SUBMISSION FROM THE MONREITH AND DISTRICT ACTION GROUP

TARGETS

- Not only are the targets unrealistic but the proliferation of both on-shore and offshore wind farms are completely destroying the countryside and seascapes which are so valuable to Scotland, not only in the current economic climate, but for the future.
- Dumfries and Galloway relies very much on tourism and in Wigtownshire, it is the third largest employer, yet this County is bearing the brunt of the Governments drive towards green energy with no thought being given to what will happen when the tourists stop coming because of the blight of wind farms.
- The local planning authority is being continually overridden by the Scottish Government when refusals of wind farm applications are allowed on appeal, and local councillors feel that they are powerless to protect the beauty of the countryside in the face of a dogmatic approach from central government.
- Not only are the number of wind farms damaging to both tourists and the local population, but the offshore wind farm currently proposed for the Solway Firth will without question ruin the livelihood of a number of fishermen. The Danish company currently investigating the site has said that compensation will be paid. We have serious doubts as to whether that would ever happen based on the previous experience of others. People who have spent their whole life fishing these waters do not want compensation, they want to be able to continue to fish.
- Not only will the Solway proposals have a devastating effect on residents, fishermen and tourists, but that area covers one of the major cruising routes between the English harbours in the North West, the Isle of Man, Ireland and Scotland. The wind farm proposed would not only seriously affect the leisure activities of recreational sailors, sea anglers and others, but would result in longer journey times for the many commercial vessels which use these waters which would lead to an increase in fuel costs and increased carbon emissions.

The Committee should be aware that, in communities across Scotland, there is an increasing backlash against the Scottish Government in areas where wind farms are proliferating and proposals for huge off shore wind farms are being considered. The number of wind farm action groups is increasing as a result, but the only way in which individuals can make their views known is by writing to their MSP’s, local councils and – ultimately – through the ballot box. The Scottish Government is not taking people with them in their search for green energy and they will do so at their peril. Far more needs to be done to develop other forms of power generation which do not destroy the environment you are seeking to protect.

CHALLENGES

- Much more needs to be done to develop less intrusive forms of generation and to build an industry in Scotland which can not only produce the technology and equipment for use here but can also export that technology and equipment to other countries. At present, we seem to have a situation
where it is foreign companies and investors who are benefiting from destroying the beauty of Scotland whilst our Government appears blind to the damage which they are doing to the quality of the environment, local employment and missed opportunities.

PLANNING AND CONSENTS

- As noted above, there are many instances locally where the Council has refused a wind turbine application only to have it overturned by the Scottish Government on appeal. This cannot be right, local authorities must surely be able to draw up their own development plans and as an integral part, formulate guidelines for the siting of wind turbines within their respective areas.

NB  The Monreith and District Action Group made a detailed submission to Marine Scotland on the 21st September 2010 in commenting on their draft plan for Offshore Wind Energy in Scottish Territorial Waters. The submissions made then are particularly applicable to the current call for evidence.

Eric Lucas, Secretary
Monreith and District Action Group
24 February 2012