Like the developers, they slip into the dangerous trap of dismissing anyone with legitimate concerns for the safe-guarding of their local area and cherished landscapes as ‘NIMBYs’. At best this is

lazy, at worst it seriously underestimates the swelling tide of opposition from people with legitimate concerns.

It is time for FoE to revisit their wind planning guidelines, and get away from the fanaticism of their more extreme supporters for land-based wind turbines. Otherwise, like the RSPB they will find that they are losing credibility and membership subscriptions.

A letter in the Western Mail on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2001 from Alun John Richards sums it up:

*'The effrontery of the spokesperson for Friends of the Earth in referring to Cefn Croes as being 'within FoE guidelines' is past belief as is his seeking to justify their destructive policies by saying that they only want 190 to 440 more turbines in Wales.*

*This assertion is reminiscent of the murderer's plea for clemency on the grounds that his victim was only a small man. The argument that hundreds or even thousands of windmills can obviate the need for nuclear or indeed any other kind of power is totally spurious.*

***An otherwise responsible environmental body, such as FoE, should be promoting policies which benefit the environment, not be allowing itself to be used as a stalking horse by wind developers whose commitment to the environment is as best questionable.'***

[Editor's emphasis].