To all our fantastic SAS Supporters

Happy Xmas!
From the team at SAS
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Dear Supporters,
With Xmas upon us once more, we bring you a round up of all the latest news to hit the headlines over the past six weeks, including our visit to the SNP conference, the Smith Commission outcome, and the new, emerging picture of the world energy markets.

Our thanks to Iain Green for his wonderful Xmas cartoons, and also to a few very special individuals who have selflessly campaigned against turbines and in the process provided much support and assistance to us all; Angela Kelly of Country Guardian, Gillian Bishop and Dave Bruce of Views of Scotland, Andrew Joicey and all at Sustainable Shetland. We wish the latter all the very best at the Supreme Court later this week and hope that Santa brings them, and us all, a much-deserved Xmas present this year!

A weekend with the SNP....

Mid November saw the much anticipated SNP Conference take place in Perth and SAS’s Linda Holt was there, along with other SAS regulars, to press our point home.

What’s the point of spending hundred of pounds and giving up a weekend to man (or should that be woman?) the SAS stand at the SNP party conference? It doesn’t, after all, halt government wind policy or even any of the wind proposals still threatening so many of us. This year’s SNP conference in Perth was the best-attended ever, with a ‘we love Alex’ demo outside and a jubilant atmosphere inside. The prospect of putting out the anti-wind message at such a venue was hardly enticing, especially with SAS’s regular lobbyists Graham and Marion Lang otherwise engaged.

And yet it proved worthwhile, even uplifting, for SAS’s hardy volunteers: Ann Cowan, Derek Powell, Aileen Jackson and Angela Shiells. We met old friends and made new ones among the delegates, including councillors, MSPs, ministers and both outgoing and incoming First Ministers.

While many SNP members were from urban areas and professed to like, or not mind turbines, welcoming them as an alternative to nuclear power, most listened politely to our contrary arguments and took away our literature to read. It was especially pleasing to see how many younger members were open to our critique of
current wind policy, and we even had self-confessed "SNP-Green" activists telling us that wind turbines were most definitely not green!

Almost everyone agreed that it was wrong that the huge profits from wind largely flowed out of Scotland and provided very little meaningful benefit to communities. A number complained that community benefit was often divisive, unduly restricted and ineffectual - as one well-informed Glaswegian SNP member asked, ‘how often can you paint your village hall?’ These discussions prompted one delegate to suggest a wind fund along the lines of the sovereign oil fund the SNP aspires to - it would be funded by a (in some cases retrospective) tax on developers and operators, and reserved for environmental preservation and enhancement, including future removal of defunct turbines and site restoration. We ran the idea by the RSPB on a neighbouring stand whom we were pleased to see collecting objections to wind farms in the Flow Country. The RSPB were enthusiastic, partly because they are currently dealing with the environmental consequences of open cast coal mine sites which have been abandoned without adequate restoration funds. We floated the idea briefly past Nicola Sturgeon and we’ll be working it up into a fully-fledged policy suggestion in due course.

We signed up over a score of new members and almost nabbed the First Minister himself. Not one to flinch from a challenge, Aileen Jackson had the First Minister reaching for a pen to sign up when he suddenly realised what he was doing and drew back!

By way of compensation, he gave her a smacker on the lips (which I sadly missed snapping). His parting shot to the ‘girls’ as he called us on the SAS stand: ‘I don’t agree with you but keep campaigning. It does bring improvements you know’.

Of course this is the spin you would expect from the great spinmeister himself, but behind it is this truth: the opposition to wind is not going away, it is growing as the problem with wind grows, and government cannot ignore it. This was tacitly acknowledged in our conversations with Nicola Sturgeon, ministers like Paul Wheelhouse and Richard Lochhead, and MSPs like Chic Brodie and Aileen McLeod (now the new Environment Minister). And this is why it is important SAS is at the party conferences, however angry and desperate we might sometimes feel.
Still in the boot….

The publication of the Smith Commission’s report on 27th November was something of an anti-climax all round, and energy was no exception. A paltry 28 pages contained a single paragraph on renewables:

*Energy Market Regulation and Renewables*

41. There will be a formal consultative role for the Scottish Government and the Scottish Parliament in designing renewables incentives and the strategic priorities set out in the Energy Strategy and Policy Statement to which OFGEM must have due regard. OFGEM will also lay its annual report and accounts before the Scottish Parliament and submit reports to, and appear before, committees of the Scottish Parliament.

In October we noted that Fergus Ewing compared setting energy policy to driving a rally car, with the UK government in the driving seat and the Scottish government consigned to the boot. It doesn’t look as if Lord Smith granted Mr Ewing’s wish to return to the front seat as co-driver. He’s still languishing in the boot, although the UK Government is promising to “consult” him occasionally.

The Smith Commission also recommended the transfer of the Crown Estate’s economic assets in Scotland, and the associated revenue, to the Scottish Parliament. As it stands, it’s hard to see that this will boost offshore development. Smith also stipulates that responsibility for managing these assets will be further devolved to local authority areas such as Orkney and Shetland. A Memorandum of Understanding between the Scottish and UK governments will ensure that such devolution is not detrimental to UK-wide critical national infrastructure regarding defence & security, oil & gas and energy.

**Reshuffle news**

The new First Minister also seems happy to leave the Minister in the boot. Contrary to rumour, Nicola Sturgeon’s reshuffle did not create a turbo-charged Minister for Energy in her cabinet. Mr Ewing remained in post with his previous tripartite portfolio. Perhaps energy policy is not very high on Miss Sturgeon’s agenda.

At SAS we are pleased that we can continue our relationship with Mr Ewing - we have another meeting lined up with him in January - while Miss Sturgeon’s reshuffles of Environment and Planning have caused us some headaches. We’d just got Paul Wheelhouse as Environment and Climate Change Minister to agree to a meeting with us and Dr Rachel Connor on water pollution caused by wind farms when he was replaced by Aileen McLeod so the whole process has to begin again.

Derek Mackay, the Minister for Local Government and Planning was replaced by Marco Biagi who became Minister for Local Government and Community Empowerment. What happened to planning? Days of uncertainty followed when the most senior Scottish Government planning officials thought Mr Biagi was in charge of planning, but Mr Biaggi himself didn’t know. Now it turns out that his boss, Alex Neil, the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Communities and Pensioners’ Rights has planning in his remit, and it won’t be devolved down to Biagi as it had been to his predecessor. One wonders if Miss Sturgeon’s administration really understands the importance of planning, and that if you want ‘community empowerment’, local planning democracy is essential.

Time for an anti-wind candidate…?

Alex Salmond’s decision to stand for Westminster means all eyes in Scotland, if not in the UK, will be on Gordon in Aberdeenshire in the run-up to next year’s general election. This is a golden opportunity for an independent anti-wind candidate to publicise the damage Mr Salmond’s irresponsible wind energy policy has inflicted.

We don’t know of a willing or suitable candidate, or indeed the group of individuals such a candidate would need in Gordon to support him or her, but we would be delighted to put interested parties in touch with each other if they email SAS – info@scotlandagainstspin.org

We have no doubt however, that if a suitable anti-wind candidate were to come forward, he or she would receive enthusiastic support from anti-wind campaigners across Scotland.
One to keep an eye on….

With the news just out that Jim Murphy is the new Scottish Labour leader, we thought we’d take a gander at his record on wind energy. He is on record in 2009 as a strong advocate for new nuclear generation in Scotland although under Johann Lamont Scottish Labour was split on the issue and tried its best to avoid it. But he has also championed Whitelee which is in his East Renfrewshire constituency. Aileen Jackson has visited him as her constituency MP several times and always been blanked when she raised concerns about local wind proposals. (On the other hand, he has been very responsive on animal welfare issues).

With a reputation for both pragmatism and ruthlessness, Mr Murphy may yet surprise us. More urgent matters will doubtless demand his attention as the general election approaches - such as winning back traditional Labour voters who migrated to the SNP during the referendum campaign. Windfarms may not be a relevant issue for these largely urban voters, but fuel poverty caused by green subsidies most certainly is.

Moreover his rival for the Labour leadership Neil Findlay is expected to play a key role in the new shadow cabinet. And Mr Findlay is an honourable anti-wind man who recognises the damage they do to both landscapes and communities.

Hurrah for the REF….

It would seem that information about the cost of energy subsidies has been withheld from the general public as it might be ‘confusing.’ At least that is the explanation that the DECC has come up with for not releasing the raw data alongside its report on the cost of the government’s green energy policies to the average domestic consumer in early November. (See Telegraph report.)

The DECC report claims that the average household fuel bill had fallen by £90 thanks to their policies, and a spokeswoman from DECC said: ‘Without the Government’s policies bills would still be higher.’ However, the Renewable Energy Foundation (REF) felt the raw data was important information and put in a Freedom of Information Request for the cost impact tables omitted from the original report. Low and behold, a very different picture has emerged, with the average household expected to pay as much as £250 more for electricity in order to pay for the Government’s green energy schemes, including the expensive subsidies paid to windfarms.

The release of the data now is going to embarrass ministers who are thought to be presiding over an increasingly expensive, and unnecessary subsidy system, but at SAS, we’re not sure which is worse; the cost of subsidies to business and energy consumers, or the fact that government has tried to spin the information about it so blatantly. Dr John Constable, Director of REF seems to agree: ‘The striking scale and increasing trend of the climate policy energy price impacts are bad enough in themselves, but DECC’s attempt to conceal these vitally important figures is breathtaking… very firm intervention is needed to clear the air and ensure that it will not happen again. This sounds like a job for the Prime Minister.’

Lima talks damp squib…?

It seems that the Climate change talks in Lima, while not being ‘disastrous’, have left the prospect of a future global climate change deal in Paris next year looking somewhat doubtful.

Late on Saturday night in Peru, negotiators agreed to a highly watered-down deal that stripped out a formal review process for the post-2020 commitments that countries will make before Paris next year. Difficult issues such as whether the Paris deal will be legally binding were also put off.

The deal – or the ‘Lima call for climate action’ as it is to e called, came after a day of deep divisions between developed countries and India, China and African countries over fundamental issues, and attempts by the developing nations to bid up the amount that should be paid to them by the developed nations in order to curb their carbon emissions. (See Christopher Booker’s latest column in the Telegraph.)

However, they did succeed in reintroducing words emphasising the distinction between developing and developed nations that the United States, supported by Australia, had fought to exclude.

In a highly succinct and damning summing up, Alden Myers, Director of Strategy and Policy for the Union of Concerned Scientist said, ‘The debate we witnessed here in Lima is not going to change that much in Paris.’
Inverclyde windfarm bites the dust...!

An application by Airtricity to operate a windfarm at Corlic Hill south of Greenock was first rumoured in 2002 and a campaign group Save Your Regional Park (SYRP) came together in 2005 under the chairmanship of Nigel Willis, aided and abetted by Archie Simpson and others. They worked tirelessly throughout the planning process to thwart the developers’ proposal.

Finally in 2007, two years after a ten-day public inquiry and advice by a reporter appointed by Scottish Ministers to refuse the application, the Scottish Government did just that.

Of course in the windfarm wars ‘final’ is a word that is seldom used because bad pennies do return and sure enough in June 2013 another developer, 2020 Renewables, lodged an application for what was grandly rechristened the Inverclyde Windfarm on the same site. Needless to say the SYRP swung into action and once again engaged with Inverclyde District Council. This was not an easy task as they are the most opaque and difficult local planning authority that SAS has come across. They do not display any representations or any responses from Statutory Consultees on the planning website all of which are public documents.

A predetermination meeting took place at which SYRP played a prominent role, along with Keep Corlic Wild and other stakeholders and community groups. Other than the developer, nobody addressed the meeting in support of the application. Inverclyde Planning Dept had already received 725 objections and only one letter of support for the application and the Inverclyde Planning Board Members unanimously recommended that the Full Council refuse the application. Based on this, and seven strong reasons for refusal the full Inverclyde Council meeting in early December refused the application on all the grounds set out.

This short article outlines the time line, with the usual appeal against refusal still to be dealt with, that campaign groups can face but so far so good. It illustrates the tortuous process and the commitment of a small group of dedicated and determined individuals and is an inspiration to all who seek to save our wild and rural landscapes from the predation of wind farm developers.

Three cheers for Save Your Regional Park!

Adverting standards slipping again....

In the middle of October, the UK had a bit of a ‘sticky moment’ in power terms, when the Didcot B combined gas power station caught fire. With four nuclear power stations already offline, the grid came under increasing pressure to meet the electricity needs of the country. It coped seamlessly though and no-one seemed to notice at the time, but controversy has now arisen following Ecotricity’s two-page advert in the Guardian newspaper on 7th November, claiming that the UK’s wind fleet had filled a 25% gap in power on the night in question.

The Renewable Energy Foundation examined Ecotricity’s claims in detail and found that they simply could not be substantiated; the four nuclear power stations were scheduled to be off-line and already taken account of by the grid, Didcot B was only scheduled to make a minimal contribution to the overall electricity supply that evening, and the shortfall between the hours of 9pm to midnight was actually plugged by large coal generators at Eggborough, Fiddlers Ferry, and Cottam, and from combined cycle gas turbines at Immingham and Medway and later at Langage. Wind power from Scotland, far from stepping into the breach, was actually being constrained off during that period and causing a separate problem for the national grid.

(Christopher Booker took up the cause in his column on 23rd November.)

Yet another example of the wind industry’s manipulative use of the media? Time for a complaint the Advertising Standard’s Authority?

We think so.
Our caring, sharing, listening Government...?

Widely reported in both regional and national press recently was the revelation that nearly 25,000 people have objected to proposals to build windfarms over 50MW in Scotland since 2010. (Letters of support for such schemes totaled 6,831 over the same period.) Murdo Fraser MSP made this comment:

‘It’s clear from the rise that the SNP is continuing to invite major applications which may fit the Scottish Government’s own policy, but are completely unacceptable to the people who have to live beside them.

‘Considering this steep increase, this is a chance for the new First Minister to rein in her predecessor’s obsession with wind turbines, and start listening to the views of rural Scotland.’

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UK leads the world - in offshore wind subsidies...!

The UK Government website is trumpeting the UK as the best place in the world to invest in offshore wind, and quotes Ed Davey:

With a stable and predictable policy regime, with more installed capacity than any other country in the world, with operating capacity set to double by 2020 and with a growing supply chain capability, the UK represents a fantastic investment opportunity.

Paul Homewood of the fantastic Not A Lot of People Know That.... blog picked up on this and had the following comment to make:

A fantastic investment opportunity? You can bet your bottom dollar it is. When you can get a guaranteed price of more than £160/MWh (€155 @ 2012 prices), against the £50/MWh you would get in the market, who would not want to invest?

It is claimed that the country is on track to have 10GW of offshore capacity by 2020. At an average subsidy of, say, £100/MWh, this will hand the operators an annual subsidy of more than £3 billion, all funded by bill payers and in addition to the market price received.

Instead of claiming the UK is a “world leader in offshore wind”, Davey should perhaps be asking himself why there are so few being built elsewhere.

Our thanks to Paul. We don’t think there’s anything we need to add to that...!
**Country Guardian tribute…**

When Graham Lang started to look for how to campaign against a wind farm near to him in Fife the first resource he found was Angela Kelly’s *Country Guardian* online. That was 8 years ago and already *Country Guardian* had been leading the battle since the first wind turbines started to appear in the Lake District 16 years earlier. Ann West, Angela’s colleague at *Country Guardian* for all of those years, takes up the story

Angie and I met around 1993 when we became involved in fighting to save the hills of Wales from the march of turbines. The size of the applications was much smaller than now, usually only 150 feet to blade tip but they seemed just as threatening as the current larger developments do. We were recruited by Joseph Lythgoe who had been touring the country and had arranged a meeting in a hotel in Llandrindod Wells to bring together local people who were opposing the spread of windpower in Mid-Wales.

Angie was inspired by his passion for the countryside and the importance of protecting our finest landscapes and *Country Guardian* was born. She toured the Principality in her camper van, bedecked with leaflets and illustrations of the destruction, which was beginning to appear in Powys and Ceredigion. At weekends we would visit local shows with our wares and gradually groups of residents began to realise what this kind of industrial developments would mean for the uplands.

She is relentless in her pursuit of knowledge chasing up information gleaned from the newspapers, trying to pass on both technical and local experience obtained from her ever-increasing bank of professionals and amateurs alike. From senior politicians to engineers, all are generous in sharing their skills with Angie. Anyone who has met her will recognize her determination to establish an excellent information service to help new groups of opponents. Tirelessly supplying emails full of precise and accurate facts and figures, lifting the spirits of people new to facing the unstoppable juggernaut that seems to be coming towards them. After a telephone call from her the unthinkable seems possible and this can mean a call from Australia, New Zealand, France, Germany, United States and of course anywhere in the United Kingdom. Dozens of people regard her as a friend, her dedication to saving the wild places is Herculean and her unswerving loyalty to *Country Guardian* members makes us all proud to be part of a tiny organisation which, under her guidance, has become a name that even the wind industry regards as formidable.

Angela Kelly is still working there on a daily basis and has been consistently for 24 years. In 2012 *Country Guardian* won *Environmental or Access Initiative of the Year* at *The Great Outdoors* awards, in recognition of the fantastic service it provides. Anyone and everyone turning the pages of this newsletter can be grateful to her for her enduring commitment. A friend in need is a friend indeed. SAS salute Angie and send her very special Christmas greetings.

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**BBC Christmas miracle…?**

Well no, not quite, but they have managed to cover a story that doesn’t show wind turbines up in a good light for a change.

It’s the recent news that researchers at Stirling University have completed a study looking at the potential mortality effects of small ‘micro-turbines’ on bird and bat populations, and are recommending that there need to be strong planning measures put in place to protect their habitats and keep these turbines away from feeding and breeding grounds. Why? Well, as we have all known for a long time, turbines have a harmful effect on bird and bat mortality and on a greater scale than had to date been realised. You can read the full BBC report on [windwatch.org](http://windwatch.org)
John and George Barber, who farm near Berwick, have three times been given planning permission for a generator which would provide their electricity - only for the approval to be quashed at the high court following judicial review.

In November 2013, Northumberland County Council considered for the third time, a planning application for a 47.1 metre turbine at Brackenside, between Ford and Lowick, which would be located just 1km from the Barmoor windfarm, where EDF is currently erecting six 110-metre-high turbines.

This application had already been granted planning permission twice, in February and November 2012, but another local farmer and well known anti windfarm campaigner, Andrew Joicey had asked for judicial review of both these decisions, claiming on each occasion that the council had acted unlawfully in the process of dealing with the application.

The authority conceded and both planning permissions were quashed by the High Court, in 2012 and 2013 respectively.

After last November’s decision, Mr Joicey again applied for judicial review, citing six grounds of unlawfulness in planning procedure and the judgement was again in Mr Joicey’s favour, quashing the planning permission.

Mr Justice Cranston criticised the county council for a ‘serious breach of its statutory obligations’ in failing to make documents available, taking ‘a dim view of any public authority which backdated a document in a manner which could give a false impression to the public’.

The Barbers, who are obviously gluttons for punishment say they will now apply for a fourth time. The question is, can Northumberland County Council get their act together? Our hero, Mr Joicey will certainly be watching!!

Help Needed....

E.on have now lodged two applications with the Scottish Government to build a total of 44 turbines at two sites. The first is at Benbrack near Carsphairn and the second for a development of 26 x 127.5m turbines by Loch Urr, just 5km south of the conservation village of Moniaive.

The large amount of wildlife in the area, including otters, whooper swans, red kites hen harriers and peregrines, will all be under threat, and the Save Loch Urr campaign group are asking for help in lodging objections to the application at the Consents Unit by 12th January 2015.

For more information on how to object you can go their website, or use the objection postcard attached, to this newsletter, or contact Caroline.pridham@birdlife.org for a pro-forma letter.
Letters to the press....

There have been some great letters in the press recently, and we’ve selected just a few of them for you to see.

I agree entirely with Linda Holt’s despair (Letters, 22 November) at the lack of protection for the environment from wind farms by bodies set up for the purpose over the last seven years. The John Muir Trust is the only one which has done its job.

In 2006, RSPB, SNH and Historic Scotland objected to the Auchencorth wind farm application. Then the pressure started. The RSPB were the first to withdraw their objection, which had specified danger to birds, especially migrating pink-footed geese and damage to a rare lowland peat bog.

SNH maintained its objection on landscape but removed it on birds. Historic Scotland also withdrew its objection to Auchencorth.

After five years the Auchencorth application was defeated at public inquiry thanks to hard work and expense from Midlothian Council and Penicuik Environment Protection Association.

The National Trust for Scotland has care for land on the Pentland Hills but has refused to object to a wind farm in the Midlothian basin at Mount Lothian with nine turbines 102m high breaking the landscape of this area between the Pentland and Moorfoot Hills.

At different times four Government Reporters have said this area should be protected and yet the National Trust for Scotland stays silent.

My husband and I have, reluctantly, cancelled our subscriptions to all three bodies. The John Muir Trust has enjoyed our full support.

Celia Hobbs
More letters to the press....

SAS Supporter Geoff Moore has also been busy writing letters to the press and this one, published in the Scotsman at the end of November caught our eye:

‘Wind farms are built faster than the grid expands. The problem is that on windy days we need to pay windfarms to stop spinning because the grid close to windfarms fills to capacity. The amount of wasted electricity is growing.

According to the Renewable Energy Foundation, the record was broken on Sunday. Those promoting renewables like to boast how many homes can be powered by each scheme, so here’s another boast: on just eight recent days enough electricity to power 50,000 homes for a year was wasted.

We are all paying for this electricity that we never receive.

Geoff Moore’

Nice one – playing them at their own game!

And a letter to us from another of our Supporters reminding us that Xmas is fast approaching....

‘That’s the time the “Turbine Taliban” may try to use to slip through their absurd planning proposals. They hope everyone will be too busy preparing for the celebrations, or will be off on holiday. They also hope the many public holidays over the festive season may be counted as “working days” by the uninformed. This could severely shorten your actual time limits to put in objections. Please be aware and keep an extra eye out, especially in the sneaky small print of your local paper. Please pass on this message to others who might be affected. Regards, Andy.’

So if you’re battling against turbine development in your area, make sure you keep an eye on those deadline dates over Xmas!

And talking of the John Muir Trust, they have just been voted the Outdoor Campaigner of the Year for their work in protecting wild land.

Topping a poll of more than 10,000 voters, organised by the TGO magazine, JMT won the top prize in this year’s Great Outdoors Awards.

To find out more and for info on their campaign against the Stronelairg windfarm, check out their website.

In a recent announcement Lindsay Leask, Senior Policy Manager at Scottish Renewables commented on the awarding of consent to the Inch Cape, Neart na Gaoithe and Seagreen Alpha and Bravo offshore wind farms, as reported in www.offshorewind.biz. In his own inimitable style, Rob Trythall of No Tyree Array left this response:

You say, “This announcement comes after years of hard work, including the production of extensive environmental surveys, from all the developers involved” as if this has been some disproportionate task.

The L&C process requires this work to be done. The fact is that Developers underestimated the ‘hard work’ required. In the case of Neart Na Gaoithe/Mainstream it was held in the consenting process for over 2 yrs; a process that Scottish Government pledged developers would be a one-stop-shop-9 month process. Does one speculate that over 2 yrs ago Neart Na Gaoithe/Mainstream may have submitted a flawed consent submission, and have only now embraced the ‘hard work’ required?

Regarding Contracts for Difference, Scotland needs a reality check. In Dec 2013 NO Scottish project made the cut of affordability. Beatrice made it with a re-application, although there was speculation that this was a pre Referendum sop, so unless there has been some re-appraisal then it is reasonable to assume there are cost factors pertaining to Scottish Projects that don’t apply, to the same degree, as they do in England, ie more adverse weather, and wind, which may make development costs higher than comparable English sites.

As there is only approx. 800MW of capacity up for grabs in the forthcoming round, then CfD awards for all these Scottish projects is some way off, as they will also be competing with comparable generation from English projects.’

Says it all really, we think and interestingly, no one else has added further comment. Well done Rob!

Topping a poll of more than 10,000 voters, organised by the TGO magazine, JMT won the top prize in this year’s Great Outdoors Awards.
It seems almost perverse that those presently holding the power to decide future energy provision in Scotland are pursuing a renewables course that will end in disaster.

Even in Germany, where there was a similar blindness to reality to that now prevailing in Scotland, the penny seems to have dropped. They have taken wind and solar power farther and faster than any major country and now find themselves out on a limb: the highest electricity prices in Europe and rising, an unreliable grid system and, irony of ironies, CO2 emissions are actually going up.

Angela Merkel’s number two, Sigmar Gabriel, has now declared emission targets cannot be met and that German industry is now at risk and coal planned by the renewable lobby.

Could a more stark warning of following the SNP’s declared line on energy be possible? Or is it once again, as in the referendum, a matter of shutting out any inconvenient truth, closing your eyes to all evidence and warnings from experts, relying on a few assertions from vested interests and ploughing on regardless? This they can do, presumably in the knowledge that ‘tainted’ nuclear and other fuel fired generation from other parts of the UK will keep the Scottish lights on. It is madness.

Alexander McKay

...surely time for the politicians to take the blinkers off and to ACT...

Wind turbines as generators or consumers...?

For those that have the misfortune to live within sight of turbines, it can often be mystifying when on a quiet and totally calm day the turbines seem to be turning, sometimes really quite fast. On just such a day, SAS Supporter Geoff Moore decided to take a closer look at the turbines near to his home to see just what was going on.

This is not the only example of ‘strange’ behavior being observed by wind turbines; similar activity has been seen at Neilston windfarm, where it is thought that sometime the turbines are fired up on cold, still days to prevent ice forming on the blades.

Geoff’s observations give rise to some further important questions though, not least of which is just how much power are turbines consuming when trying to ‘catch’ the wind, and just how critical might this factor be when the spare capacity on the grid has reached an all time low? Geoff’s account of his day of discovery is attached for you to read.

Drop in fossil fuel prices threatens renewables....

One has to wonder if Alex Salmond’s departure from the SNP leadership wasn’t just in the nick of time for him. With oil and gas prices falling dramatically this year (oil by 44% since June) the impact upon politics, industry and the climate could be very radical indeed. The impact will be felt around the globe, and threatens to be particularly severe in Scotland. (See Independent Newspaper report.)

The biggest threat posed is to the renewable energy industry dominated by wind, solar and hydro power, all of which have been banking on a decline of fossil fuel supply pushing prices of conventional energy up and making renewables more economically attractive. In reality, the opposite is happening, and in Scotland this may be a ‘double-whammy’. With falling oil prices, our oil wealth from the North Sea will deplete, the cost of renewables, and the fledgling fracking industry will look comparatively high and undesirable/unaffordable. Meanwhile, consumers will benefit from falling prices at the petrol pumps and on consumer goods, which may influence the way people decide to vote in next year’s election – food for thought!

Water still flowing....

We recently sent an update to you all on the on-going struggle that Dr Connor is having over possible water contamination caused by wind turbine construction works. Well she is not the only person concerned about this issue at Whitelee.

Elliot Davis, who moved to the Eaglesham Moor area 9 years ago, has now spoken publicly about the problems he has experienced with his private water supply since the windfarm at Whitelee was built. You can read more in this Daily Record report.
**Research, research, research....**

An interesting new report from researchers in Denmark has shown that the noise from wind turbines does cause annoyance and sleep deprivation. It is acknowledged that there are potentially detrimental health impacts, (possibly resulting from sleep deprivation) but as yet, no conclusive evidence has been found linking the noise of wind turbines with conditions such as tinnitus, hearing loss, vertigo or headache.

You can read the full paper on the Wind-watch website.

**Government Research....** Still with noise, the DECC announced at the beginning of December that they are going to commission research into the issue of noise from wind turbines, specifically Amplitude Modulation (AM) in order to provide guidance on how appropriate thresholds might be set in planning guidance and conditions. (See report in Daily Telegraph.)

At first glance, this looks like very good news, possibly opening the door to compensation for those who are currently living with unacceptable noise intrusion from wind developments. However, what should be fantastic news is being given a very cautious reception by many campaigners, including Andrew Joicey in Northumberland, who said, ‘... having spent a lot of time studying the way in which the wind industry, DECC, and many members of the acoustics profession have colluded in the past, always in the interests of wind developers rather than noise ‘victims,’ I remain extremely cautious.’

Bill Short, from Kirkwhelpington, who has opposed a number of windfarm proposals, told how he had cited amplitude modulation at a public inquiry in 2007, only for an acoustic expert, reportedly lined up by DECC for its latest study, to claim it does not exist, and commented, ‘I do not expect to get a great deal from it.’

**Marine research needed....** In November, a pod of forty pilot wales was spotted in shallow waters near the offshore wind turbines on the Essex coast. They were observed as stressed and disorientated, and one whale was found dead after the rest of the pod had moved off. Questions are now being asked about the possible role that the turbines may have played; the noise and vibration made during construction works, and the electromagnetic fields created by under-sea cables, which may affect the navigational abilities of whales, dolphins and porpoises. Research in this field is however, still fairly scarce and the questions remain unanswered. Something that perhaps Greenpeace could get behind instead of desecrating ancient monuments at the UN climate talks in Peru...?

**Google...** In 2011, Google brought to a halt their research and development programme into renewable energy and focused exclusively on deploying the existing technologies. A PR campaign ensued painting a rosy picture, but the reality behind this was somewhat different. In a report published in the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers’ Spectrum magazine, two Google engineers, Ross Koningstein and David Fork came clean on why Google changed its tack: ‘Trying to combat climate change exclusively with today’s renewable energy technologies simply won’t work; we need a fundamentally different approach.’

In other words: much more realistic analysis of the current difficulties of tackling climate change using today’s technologies, whatever your own particular take on climate change.

**SAS bookshelf....**

*Energy Matters* is a website with a mass of information about current energy markets, supplies, policies and innovations in the UK and global markets. Set up by Euan Mearns, this site is a continuation of the fantastic Oil Drum blog (which is now archived on the Energy Matters site), and is jointly run with Roger Andrews. Both Euan and Roger have long and extensive experience of energy, both starting off academic careers in geology and geophysics at UK Universities before going on to work in a very wide variety of engineering and energy related projects. Both now semi-retired, they have spent the last 7 years studying, analyzing and commenting on current energy news.

There are extensive archives and very useful articles explaining some of the basics, aimed at beginners. The article on *Energy for Beginners* is particularly interesting, with Fig 2 shows the paltry contribution that wind energy made during a two-week period in Dec 2012 to the total energy supply mix and energy demand.

Their guiding principle on all matters is to look at the data and see what it is telling them rather than the politicians or lobby groups. As Mr Andrews put it in his brief biographory: ‘On specific energy and climate issues I’m guided by what the data tells me, not by claims made in the scientific literature. This is why you will find me disagreeing with most of the “consensus” views on climate...’

Refreshing!
Berlin blog....

Xmas greetings from Berlin. The lights are up here and the many fantastic Christmas markets that line the streets and squares of Berlin (over 60 this year) are all in full swing. It really is a sight to behold, although as yet, we haven’t had any snow – we’re still waiting!

One of the bigger markets is outside Charlottenberg Palace and we went along, en famille, a couple of weeks ago to do some shopping, see the sights and drink in the atmosphere. I was disappointed to find that the central display piece had, what I can only describe as a large wind turbine on top! Less disappointing (to me – my children thought otherwise) was the fact that it was very cold with no wind at all, so the turbine remained static the entire afternoon. ‘I rest my case,’ I thought to myself, and was cheered to hear that many similar comments were being made at a book reading my husband went to the following week. ‘We know turbines don’t work, but it’s how we get out of the commitments we’ve made to the industry,’ was one such remark, made by someone who lives in the city and has no particular axe to grind about turbines impacting upon him. Bavaria, one of the 16 states of Germany, seems to have come up with an answer to halt major turbine construction though; the 10-H rule which was passed and implemented in mid-November.

The new rule means that a turbine cannot be placed nearer than a minimum of 10x its height to any building. If it is 200m in height, then it must be at least 2km away from the nearest building, if it is 120m in height, then it must be at least 1.2km away etc.

No other state has implemented such a tough rule, and in a densely populated country like Germany, this minimum distance means that very few turbines will now be able to be built in this region. Support for wind energy is apparently still running at roughly 70% in Bavaria, so it’s not entirely clear why this new legislation has been introduced, until that is, one takes a closer look at how the feed-in tarriffs work in Germany. Bavaria has more PV solar installed than any other state, which attracts a much higher rate of subsidy than does wind energy. As a result, they receive more subsidy than any other state despite producing less electricity. Consequently, they simply don’t

And finally....

UN Climate Change talks - there is much chatter on the wires about the climate talks in Lima, Peru along with associated stories, some of which are mind-boggling.

One such story from Japan revealed that the UN has no rules, or even definition of what ‘climate finance’ actually is or how it is to be spent, with the result that Japan spent $1 billion of UN Climate Finance on building 3 new coal-fired power stations in Indonesia. They have defended their actions on the grounds that they have a) done nothing illegal (they haven’t) and b) many countries don’t have technologies that tackle climate change and these coal-fired stations are ‘cleaner’ than older ones. You couldn’t make it up really, and about the only thing that everyone seems to agree on is the fact that UN Climate Finance is ‘a mess’!

You can read the full report on Yahoo News.

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If you have news or ideas about turbines or wind energy send your contributions to info@scotlandagainstspin.org

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