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Danish wind boss admits:

Wind-power hasn't cut Denmark's CO₂ emissions

Wind-power does almost nothing to cut emissions of CO₂ because its output is so unpredictable. This makes its fossil-fuel backup highly inefficient and tends to offset the savings as it makes.

New Labour's 'Renewables Obligations' subsidy schemes do not oblige electricity suppliers to measure cuts in CO₂ emissions. If anyone tried, the game would be up.

While our critics simply ignore this argument, it recently received a welcome boost. *VoS News* found on the internet a presentation by a senior manager at Elsam, Western Denmark's biggest electricity generator. Made at a Copenhagen energy conference in May, it lists what it calls

'challenges' for the Danish energy system. Two of these translate as follows:

- The forced development of wind turbines in Denmark raises the demand for subsidy in øre/kWh;
- The increased development of wind turbines does not reduce Danish CO₂ emissions.

The argument is simple. Denmark, unable to absorb most of its wind output, exports over 80 per cent of it. By definition, this does not cut Danish emissions.

Much of it goes to Scandinavian suppliers (with six per cent losses *en route*) to replace genuinely clean hydro power or Swedish nuclear. So it doesn't cut emissions there either.

Whilst Danish wind-power generators are heavily subsidised, buyers from other countries pay the going rate and sometimes even charge for taking it.

Buying electricity at giveaway prices allows generators to turn their hydro off, save water – and wait for the wind to drop so that they can sell the hydro at better prices.

To Denmark, even.

It's high time to scotch the myth that 20 per cent of Danish electricity consumption comes from wind power.

It doesn't. West Denmark generates *the equivalent* of about 20 per cent of its *consumption* from wind power – and tries to find someone else, somewhere else, to buy it.

'Embrace the Revolution' or Swallow the Spin?

GOVERNMENT AND the wind industry, rattled because anti-wind arguments are proving difficult to dismiss, are set fair to spend huge sums on publicity to boost wind-power's flagging image.

- The DTI has awarded a £2 million contract to PR giant Porter Novelli to 'educate planners'.
- An unconfirmed source claims that the British Wind Energy Association (BWEA) has budgeted up to £20 million to 'turn things round'.

This seems a lot to spend on the likes of us but it is the BWEA's business to ensure that an increasingly discredited technology retains its lucrative stranglehold.

OFGEM expects the industry to issue over 13.5 million Renewables Obligations Certificates this year. Most will have netted over £30 each for wind-power generators with many later traded by suppliers at about £45.

So, no surprise when the BWEA launched an internet campaign, *Embrace the Revolution*, in September: wind power is now backed by a host of celebrities (although there's no sign yet of Neil and Christine Hamilton). Nor, more seriously, are there any power engineers.

The BWEA's *Myths and Facts of Wind Energy* couches its 'facts' in virtually meaningless prose but misquotes the anti-wind case.

Central to the launch was a phone 'survey' of 1,000 people. Details of the questions and responses are not publicly available. (If 1,000 people are chosen at random across the UK, about 90 would live in Scotland.)

Porter Novelli – 'What we do'

'Whether called to manage a short-term crisis or long-term regulatory or legislative issues, our public affairs practice is able to respond to clients' needs no matter where they may arise in the world.'

Although 71 per cent apparently 'agree wind farms are necessary so that we can produce renewable energy to help us meet current and future energy needs in the UK,' without a scrap of data apart from a press release, we are entitled to be sceptical.

For the claim '70 per cent would support the development of a wind farm in their area' another poll is cited – ICM for Greenpeace and another random sample of 1,000 from across the UK.

The next *VoS News* will examine in more detail the inappropriate use of polls in the wind war.

Letters + Letters + Letters + Letters + Letters

Renewables aspirations – and moving targets

TRADITIONALLY, Scotland has been an exporter of electricity to other parts of the UK.

To my mind, the Scottish Executive hasn't a clue as to what figure they refer to when they seek to achieve 18 per cent renewable generation by 2010 and 40 per cent by 2020. Does it mean installed capacity, Scottish demand only or the total power generated in Scotland? It has yet to answer questions I have put to them on these basic points.

I believe that overall energy needs for the UK are best dealt with by Westminster but, in the light of Scotland's important position in electricity generation, there must be input from the Executive, given the implications for local government, tourism, economic development etc.

I fully accept the desirability of developing new forms of generation but we have been attempting to harness wave and tidal power for years without success.

False targets hardly help other than to force the use of renewable technologies already available, however undesirable or financially unattractive. This effectively means wind-power since hydro sources, of which I am a real fan, have been all-but-exploited to the full in Scotland.

The national government's duty is to ensure that generation supplies are guaranteed for the future. They have not secured this objective and the renewable targets jeopardise future requirements.

I acknowledge that energy conservation is all-important but this has been recognised for years by industry in particular on cost if not environmental grounds. On the domestic front, people have been aware of means of improving energy efficiency in their homes but in the main simply add to consumption by purchasing all kinds of power-consuming devices.

Hopefully, renewable energy generation methods will be developed in the longer term to meet the nation's needs but, if CO₂ emission requirements are to be met, practical steps have to be taken now to secure future supply without destroying our landscape or our quality of life.

To that extent I welcome Tony Blair's realisation that there is an urgent need to review the nuclear option. The industry in Scotland and the UK has proved to be reliable, safe and secure. The industry's safety record far exceeds that of other generation sources. If future generations are not to be disadvantaged we must take decisions now – which does not mean stopping the search to find better means of energy production in the future.

Phil Gallie MSP

VoS News Editorial Comment

PHIL GALLIE (Conservative list MSP for Southern Scotland) makes a valid point when he asks whether the Executive's renewables 'targets' mean anything.

Ever since VoS came across the 18%/2010 target, it has tried to find out what it meant. Or what the 40 per cent target or the gung ho SNP call for a fifty per cent target are about. Let's face it: no-one knows. Or seems bothered.

So we took a peek at Gallie's efforts to make sense of it all. In November 2003, he asked energy minister Lewis MacDonald a simple question. (Gallie used to be manager of a power station – hence the witty riposte.)

Phil Gallie: Will the Minister clarify whether the 18 percent target was set on the basis of sent-out megawatts or of the capacity of units that could be generated? If it is based on the latter, on what load factors has the Executive based its targets?

Lewis Macdonald: If Phil Gallie was able to predict what the power requirements of the power companies would be in seven days time, he would be a very popular man, especially with the power companies. They might even give him his old job back. We have not attempted to predict that, we have attempted to predict where we think electricity generation requirements will go and to encourage electricity companies to apply to provide the necessary share of the capacity that is set out in our targets.

Or, as we say in the real world, 'Sorry, pal, not a clue'.

The daft numbers roadshow started when the Executive published *Scotland's Renewable Resource* in 2001.

Although the Department of Energy, Transport and Lifelong Learning was responsible for renewable energy, it was the Minister for Environment and Rural Affairs, Ross Finnie, who published the August 2002 consultation paper, *Scotland's Renewable Energy Potential – Beyond 2010*.

And he it was who responded to comments early in 2003 in *Securing a Renewable Future – Scotland's Renewable Energy*. OK so far? In it, he said:

The Executive has already set a target for electricity generated within Scotland by renewable means. The Scottish target is 18% by 2010, which most of the respondents ... believe will be met.

Now we're clear – it's electricity *generated*, including exports. Huh – that's what you think. Turn the page:

Scotland should aspire to generate 40% of its electricity from renewable sources by 2020.

While the UK's 'renewables' target is a clear percentage of consumption from approved sources, Scotland is 'to aspire to 40 per cent of its (?) total generation'.

But surely that means that 'renewable' electricity exported from Scotland will go not only to meet Scotland's *generation* target but the UK's *consumption* target too?

Had Finnie found an answer to New Labour's target fetish? Make your product meet two targets at once! Renewable – and recyclable! Move over, Sir Humphrey.

Who knows? Little has been heard about energy from Finnie since. 'Renewables' are now safely with the ever-dependable Deputy Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning.

There are several pictures in this issue but, as we distribute by e-mail (which limits file size), their resolution is low. To download a high-quality copy, visit www.viewsofscotland.org (~1.5MB). For a top quality version on CD (~50MB, e.g. for printing and circulating to others) please contact the VIEWS OF SCOTLAND office.

+ Letters + Letters +

Has VisitScotland's report on tourism and wind power been buried?

BACK IN MAY 2002, I petitioned Holyrood's Petitions Committee on 'Keep North Argyll Free of Wind Farms' and I raised the issue of tourism.

As a result, the committee asked the Scottish Executive, Argyll and Bute Council and VisitScotland to comment. One committee member also asked VisitScotland to investigate the impact of wind power on tourism as a matter of national importance.

In reply, VisitScotland said that it had 'decided to commission research into wind farms and tourism', explaining that its study would consider the anticipated pace, scale and location of wind power developments, the adequacy of the relevant planning guidelines and the views of the tourism industry towards wind developments.

It undertook to examine how wind turbines would affect visitors' decisions to visit not only those areas with wind-power sites but Scotland in general.

It promised to study the impact on tourism in countries geographically similar to Scotland but where wind power was more widespread and also to look at where it had been rejected on landscape or tourism grounds.

It published a thorough report later that year. Given the important issues it raised, I have often wondered why it was never widely publicised but ended up in an obscure corner of a website aimed at tourism operators rather than being in VisitScotland's public forum.

You can obtain the report from:

<http://www.scotexchange.net/knownyourmarket/kym-windfarm-report.htm>.

Views of Scotland published a detailed analysis of the report called Turbines and Tourism Jobs as VoS Brief No 3, December 2003. It is (readily) available in PDF from www.viewsofscotland.org

You might like to know that I recently discovered from a very reliable source that VisitScotland was explicitly instructed – by someone in a 'very high' position – to 'de-emphasise' it on its web-site.

This has seemingly caused considerable anger within VisitScotland. I intend to find out more.

Could this be the explanation for the report's low profile? Maybe if anyone says too much they will be told to move their head office to Tobermory.

Marilyn Henderson

Secretary, Avich & Kilchrenan Community Council

The Views of Scotland Office

VIEWS OF SCOTLAND'S OFFICE hours are Monday to Thursday in the afternoons.

While, in practice, calls are received all day (and early evenings) every day, we do ask that you try to phone 01357 440462 during the above times.

Islanders face an environmental crisis

Planning applications are expected imminently for one or more of the mammoth wind-power sites mooted for Lewis, most probably the 240-turbine project from AMEC and British Energy, those twin giants of Europe's nuclear establishment.

The sheer scale of this, largest of the five sites planned for the island, is intimidating. It takes an hour to drive from one end of the site to the other.

It would lie on some of the finest unspoilt – and protected – peatland in the world.

For any but the irredeemably philistine, these are stunning, literally breath-taking, expanses of wild land, truly the 'tropical rainforest' of northern Europe.

From the ecological perspective, they are even more important as a carbon sink. And the rest of the island is of the same standard.

To visit Lewis is, for lovers of the landscape, truly to glimpse the gates of Paradise. But it might soon go for ever.

Politicians and the media tend to portray the drive to make Lewis the 'world's largest wind farm' as a milestone in the drive for 'clean' or 'green' energy bringing with it the prospect of prosperity to a hard-pressed, if not downright oppressed, society.

The reality is different. It's a squalid drive to divide local communities and aggressively stifle opposition so that multi-nationals can enjoy a New Labour-inspired subsidies bonanza regardless of its social and environmental cost.

Invited by campaigners, VoS News visited Lewis last month. The community, far from being desperate for charity from multi-nationals, is a well-educated and modestly prosperous society, proud of its way of life but cultured and outward-looking.

It is genuinely concerned that this way of life and the environment which supports it are seriously at risk.

These concerns are belittled by a dismissive political establishment.

All the way from its New Labour right through its political advisors ('Friends' of the Earth) and its allies the Lib-Dems to the SNP and the Scottish Socialist Party, it has treated with disdain any who dare to question its new, uncritical attitude to these arrogant multi-nationals.

A recent report from Friends of the Earth said that:

'AMEC is a multinational construction company that ... continues to be involved in ... controversial and destructive projects that threaten its reputation. [It] is subject to campaigns ... because of its activities in the UK, North America, South America and Africa.'

Quite. It is high time we abandoned the *idée fixe* that persists in believing in the ability of windmills to change the world's climate and listened to some of the communities which will suffer the results of this absurd complacency.

This issue of our newsletter, the first of two produced in collaboration with islanders, presents their case.

It has been a privilege and a delight to work with them. We hope you will pay them heed.

- More information on the campaign to defend the Isle of Lewis can be found at <http://mwtlewis.org.uk/>

The feeling of wilderness . . .



The large wind-power sites planned for the Lewis moor would result not only in the physical loss of large areas of moorland but the loss of tranquillity and the feeling of wilderness of the rest.

People may not realize that an intrinsic part of the culture of Lewis could also be lost.

Lewis villages stretch inland from the coast through croftland, the peat-cutting areas and out to moorland grazings.

You can be in the next village a quarter of a mile along the coast road – but still in your own village five miles out on the moor.

Nowadays, people live on the coast but, in the past, before the peat reached its present extent, it is recorded in folk memory that people lived inland.

In my own village, I have found pottery in a mound (possibly a wheelhouse) by the Bragar River, which has been dated to the Bronze Age.¹ The people who made and used this pottery are likely to be the direct ancestors of the people living here now.

Although most of Lewis belongs legally to landlords, the people who live here and who have been here for countless

generations believe that the land is morally theirs.

Since the Crofters Act of 1886 gave crofters security of tenure, the rights of the people to the land have not been challenged (at least in this area) – until now.

People have always been one of Lewis's biggest exports, whether the emigration was forced, as at times in the 18th and 19th centuries, or voluntary and/or economic.

Island life has never suited everyone and the people who live here now, whether indigenous or recent arrivals, are here through choice.

In my own family, my two grandfathers returned to

Bragar from Canada and the USA, my father from southeast England and my sister and I from Edinburgh. We returned because of our love of the place and because, in our eyes, of the superior quality of life available here. It certainly was not for the economic

opportunities! This is a common pattern.

The uses of moorland

Peat-cutting – Though many in Lewis still cut peat for fuel, the peat-cutting areas are the main sites chosen by AMEC for their turbines, presumably because crofters have already made tracks to these areas and the peat is shallower where it has been cut for fuel.

Around these tracks, the same areas have been used by families for peat cutting for many years: our peat-banks were begun by my great-uncle, continued by my parents and are now used by my sister and me.

As a long-term investment, they are carefully managed. First, the top turf is removed and placed below the bank

It is not too much of a leap of faith to see peoples' relationship with the moorland in the same way as the relationship of the aboriginals of Australia to their land: mythology and experience combining to produce a living world which exists vividly both in the present and in memory and imagination.

Author *Ann Campbell* was brought up in Bragar, on the west of Lewis, where her family has lived for centuries. After ten years in Edinburgh, during which she studied painting at the Edinburgh College of Art, she came back to the Isles to run a business manufacturing tweed in Harris and complete a BSc at the OU. Six years ago, she returned to Bragar to live on a croft. She says, 'I am part-time artist, part-time laboratory assistant – and keep sheep and grow vegetables on the croft'.

What AMEC is offering

We've been told that we can still cut peats beneath the turbines or move to another area if our banks are destroyed. But neither option holds much appeal.

where the peat was cut last year so that it will re-grow and also make a firm track for the tractor. The banks and tracks are carefully designed so that the tracks follow firm ground and do not interfere with watercourses and make bogs in which livestock could drown.

Turfing begins in April and the banks are normally cut in May. In June and July, when the moor is at its driest and after various stages of turning and gathering, the peats are taken home and stacked. Each stage of the job and each part of the bank has its own name in Gaelic.

For most people, peat is no longer the most economical way to heat houses or cook: they cut peats partly for enjoyment. Our peats are by the Bragar River. It is idyllic out there on a spring day with the skylarks and meadow pipits singing and the curlew displaying overhead, the whistling of the golden plover (which my mother used to tell us said *samhradh cridheach, the e a' tighinn* – a hearty summer, it is coming), the call of the sandpiper from the river and the red grouse from the heather, perhaps seeing lapwing or ringed plover chicks by the track or river, an eagle soaring overhead or a merlin swooping by.

We've been told that we can still cut peats beneath the turbines or move to another area if our banks are destroyed. But neither option holds much appeal.

Sheilings – In the past, the crofters' cattle were taken out onto the moorland pastures in the centre of the island in May, returning to the villages in August. The cattle were herded mainly by old people and children who lived in small stone and turf bothies called sheilings. The middle generation mainly stayed in the villages to work and tend the crops. This transhumance more or less died out in the 1950s but their time on the sheilings in the interior of the Lewis Peatlands is remembered with great fondness and nostalgia by the generation who spent their childhood summers there.



Many people still use their family sheilings not out of practical necessity but as a place of peace and tranquillity, to rest for a time, much like a Zen hermitage. Those in Ness and along the Pentland Road will be greatly affected, and may even be destroyed, by the AMEC scheme.

Grazing – While it is now unusual to graze cattle on the moor, many people still use it to graze sheep, which return to the areas they know (often around the family sheiling) year after year. Those who herd and gather these sheep know the peatlands better than anyone else and provide a link with its traditions, place-names and stories.

Some people see the Lewis moor as a barren featureless expanse of no value (the Environmental Impact Assessment for the Pentland Road wind-power site calls the north Lewis moor 'very large and rather bland').

But to those who know them, each mound, pool, stream,



A traditional sheiling near Bragar and a modern one near the Barvas road

Bogs are the liveliest elements in the European landscape, not just from the point of view of flora, fauna, birds and animals, but as strong places of life, mystery and chemical change, preservers of ancient history

Joseph Beuys, Eine Aktion im Moor (Bog Action), 1971

sheiling-site and slope is named and many have stories associated with them. These names were, and still are, as useful as the street signs in cities for negotiating one's way around, describing where something is to be found or where a particular route can be taken.

Some names describe features which can no longer be seen above ground, such as *Garadh na Croit*, *An Garadh Droma* – old stock walls; others are descriptive, e.g. *Loch Airigh na h-Aon Oidhche* – the loch of the sheiling of one night; many are Norse, e.g. *Suainagadail*, *Stacaisal* while others are of unknown origin, like *Beinn a Bhoghalan* or *Ishiboi*.

Fishing – Fishing for brown trout (and the occasional salmon) is another activity which takes people out to the moorland. The myriad of lochs and rivers attract fishermen who enjoy walking to roam the island's interior, and for some fishing becomes the excuse for spending days out on the moor. Mainly a male pastime.

Tourism – Many people holiday on Lewis for the peace and quiet, the views and the beaches, for walking on the coast or in the hills of the southern part of the island. But few venture into the interior of northern Lewis. It is difficult terrain and may seem uninviting at first. But once you are out of sight of the road you are into a different world, hearing nothing but the wind blowing through the vegetation and the calls of birds, seeing nothing but the

grasses rippling in the wind and the shadows of passing clouds.

And there is endless variety of detail: river and stream valleys, deep, dark pools, sandy-shored lochs, sheiling mounds, carnivorous flowers, jewel-bright mosses, lichens, iridescent beetles, dragonflies, caterpillars, moths, birds' nests, etc. Many people would appreciate being taken out onto the moor in the same way as people enjoy going into the Sahara Desert or the Mongolian Steppes.

Once a person has been out in the remote Lewis Peatlands, its atmosphere stays with them forever. It is not too much of a leap of faith to see peoples' relationship with the moorland in the same way as the relationship of the aboriginals of Australia to their land: mythology and experience combine to produce a living world which exists vividly both in the present and in memory and imagination. If we allow the peatlands to be destroyed, an important part of the island's culture will go with them.

Note

- 1 Peat has a long history on Lewis – 7900 years according to Stewart Angus in *The Outer Hebrides, Moor and Machair*. The Bronze Age lasted from c2,300BC to c700BC and peat growth accelerated after that. Wheelhouses are a type of subterranean roundhouse peculiar to north-west Scotland.



The north Lewis moor seen from Beinn Bharbhais. Top, bog asphodel and bog cotton



Photo: Justin Busbridge

Grim days ahead for Isles tourism?

HEBRIDEAN TOURISM relies on unspoilt scenery – all its advertising shows the islands as a wilderness environment and an attractive destination.

Activities such as hill and clifftop walking, bird watching, cycling, fishing, golf or just enjoying the flora and fauna or miles of empty beach attract hundreds of thousands of visitors every year.

If we build on the growth in adventure-sport tourism – kayaking, diving, fast boats, surfing and kiting, the Western Isles could rival New Zealand as a tourist destination. And if we develop top-quality ‘sporting’ tourism such as salmon fishing and shooting in a fabulous wilderness setting, they can hold their own against the exotic destinations of Africa and Asia.

With hundreds of environmental designations, their environment is recognised as having global significance and real economic worth. Far from being a burden, these designations are unique selling points for the Hebrides.

It is often said ‘you can’t eat a view’ – but tourism operators and thousands of islanders earn their living from just these views. If they are destroyed, so is their livelihood.

Tourism is not a ‘Cinderella’ industry: it creates real jobs. In 2003, nearly 180,000 visitors, stayed an average of six nights in the Hebrides and spent between £40 and £60 million.¹

Justin Busbridge is a freelance business consultant who also runs a small but successful business in adventure and activity tourism. He lives with his wife on her Macdonald family croft on the west side of the Isle of Lewis from where he is researching towards a PhD in remote and rural health care with the University of the Highlands & Islands.

Tourism is vital to the Western Isles but relies on an unspoilt environment. If the Hebrides do become ‘the world’s largest windfarm’, islanders could lose hundreds of jobs and £millions a year.

Wind-power promises few jobs with many either short-term or going to the mainland. Justin Busbridge urges that islanders look carefully at what is being offered – it might not be as generous as they are being led to believe.

Although concentrated from March to October, visitors sustain services all year round, especially the transport links. Numbers are increasing year on year. It is no longer possible to dismiss tourism as a few visiting businessmen or people ‘visiting friends or relatives’.

The Western Isles have a population of 26,500.² Highlands and Islands Enterprise reports 11,500 jobs, including 840 in agriculture and fishing, 1,040 in manufacturing and about 3,600 in local council and health services.³

But these figures do not reflect the importance of tourism. Besides full-time tour operators, it provides work across the board: a bit to the taxi drivers, something for the shops, a boost for the restaurants and traffic for the ferry. Since much of it is seasonal or part-time, statistics usually express it as the equivalent number of full time jobs (FTEs).⁴ Going by official figures (see box overleaf), tourism represents 2,300 jobs or 20 per cent of Western

Isles employment. But if spending is as high as £60 million, it represents 3,400 FTEs or 30 per cent of our employment – the same as local government and health combined. It is not a sector lightly to be dismissed.

Will turbines damage tourism?

A VISITSCOTLAND survey found that 50 per cent of tourists felt that wind turbines would spoil the look of Scotland, one of the main reasons they visited.⁵ While twenty-five per cent said they would be 'less likely' to return to an area with turbines, fifteen per cent said they 'definitely' would not return.⁶

Another visitor survey, conducted by tourism operators in north west Lewis, has indicated that over 90 per cent are not in favour of the massive wind-power developments planned for Lewis and that a massive 50 per cent agreed with the statement that 'any windfarm in this area will discourage tourists from visiting Lewis'.⁷

Alarming, this is double the 25 per cent drop-off suggested by the VISITSCOTLAND survey and illustrates the reliance of the Hebrides upon its unspoiled natural environment.

Assuming that tourism is 'only' worth £40 million annually and taking a 25 per cent drop-off, industrialisation of the Hebridean landscape could damage the economy by £10 million and cost nearly 600 jobs – or five per cent of total employment.

If the figure is in fact nearer £60 million and we are contemplating a 50 per cent drop-off in visitors, then the loss could be anywhere between £15 and £30 million and losses of anywhere from 850 to 1200 jobs.

(Note that this is FTEs – considerably more employees would be affected.)

OFFICIAL FIGURES for Western Isles income from tourism could well be seriously under-estimated.

They are based on a 1999 survey which asked visitors how much they had spent on their holiday and estimated the total spend at £32.9m.⁹ As numbers and spending rise, the figure has been extrapolated and is currently just under £40m.

It constantly finds its way into official documents and local government reports. It is time for a re-evaluation.

First, it suggests that visitors to the Isles spend only £36 a day which, with B&B typically £25 in the summer, leaves only £11 for two meals and excursions. Clearly too low. VisitScotland puts typical tourist spends at a more realistic £56 a day.¹⁰ This figure gives a total Western Isles spend of £60 million.

Second, the £40 million figure does not allow for the 'multiplier effect' whereby the earnings of those working in tourism support other jobs.¹¹ A realistic multiplier of 25 per cent suggests that tourism contributes at least £50 million to the economy as a whole.¹²

Another way of calculating tourism's value is to use salary per FTE, with jobs valued at £12,500. Losing 570 jobs would take £7.1 million out of the economy while 850 job losses would cost over £10.6 million.

All this strongly suggests that the official figure is way too low.

These jobs are primarily in small, local businesses – boat operators, fishing guides, B&Bs, self-catering cottages, taxi-drivers, bus companies, cafes, restaurants and hotels. Much of the tourist pound goes direct to local people.

Some Area Tourist Boards take the view that, overall, Scottish tourism might not suffer to the extent predicted by the VisitScotland survey as tourists would be 'displaced' to areas not affected.

Lessons of Foot and Mouth

The importance of rural areas for the population at large was demonstrated during the 2001 Foot and Mouth crisis. The damage to tourism far exceeded that to agriculture. When the urban population couldn't travel to the countryside, rural economies were severely hit.

This at least acknowledges that tourism will suffer at a local level but the argument does not apply to Lewis as there will be so few places that will not be affected visually by the turbines.

The Hebrides are not like Loch Lomond or the Trossachs. If a tourist doesn't like a windfarm in Callander they can be 'displaced' up the road to Pitlochry.

But it takes a lot for a tourist to travel to the Hebrides. If the islands become known as 'the world's largest windfarm', displacement is not an option. Visitors just won't cross the Minch.

Claims that turbines become tourist attractions are ridiculous. Who will drive past thousands of them through the centre of Scotland just to visit yet more in Lewis? Two wind-power 'theme parks' (Delabole, Cornwall and Swaffham, Norfolk) are in difficulties due to lack of visitors.

The impact on tourism in the North West Highlands must also be considered. The Lewis sites would require transmission lines from Ullapool to Beaulieu which also relies upon an unspoiled environment. The Hebrides are frequently one leg of a longer Highland tour. If mainland tourism is damaged, the islands too will suffer.

The drop-off in numbers could well be more than the 25 per cent suggested by VisitScotland.

As a minimum, no decision on the proposals should even be mooted until the possible effects on one of the Hebrides' largest earners are competently researched.

Is it worth the risk?

Apart from limited short-term gains, the wind-power companies will not replace the income lost to tourism.

Lewis Wind claims it will provide 150 construction and 25 maintenance jobs.⁸ The Eisgen and Pairc proposals would involve comparable numbers though their data suggest that Lewis Wind's figures are too high.

The islands already rely on imported labour. Work on Stornoway's new arts centre and swimming pool overwhelmed the local labour supply and much of the work went to mainland firms. Fish-processing plants on the island are already employing east-Europeans.

There is little reason to suppose that the situation would be different for wind-power construction work, some of which in any case is seasonal.

The economics of environment

The environment figures highly in attempts to attract a skilled workforce, tempted here by a high quality of life. If that environment is damaged, how will that affect in-migration. And how many will just move away?

Turbines need specialist cranes and transporters and much of this work would be imported. Local firms could bid for ground-preparation, quarrying and haulage work but the big money would go elsewhere.

Many of those who currently earn an adequate income wholly or in part from tourism would neither wish, nor be able, to earn a living in low-grade construction on skill, physique or age grounds alone.

Is short-term work of this calibre likely to lure people back to the island?

The developers are all promising jobs in a revived Arnish fabrication yard. But, if the three schemes were to come off at much the same time (and they all are scrambling for planning permission), Arnish just could not meet the demand.

Under European law, developers have to seek tenders Europe-wide. The Arnish yard is still defunct and lacks experience in turbine construction (see page 10). It would

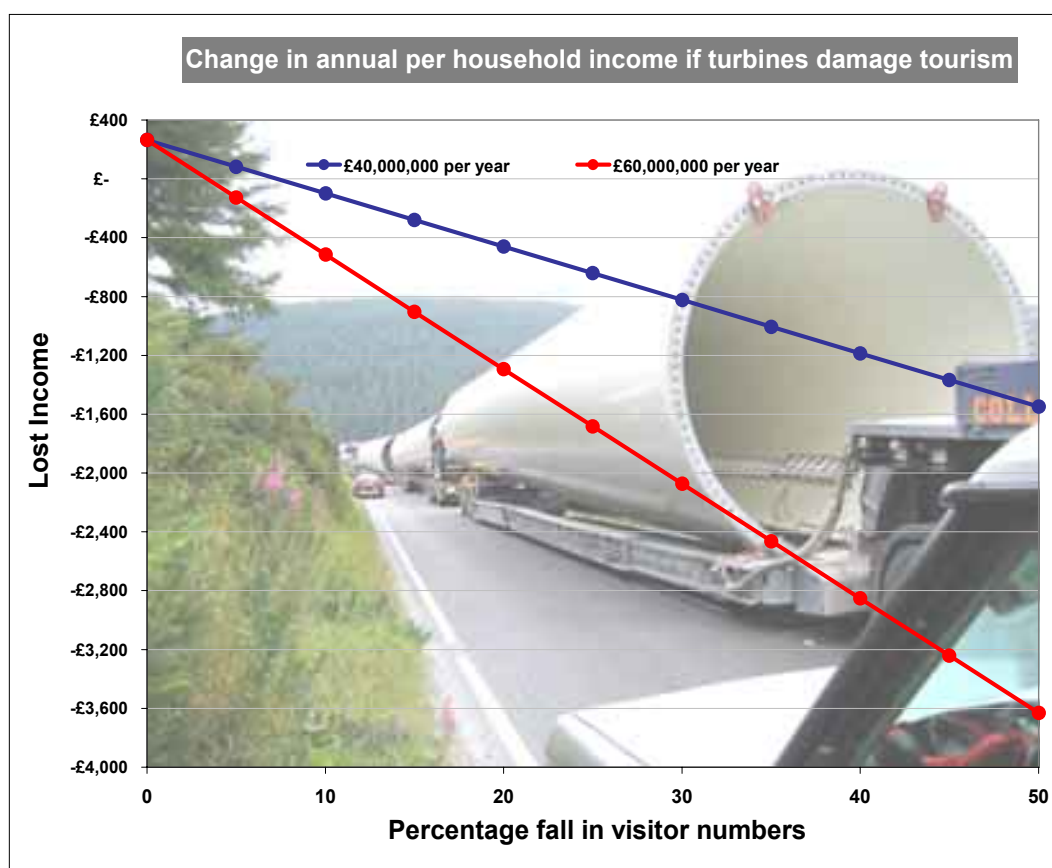
be competing with overseas companies with expertise and lower costs. *There can be no guarantee of fabrication work.*

Once constructed, the turbines will be here for keeps but the jobs won't. It is common practice to control turbines remotely and bring in maintenance technicians from outside. A recent *cause célèbre* was the Causeymire site in Caithness. Bonus staff boasted that every last nut and bolt was Danish-made, that the site was erected by Danish engineers and that it is even controlled from Denmark.

As regards payments, figures vary widely, but income from the wind projects has been put at between £3m and £6m per annum, significantly less than the potential loss of £10m. The major profits from these schemes are going to be taken by multinational or mainland companies.

Much of the rental payments will leave the island. Apart from the Stornoway Trust and the Galson Estate, many of the landowners are individuals or syndicates based on the mainland. Even the option of retaining the benefits through community buyouts seems to have disappeared as existing landowners seek to hold onto royalties through new Edinburgh-registered companies. Of the millions promised by the wind-power companies, how much of it will actually remain here?

The graph suggests the scale of the impact that falling tourist numbers might have on Lewis's annual income, assuming Western Isles spends of £40- and £60-million a year (see text), weighted for Lewis only. It excludes rent to landowners as these are often not local and business rate payable to the local council, CNES. It assumes community 'benefit' of £1,000/MW, an Installed Capacity of 1.43GW, a population of 18,500 and an average household of 2.4 persons. It includes income at £20k for maintenance crews of the size suggested by developers (though we doubt some of their figures). The photograph is of turbine delivery to the Cefn Croes site in Wales – thanks for permission to use it.



Notes

- 1 Macpherson Research, *TIC Visitor Survey*, 2003.
- 2 General Register Office for Scotland, *Scottish Census Results on Line*, Office for National Statistics, *National Statistics On Line* (accessed 3 September 2004).
- 3 Highlands and Islands Enterprise, *Western Isles Area Profile*, 2003; Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, *Factfile*.
- 4 Roberts D et al, *1997 Western Isles Regional Accounts*, Macaulay Land Use Research Institute, 1999.
- 5 NFO System Three for VisitScotland, *Investigation into the Potential Impact of Windfarms on Tourism in Scotland*, 2002.
- 6 Views of Scotland, *Wind Turbines and Rural Tourism, an analysis of data from VisitScotland*, July 2003.
- 7 Conducted August/September 2004 by NW Lewis tourism concerns. We hope to have a fuller report in a future *VoS News*.
- 8 AMEC presentation to WIAREP/Stornoway Trust, 2003.
- 9 Macpherson Research, *Visitor Survey*, 1999; Macpherson Research, *Western Isles Tourism Report*, 2002.
- 10 The ScotExchange website (i.e. VisitScotland, HIE, Scottish Enterprise), *Know Your Market* (accessed 3 September 2004).
- 11 Steve Westbrook (economist), *pers com*, 4 September 2004.
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From a Garenin 'black house' to . . .

The Arnish black hole

- The Western Isles 'Energy Innovation Zone'
- 240 turbines (700MW) on the Lewis Peatlands
- 125 turbines (375MW) on the Pairc Estate
- 125 turbines (375MW) on the Eisgen Estate
- The Lewis Interconnector
- A Turbine-tower Factory at the Arnish yard

Bring this lot together and it's All Systems Go for Europe's biggest wind project on the Isle of Lewis.

The project was launched the moment Brian Wilson became the fourth of New Labour's six energy ministers so far.¹ It was during his term that we got the Energy White Paper and the Renewables Obligation scheme.

As editor of the *West Highland Free Press*, Wilson campaigned during the 1980s for the Western Isles to be made into a renewable energy centre. The aim was small-scale investment in renewables for the islands' own needs.

Once he had the energy portfolio, he needed a policy for UK electricity supplies. It was an opportunity to put his ideas into action.

The Lewis project was born. But its scale had grown out of all proportion to the island's needs. Wilson wrote: 'We are looking at something much more ambitious than what was regarded as ... slightly eccentric ... these 30 years ago'.

A 'high-powered group' met at the Garenin black house on Lewis only weeks after Wilson took office. The ball was rolling.²

AMEC and British Energy came in for a major wind project at first only on Stornoway Trust land but later expanding onto the Barvas and Galson Estates.

Scottish and Southern came in to take care of grid issues and got a major site on Barry Lomas' Pairc Estate. Latter on, Nick Oppenheim and Cathy Cripps came in with the Eisgen scheme.

Getting power out was always going to be a problem. Wilson's first proposal was an interconnector down the west coast, coming ashore either by the nuclear site at Hunterston (co-incidentally in his constituency) or by the BNFL Magnox plant in Wales. He dubbed it the 'Celtic Ring'. A feasibility study suggested a £2 billion price tag.

The chairman of Westminster's Trade and Industry Select Committee complained that British Energy's history was 'littered with ideas from the bright ideas box that come out prematurely ... and very often never actually produce the goods.' The scheme was shelved.

Fallback plans called for a new interconnector and reinforcement of existing links: the controversial Ullapool-Beauly and Beauly-Denny proposals. Wilson underlined

VoS News examines the political and economic background to the controversial Lewis Project

that it was 'a clear expectation of government that the final proposals will extend to the north and west of Scotland, including the islands'.

Despite this small setback, AMEC had managed to get its Lewis project manager, David Still, seconded to the DTI as a 'renewables advisor' in December 2002 and a Welsh company, Cambrian Engineering, had moved into the Arnish Yard by Stornoway early in 2003. Jim Wallace opened the plant in August amidst a fanfare of publicity. Brian Wilson was at the height of his powers at the DTI and things were looking good.

The Arnish fiasco

Plans to manufacture turbine towers at Arnish promised hundreds of jobs and Jim Hunter's Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) had pledged £14 million of public money.

However, just as the yard opened, Denmark changed first its government and then its wind-energy policy. Investors, sensitive to regulatory risk in a subsidy-driven market, got cold feet and, as Europe's turbine market slumped, manufacturers retrenched.

HIE had exacerbated the problem by pumping £9.4 million into Cambrian's biggest UK competitor, the Danish-owned Vestas Celtic plant in Campbeltown.

As the slump deepened, and despite £1.2 million in grants, Cambrian started laying off its workforce. It went out of business in February 2004, leaving £2 million in unpaid bills. (It later emerged that it had financial troubles prior to the Arnish venture.)

HIE's preferred choice as successor was called Cambrian Caledonian. One councillor pointedly asked, 'Why are the same directors coming to the same enterprise company to get the same grants to buy the same equipment from the same suppliers a second time?'³

The collapse represents a setback for the wind lobby, not least because it was the only UK-owned tower manufacturer. The yard is still in limbo although HIE insists that negotiations are ongoing and that the timing of new cash is the only stumbling block.

But observers warn that Arnish's high costs make for an uncertain future in a crowded market. They point to

'Why are the same directors coming to the same enterprise company to get the same grants to buy the same equipment from the same suppliers a second time?'

Vestas losing 54 million Euros in the first half of 2004 and to its rival, DS SM, which recently cancelled plans to open a Scottish yard. MD Claus Bo Jorgensen explained that, 'It is cheaper for us to manufacture [in Denmark] and ship to Scotland than to open a factory'.⁴

SNH under fire

From the beginning, it was clear that the island's nature designations would be a problem. Lewis has a big slice under European Commission protection and it is SNH's job to protect it.

Developments that could harm the nature reserves can only be approved under exceptional circumstances and if there is no alternative available.

Proponents of the Lewis project argue that the designations hamper their plans, and there have been approaches to the Prime Minister in an effort to have them removed.

Because designation removal is unlikely on past European form, SNH's endorsement is seen as crucial to the Lewis project. Both its support for wind power and its joining the Western Isles Renewable Energy Partnership were welcomed by Wilson's supporters.

But it came under heavy fire when it emerged that it had controversially endorsed the Pentland Road scheme (see page 12). This could land it in European hot water.

As AMEC/British Energy prepare to lodge their application for 240 turbines on the same nature reserve, there is mounting pressure on the body.

Outgoing HIE chief Jim Hunter joined the SNH board at a difficult time.

Industrial and legal muscle

One compromise suggested locally is to upgrade the Skye-to-Harris 33kV link so that community projects can export electricity using the 132kV line through Skye.

But AMEC has already cornered its spare capacity for the Edinbane site. It told crofters in Skye that, 'AMEC holds the only non-assignable grid transmission agreement for this site. The site only has value to AMEC'.

There are also reports that the Barvas, Galson and Pairc Estates intend to forestall crofter and community right-to-buy provisions available under the land reform legislation.

Contracts are said to have hived-off wind-power rights to companies under the landlord's control which are then re-leased to developers. This news comes as residents in Barvas, Pairc and Galson pursue community buy-outs.

One unexpected difficulty for the Lewis project has been

The things people say ...

'The best place to put a wind farm in Wales is Lewis (Scotland)'

David Still, general manager, Amec Wind, former chairman BWEA, Renewable Energy Advisor, DTI, quoted in *Renewable Energy News*, 7 June 2002

'If it comes to renewable energy or the rape of the countryside, I am for the rape of the countryside'

Jim Hunter, former chair of Highlands and Islands Enterprise (now on the board of SNH), answering questions at a meeting in Tarbert, Argyll, 21 June 2004

the high level of local opposition. A recent poll in north Lewis showed an 88 per cent rejection of the AMEC/British Energy plan and the council is becoming nervous. There's an old saying that if you burn your backside, you're going to have to sit on it later.

Councillors went on the offensive after a well-attended *Moorlands Without Turbines* meeting in Stornoway but it was counter-productive. As one resident put it: 'We ask for meaningful and open dialogue with our local authority instead of ... confrontational press statements'.⁶

Among the most commonly heard complaints are:

- the Lewis project is neo-colonial in its ambition, scope and disregard for the island's people and culture;
- the council has thrown its lot in with the developers when it ought to be considering the full spectrum of views.

If the council cannot conduct a meaningful dialogue with residents, it is difficult to foresee any consensus between islanders and the incoming developers. An all-or-nothing situation looms.

Question marks remain over the Lewis project. Obtaining the consents and upgrading the grid was always going to be difficult – but the political pressure is intense.

We have followed Brian Wilson's 'gentleman's adventure' at Westminster. As we came in with him, so we'll go out with him:

Of course, the issues became more complex as it was not just a quarry which was eventually proposed but the biggest hole on earth. Nobody on Harris ever asked for that and I have always felt that the developers who chose to pursue that jackpot, rather than something more in keeping with local needs and expectations, had a lot to answer for.⁷

Notes

¹ Brian Wilson was energy minister from June 2001 to June 2003.

² Wilson wrote (*West Highland Free Press*, 25 July 2003): 'Two years ago, a high-powered group of people assembled in Lewis to focus on how renewable energy could be taken forward in the Western Isles and adjacent areas. My own recently-acquired position as energy minister had helped to get some of these people to Lewis ...

(The Garenin 'black house' is a restored crofters' cottage.)

³ Councillor Angus Nicholson, *Stornoway Gazette*, 6 May 04.

⁴ *Press and Journal*, Vestas Loss, 21 Aug 04; *Scotland on Sunday*, Wind turbine factory plans blown away, 12 Sep 04. See also *Scotland on Sunday*, Green energy blows in jobs for Scotland, 14 Dec 03. Recently, Fife blade manufacturer NOI has encountered serious difficulties and the flagship Vestas Celtic is reported as threatening layoffs.

⁵ Scottish Land Court SLC/126/03.

⁶ Marion MacLeod, *Stornoway Gazette*, 23 Sep 04.

⁷ *West Highland Free Press*, *Momentum must be maintained on renewable energy developments*, 31 May 02.

An appeal

Many thanks to all those who sent donations after our last issue. They were used to fund this one.

If you think that the UK's present renewables policy is a recipe for disaster, help us to change it.

If you find VoSNews useful, please support it – send a donation to help us research and publish it regularly.

Please send cheques (together with your name and address) to:

**VIEWS OF SCOTLAND, P.O. Box 19119, Strathaven,
Lanarkshire, ML10 6YQ.**

A wind-power atlas for Lewis

Renewables on Lewis is a complex and often unattractive story. Information is hard to come by as developers seek to protect 'commercial confidentiality' at the expense of environmental integrity and the long-term interests of local communities.

They are driven by the high profits available to privatised companies under the Renewables Obligation schemes. As these disproportionately reward early birds in the 'renewables' sector, there is considerable commercial pressure to truncate the environmental assessment process.

There is no doubt that politicians of all shades are improperly uncritical of what is a powerful lobby, dominated by giants of the European nuclear industry. This is nowhere more true than on Lewis.

As a guide to the newcomer, VoS News is collaborating with members of island communities in the preparation of a Lewis wind-power atlas. We present here a summary of the work to date.

As well as completing site-by-site summaries of such proposals as are in the public arena, the next issue will feature maps showing the principal national and international designations that protect what is not only a heritage but, in competent hands, an asset.

To our knowledge, these have not been presented together in one publicly-accessible place before.

Arnish Moor Wind Cluster

Location	Just south of Stornoway
Landowner	Stornoway Trust Estate
Developer	Farm Energy Ltd
Turbines	3 @ 0.85MW
Installed capacity	2.5 MW
Total Height	76 m
Rotor Diameter	52 m
Status	Consented June 2003

Although initially involved, the European subsidiary of Texas utilities giant TXU went bankrupt in 2002: Farm Energy is now the sole interest in this development.

The project does not lie in a designated area but it is known that Annex I/Schedule I species including Divers and Golden Eagles are present on Arnish Moor. The Loch Orosay SSSI is located immediately to the south-west.

According to the Environmental Statement, the bird survey took two days. Breeding bird interest reported includes teal, mallard, red-breasted merganser, red grouse, oyster catcher, golden plover, lapwing, dunlin, snipe, curlew, redshank, common sand piper, lesser black-backed gull, herring gull, cuckoo, skylark, meadow pipit, wren, wheatear and starling.

Other birds reported in the vicinity included grey heron, buzzard, great skua, hooded crow, raven, black-throated diver and greylag goose. The ES reported that all survey data on protected species are contained in a Confidential Addendum. This remains hidden from public scrutiny.

Pentland Road



Photo © Ann Campbell and Jon Macleod

Initially, the aviation authorities, NATS and HIAL, objected to the Pentland Road proposal on the grounds of the potential impact of the six-turbine site on Stornoway Airport.

As it lies on the Lewis Peatlands Special Protection Area/RAMSAR site, SNH also objected – on the grounds of potential adverse impact on an SPA.

The European Union's *Birds and Habitats Directives* set strict criteria for developments on SPAs that are not compatible with the site's conservation objectives.

An 'Appropriate Assessment' must be made to assess if

The Pentland Road six-turbine site is destined for this landscape

Location:	Due west of Stornoway
Landowner	Stornoway Trust Estate
Developer	Farm Energy Ltd
Turbines	6 @ 2 – 2.5 MW
Installed Capacity	12 – 15 MW
Total Height	120 m
Rotor Diameter	80 - 100 m
Status	Consented September 2004

Objectors take the view that Pentland Road only obtained consent because of the premature withdrawal of objections by SNH, that SNH failed to address many of the issues raised in the Environmental Statement, that it relied on inadequate evidence to justify withdrawing its objection and, most notably, that it failed to ensure that its own guidelines for best practice were adhered to.

there is likely to be significant environmental impact. If so, development can only proceed if it is shown that there is an 'over-riding public interest'.

SNH argued that insufficient information had been provided on the risk to Golden Eagles breeding nearby and queried the merit of the theoretical models used in estimating that risk.

In June 2003, CNES recommended approval subject to the resolution of these outstanding issues.

SNH withdrew its objection in August, claiming that it now had information enabling it to conclude that there would be no adverse impacts.

The island community had generally welcomed renewable energy projects but details were now emerging about the unprecedented scale of the wind sites proposed for Lewis.

It was very different from what they had been led to believe would be a 'sustainable future' and concern was growing about what was taking place.

As islanders began to study Farm Energy's Environmental Statement, they made worrying discoveries:

- SNH guidelines call for raptors to be observed for at least a year properly to identify flight habits. Farm Energy's eagle survey had been conducted over two months.
- The Scottish Executive had deemed the collision risk model used as unsuitable for SPAs.
- The model used to predict the eagle's range was inappropriate for the Western Isles. Despite this, the flight data did appear to support the predicted core range.

In July 2003 a one-day survey was carried out by local SNH Officers. Finding only two pairs of grouse within 750m of the proposed turbines, they concluded that this would not represent a significant loss of prey.

SNH also reported that it had received information from 'other wildlife consultants' that the eagles were more frequently seen to the north west of the development area. (The nature and status of this information is unknown).

Apparently on this basis, SNH concluded 'that the predicted core range stated in the ES does not reflect the eagles' actual range use.' (letter to CNES, 29 August 2003) – and withdrew its objection.

By spring 2004, the application was in the hands of the Scottish Executive. The RSPB was now taking an interest in the site and submitted a representation to Scottish ministers, who also received about 150 objections from the public.

However, the application was returned to CNES in July 2004 with the instruction 'your council are hereby authorised to deal with the application in the manner they

think fit' and asking it to address the concerns of the aviation authorities so their objection could be withdrawn.

Objectors, concerned about the outstanding conservation issues, were told by the Executive that, without an objection from SNH, little could be done.

Further representations were submitted to CNES, including a second objection from RSPB, but its planning committee accepted a recommendation to approve the Pentland Road site on August 31. The report said:

Since the last Report to Committee, objections have been received. They focus on likely adverse impact on the Lewis Peatlands SPA and RAMSAR site and claim inadequacies in the Environmental assessment. These issues were considered carefully last year. SNH objected initially but, after further study, removed its objection. Accordingly, an Appropriate Assessment (which is required by the Habitats Regulations) was made.

Barvas Moor

Location	Spread over 40 kM on Lewis Peatlands
Landowners	Galson Estate Ltd, Barvas Estate Ltd, the Stornoway Trust
Developer	Lewis Wind (AMEC/British Energy)
Turbines	240 @ 3 MW
Installed Capacity	~ 700 MW
Total Height	~ 140 metres
Rotor Diameter	100 m
Status	Application imminent

THIS SITE FALLS almost entirely on the Lewis Peatlands, commonly referred to as Barvas Moor, one of the largest and most intact areas of blanket bog in the world.

As such, it has attracted multiple, overlying international designations as a RAMSAR (Wetlands of International Importance), a Special Protection Area (SPA – the Birds Directive), a Special Area of Conservation (SAC – the Habitats Directive) and an Important Bird Area (IBA – the Berne Convention). There are also SSSIs within the area.

The latest picture we have is a proposal for 240 turbines on an area stretching over some 40km. At 140 metres total height, they would be amongst the largest onshore turbines in the world. It is estimated that turbines of this size will be clearly visible for over 30 miles.

The development will require anything up to 200 kM of access tracks on the moor with a typical land-take width of around 15 metres (including cuttings, drainage, cabling etc.) After construction, the visible road surface is reduced to around five metres.

There are serious concerns about the effect all this will have on the hydrology of the peat. AMEC has indicated that it plans to use 'floating roads' to minimise their impact.

But SNH has cautioned that 'some may be optimistic in terms of the load bearing capacity of "floating infrastructure", which may subsequently require deeper foundations with consequent wider impacts on bog hydrology and carbon loss.' [In other words, the technique

doesn't work, a fact experienced peat cutters on the island stress with a mixture of horror and contempt – *Editor.*]

Other essential infrastructure includes hard standing for crane access to turbines, nine substations and overhead cabling running between them – probably a 38-metre pylon line running the length of the development.

Construction will require on-site quarries for access tracks and turbine foundations and a claimed 62,400 m³ of concrete for turbine foundations. There would be concrete batching plants and a temporary compound including portable cabins, loading bays and parking facilities.

AMEC has conceded that portions of public roads will be used during the construction phase, which is estimated to last for four years. Temporary traffic control measures may be needed, most likely on the main Barvas-Stornoway road and the southern approach to Stornoway (the Lochs Road between Arnish and Marybank).

Around 150 people would be employed in construction and, once operational, it is claimed that there could be 20-25 jobs in maintenance. This figure has been challenged.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

PEATLANDS

It is accepted that peatlands are extremely sensitive to disturbance and difficult, if not impossible, to restore when damaged.

Active peatlands act as both carbon sink and store and have an important role in regulating climate change. Wetlands, including bogs, store over three times as much carbon for a given area as tropical rainforest. When peatlands are disturbed, CO₂ is returned to atmosphere.

The ecological value of peatland is recognised

internationally and there is strong guidance towards preserving and restoring bogs.

The SAC designation of the central portion of the moor (to protect the blanket bog) reflects its international importance. Developments are only allowed in such areas for reasons of 'human health or public safety... beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment ... or other imperative reasons of overriding public interest'.

This will have persuaded AMEC not even to attempt development within the SAC boundaries.

But the RAMSAR boundary follows that of the larger SPA, emphasising that the wetland habitat is not confined to the SAC.

Indeed peatland is widespread across lowland Lewis. Major quarrying operations, construction of a massive infrastructure and the drainage that this will require will have a devastating effect on the habitat and its occupants.

BIRDS

The importance of Lewis for birds cannot be overstated. Significant numbers of protected, rare and 'common' birds are found across the whole island but in most instances only those areas with the very highest bird densities have been designated as SPAs. (Some other areas have been identified as IBAs, a slightly lesser designation.)

There is acute concern about the impact the proposal will have on the SPA. The RSPB has already indicated that it will vigorously oppose the development. Despite a relative paucity of research, it is now recognised that some species are particularly sensitive to wind power developments (disturbance, displacement, barriers to



A view of the Bragar/Arnol section of Lewis Wind's proposal

movement, blade-strike and habitat loss).

The EU's Berne Convention identifies the following amongst Lewis Peatlands' qualifying species as at risk from turbines: Golden Eagle, Golden Plover and divers.

Other sensitive species present in significant numbers include gannets, shags, herons, geese, swans and White-tailed Sea Eagle.

The Executive's own scoping opinion highlighted the need for study into impact risk for Greylag Goose, Great Skua, Arctic Skua, Whooper Swan, Red Grouse, and Corncrake.

There has been as yet no statutory recognition of the importance of Lewis for a wide range of birds migrating between the Arctic and Western Europe.

Lewis Wind Power will have to demonstrate '... reasons of over-riding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature ...' and there must be an 'absence of alternative solutions' (*The Birds and Habitats Directives*, 6.4) to gain consent.

It may be that payments to landlords and crofters whose grazings will be affected and 'community benefit payments' yet to be negotiated may be included in this appraisal.

AMEC has said at public meetings that they are discussing an island-wide benefit fund with the council. Maintenance employment will also be considered. But these factors will have to be balanced against the potential damage to existing local business and community amenity.

That said, there seems little grasp amongst politicians of the importance of designations. Communities concerned about proximity and impact of the site were told that the scheme has been pushed towards villages in order to protect birds. This is not true.

Calum Macdonald (Labour MP for the Western Isles) expressed a preference for locating the site in the middle of the moor, adding that 'It's either disturb people or disturb birds – and never under-estimate the importance of birds!'.³

Philistinism of this order is hard to counter. AMEC has

already proposed locating the turbines in an area heavily designated to protect rare birds.

Notes

1 *West Highland Free Press*, 16 April 2004

2 Lewis Wind Power's web site

3 *The Hebridean*, 3 September 2004

4 Although no turbines will be sited within the SAC, current layouts show turbines immediately adjacent to its boundary.

Linsiadar

LITTLE IS KNOWN about the Linsiadar proposal. A *West Highland Free Press* report dated May 21 2004 described it as a 'crofter-led' development but gave no source.

It added that 'a number of potential developers had been approached and more would be contacted ... before a final decision is made'.

The current front runner seems to be a company called Virtual Utility Ltd. Interestingly, one-time *West Highland Free Press* owner and former energy minister, Brian Wilson, who has a house on Lewis and family connections with the island, is listed as having been a director for ten months, from 1 September 2003 to 25 May 2004.

Other directors include Kevin Jenden, Michael Annis, and Iain Macaulay, also believed to have island connections. Shareholders include two companies registered in the British Virgin Islands where company information is not accessible to the public.

A company called Virtual Utility was associated with a controversial plan to construct the Chomutov Wind Park Project (325MW) on a NATURA 2000 site in the Czech Republic. *V&S News* does not know its current status.

'Suppose we took one of our islands – Islay or Lewis. Suppose, in conjunction with wind and wave power development, we turned the whole island into a gigantic advert for the environmental benefits of green power ...'

**Jim Hunter, Highlands and Islands Enterprise
November 2001**

Barvas Moor Designation notes

SPECIAL PROTECTION AREAS

Annex I species – populations of European Importance:
Black throated Diver – 6.9% of breeding UK population,

Golden Eagle – 1.5% of UK breeding population,
Golden Plover – 8.8% of UK breeding population,
Merlin – 1.5% of UK breeding population, Red-throated Diver – 6.4% of UK breeding population.

Migratory species – populations of European Importance:
Dunlin – 33.2% of breeding Baltic/UK/Ireland population, Greenshank – 0.3% of Europe/Western Africa population.

RAMSAR SITES

The Lewis Peatlands are one of the largest and most intact areas of blanket bog in the world, supporting a number of rare species of wetland birds including

nationally important populations of the Divers *Gavia stellata* and *G. arctica*, the plover *Pluvialis apricaria* and the Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*. During the breeding season the site regularly supports 31 per cent of the Baltic/UK Ireland population of dunlin *Calidris alpina schinzii*.

IMPORTANT BIRD AREAS

Red-throated diver, Black-throated diver, Golden Eagle, Merlin, Eurasian Golden Plover, Dunlin.

SPECIAL AREAS OF CONSERVATION⁴

Annex I habitats including Oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing waters, Natural dystrophic lakes and ponds, Blanket bogs, Northern Atlantic wet heaths, Depressions on peat substrates.

Annex II species including Otter

All puff and protons

Issue 12 / July 2002

British Energy

Scottish Update



"The Lewis Wind Farm will place the Hebrides at the forefront of the renewables revolution. The development will transform the economic landscape of the islands. Our task is to ensure long-term benefits for the community."

Alasdair Morrison MSP

Wind and nuclear - natural partners

The island of Lewis is set to have the country's largest wind farm bringing new jobs and a boost to the economy of the Western Isles.

East Kilbride-based British Energy and UK partners, AMEC are investing in a 300-turbine wind farm which will cost around £600 million.

The Lewis Wind Farm, at Arnish Point, will create at least 600 MW of electrical power – around one per cent of the UK's electricity needs - and help the UK Government achieve its targets for sustainable energy generation by 2010.

Dr Robin Jeffrey, British Energy's executive chairman said: "I'm delighted that British Energy is a partner in this



First Minister Jack McConnell hosted the 'Natural Elements' art exhibition at Scotland House, Brussels, sponsored by British Energy and AMEC and based on a theme of nature and the environment

warning, and giving Scotland a leading international role in developing sustainable energy systems of the future."

The project will bring considerable benefit to the

Isles as the 'renewables capital of Europe'.

If there is anyone left in the country who still thinks that windmills can change the world's climate and replace nuclear power ...

A RECENT PRESS AND JOURNAL report on David Bellamy's speech to the Ullapool group Highlands before Pylons caused a bit of a stooshie.¹

VIEWES OF SCOTLAND's Dave Bruce was quoted as being 'convinced' that a nuclear plant was planned for Lewis.

This is not quite true: he said that there were political grounds for *suspecting* it was the case and warned the anti-nuclear lobby to be alert. But, for a brief comment from (with all respect) a bit player, it seemed to touch a nerve.

An anonymous Scottish Executive spokesman claimed that, "There are no proposals for a nuclear power station on Lewis. It is for the industry to come forward with new proposals for new power plants.

'However, at the current time ... no nuclear power stations will be considered until a solution has been found for the problem of waste.'

Besides being a *non sequitur*, this might merit rebuke from Whitehall chums since energy policy – including nuclear build – is a reserved matter on which the Executive is not competent to comment. Nuclear waste is Westminster's baby, even if no one seems minded to hold it.

AMEC's spokesman said, 'I almost feel it is a question that does not deserve a response'. And gave none.

True to form, Brian Wilson accused David Bellamy of 'complete lunacy', of indulging in conspiracy theories and probably much else besides. Helpful.

But, although he pops up everywhere, it is a year since

he quit as energy minister. So he wouldn't know if proposals had been mooted. Would he?

British Energy was more forthright: 'There will be no nuclear power station built on Lewis'. Well, as they're broke, they would say that. Whether it also goes for BNFL was not clear.

So, is it a firm promise from nuclear's big boys – or do those pesky NIMBYs have a point?

VIEWES OF SCOTLAND has consistently argued that the wind scam is, in part at least, a smokescreen for a nuclear revival. Many on Lewis share that view.

British Energy managing director Mike Alexander said recently that, 'If new reactors are built, we would like to operate them'.² Two weeks later, despite Whitehall and Holyrood being ankle-deep in reports on 'renewable' energy, Tony Blair told a House of Commons committee that nuclear power was back on the agenda, following 'lobbying' from the US.³

The press is currently awash with the usual muddled debate on nuclear's 'green' credentials.

The partnership between Britain's largest nuclear generator and its largest nuclear constructor would exert a powerful hold over both landowners and people on the Western Isles. Were tourism to decline as a result of industrialisation, as we predict it would, that hold would become stronger by the day. This would not be entirely to the disadvantage of the generators.

They must have their costly grid upgrades to get wind power to market. But wind's average output is about a quarter of its maximum output and, by definition, for about half of the time it's less than that.⁴ So, lots of spare capacity earning nothing.

And would the turbines not all be due for de-commissioning in 25 years time? With all those ever-so-expensive grid upgrades still there?

Nuclear on Lewis? Don't talk daft.

Notes

1 *Press and Journal*, 4 September 2004

2 *Independent on Sunday*, 20 June 2004

3 *Guardian*, 7 July 2004

4 Current DTI figures put the average capacity factor for on-shore wind at just over 24 per cent and falling. The Lewis wind carpet suggests a higher figure but BWEA claims are undeniably optimistic.

VoS News

The Views of Scotland Newsletter No 3 April 2003

Finnie's Folly or DTI play: Does Dough-for-Blow scam herald comeback for nuclear?

Make no mistake. The Breeze Wheeze is a cover for a Nuclear Revival.

Westminster has decided to cover Scotland with wind turbines and export their flaky product down south to meet England's meaningless Kyoto targets. It's well on the way to doing it.

The consequences to jobs in Scotland's tourism and conventional energy sectors are irrelevant.

The damage to the environment is of no interest to

MSP candidate calls for an end to wind-power carnage

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oldest, most profitable and dirtiest coal in the country to provide the power turbines appear to be producing.

And our chums in the power sector make a bob or two on the way to the renewables Obligation price fixing.

What on earth for? All in the land has told us it won't work.

The Scottish power engineer

See www.viewsofscotland.org