Dear Supporters,

Welcome to purdah! That’s the term politicos use for the run-up to an election when parliament shuts up shop, and government dissolves into party-political electioneering.

When SAS had its much-postponed meeting with the Scottish Energy Minister last week, Mr Ewing was relishing his purdah. Officially let off his policy-making duties, with the bonus of a likely hung parliament at Westminster. After all, who knows what motley crew will form a coalition, or pull the strings in a minority government? Or what will happen to UK energy policy in the inevitable backroom dealing? A former Scottish First Minister as UK Energy Secretary perhaps?

To be fair, this did not come up at the meeting as the joke (?) was only made on the way out. We were hardly celebrating though as the Scottish Government had once again got away with sitting on its hands – and for what is turning out to be the indefinite future. The referendum froze energy policy for months, if not years. Then afterwards we were told nothing could change until the new First Minister had bedded down. Once the current general election shenanigans are over, next year’s Holyrood elections will exert another dead hand on the government of Scotland.

We had heard whispers from officers at local and national levels that an announcement of change in energy policy was coming last month. Problems like the Longannet crisis, security of supply, fuel poverty and meeting out-of-date renewable energy targets 5 years early have been attracting
unprecedented levels of public criticism – not just as policy ‘challenges’ in their own right but as direct consequences of the Scottish Government’s obsession with wind energy. Even the Labour Party, aka the Shadow Energy Minister Tom Greatrex (MP for Rutherglen & Hamilton West), has realized too much wind has messed up Scotland’s electricity.

So we were invited to think change was coming with the imminent publication of the delayed Renewables Routemap (due in December 2014) and wind turbine stats (an updated SNH map had been due in August 2014). The Scottish Government could no longer ignore this momentum and its promotion of wind at the expense of everything else would shortly give way to other priorities. Apparently not.

The new Routemap has been postponed again. There is no date for its publication. The new wind turbine map won’t be available for a long time (tricky negotiations with DECC apparently plus technical ‘challenges’) although the hope is to release the raw data by the end of the year. Mr Ewing insisted on speaking to us about what the Scottish Government was trying to do about other energy issues (interconnectors, Peterhead, carbon capture & storage, connecting the islands, wave and tidal, etc) as if they constituted a coherent energy plan. Does that mean wind is no longer such a priority, or is it just the same old rhetorical avoidance which ministers have been practicing for at least two years now?

For a party wanting above all to secure independence, this is undoubtedly a shrewd move. Scottish energy policy is not a vote-winner nor a nationalist recruiting sergeant, and changing it would only draw attention to its failings as well as alienating Green support, so better to leave it be and sit out the growing tide of criticism. Expediency is all. Anyone who doubts the SNP determines all its policy via the prism of independence need only recall Mr Ewing’s decision to launch yet more studies, now also delayed, into fracking last month. Doing nothing also makes the reflex of blaming the UK government for Scotland’s energy problems look more plausible.

Mark Rowley, one of the SAS team who met Mr Ewing, proposed that a de facto policy shift was taking place. With the closure of Longannet and no plans to renew either nuclear or fossil fuel generating capacity in Scotland, the aim was no longer an energy-independent country producing enough renewable energy for its own needs. Instead Scotland exports excess wind energy to the rest of the UK when the wind blows and imports fossil fuel and nuclear generated electricity when it doesn’t. Our fate as the UK’s wind farm is sealed and we’ll see more development of industrial wind together with the infrastructure for greater interconnection. A rum scenario indeed for a party which claims to put Scotland first. Mr Ewing looked a bit uncomfortable but did not demur.
The patience of Job....

Like many anti-wind farm campaigners, we’re feeling more like Job every day.

Whether it’s comprehensive up-to-date stats on turbine development, or studies into the impacts of turbines, problems and publication delay seem to be legion. No one should be surprised, given the sheer quantity and speed of wind development and the complexity of its multiple environmental, economic and social impacts.

Cock-ups may be inevitable, but they are often laced with conspiracy, if only of the passive kind. A government which has decided to sit on its hands about wind policy is not going to put a great deal of energy (or money) into pushing officials to obtain and publish the data which would make policy change irresistible.

We understand that a wish to produce a genuinely comprehensive and accurate picture of all turbine development in Scotland (in contrast to the very unreliable mapping produced by SNH), complete with an interactive map, is responsible for the no-show since last summer. There is no publication schedule as yet.

The 14-month (sic.) study into the visual, noise and shadow impacts of ten wind farms on residential amenity, which SAS lobbying prompted and on whose project steering group Graham Lang and Linda Holt sit, has just reached the stage of a final draft, with an unspecified date for publication after the election.

The house price study, also very overdue, has no completion date in view as attempts to obtain post-2010 sales data continue.

A few glimmers on the horizon....

The Scottish Government Energy Consents Unit (ECU), which the Energy Consents & Deployment Unit (ECDU) has become in an internal reorganization of the Scottish Government energy team, is the department which deals with applications for Section 36 (power plants over 50 MW) and Section 37 (major transmission projects) applications. In the next month or so, ECU will join the online planning world. While local planning authorities and the DPEA have been making all the documents, consultation responses and correspondence associated with planning applications publicly accessible online for years, SAS were not the first consultees to question the ECU’s lack of transparency when its then head promised us a solution almost two years ago.

The Citizens’ Juries study which pilots an alternative form of community engagement for local wind farm applications will be published after the election, with a launch on 20 May in Edinburgh.

An unexpected glimmer is offered by Aden Beresford’s report to SNH, Assessing the Success of Restoration and Reinstatement on Onshore Wind farms & Hydroelectric Schemes in Scotland. Although published, it’s not available on the SNH website but you can download it from the SAS site. It identifies extensive bad practice, environmental damage and poor monitoring and enforcement by local authorities and makes some excellent suggestions for improving policy and practice by all concerned. This is an individual graduate placement project which SNH has stressed it did not commission.

Nevertheless we’ve heard SNH is holding a Sharing Good Practice event entitled Monitoring and enforcement of on-shore renewables to discuss it. This will take place at Battleby on 22 May. Perhaps the Scottish Government should encourage post-graduate placements to look at aspects of wind farm developments if it wants high-quality studies published on time!

Anyone wishing to attend either of the above events should contact:

info@climatexchange.org.uk
Citizens’ Juries launch on 20th May
sgp@snh.gov.uk
SNH Sharing Good Practice on 22nd May

Our thanks to Steven Camley for this cartoon originally published in the Glasgow Herald, 9th February 2015
Have your say ...

Thanks to the plight of Longannet, the energy policy crisis has not escaped the attention of Mr Ewing’s colleagues at Holyrood. The last weeks have seen a debate in the chamber, Mr Ewing’s statement plus questions on ‘Scotland’s energy future: achieving security of supply and a balanced energy mix’, as well as a parliamentary question on the elusive SNH wind farm mapping.

On March 11 the Energy, Economy & Tourism Committee took evidence on Longannet and security of supply. It has just launched a call for evidence for an expanded inquiry into ‘Scotland’s energy needs in a changing UK electricity market – an inquiry into security of supply’, focusing on the themes of supply, demand, the transmission network and market functioning. SAS wrote to all E,E&T members to lobby for such an inquiry. Convenor Murdo Fraser has invited SAS to contribute and also urges our Supporters, whether as individuals or groups, to make submissions. The deadline is 6 May 2015.

The clock is also ticking for two consultations. SNH’s new draft guidance on Spatial Planning for Onshore Wind interprets and explains what last summer’s new Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) means for locating wind turbines. Although aimed at local authorities and developers, SNH’s renewables man, Brendan Turvey, told SAS that responses from individuals and groups, including community councils, are very welcome. The document makes for chilling reading; it spells out how much of Scotland, despite being designated wild or protected in some way, remains fair game for wind speculators. The closing date is 24 April.

The second consultation is on the Scottish Government’s Good Practice Principles for Shared Ownership of Renewable Energy Developments and runs until 9 June. It also includes workshops (contact Jennifer Ramsay for details). It aims ‘to set out good practice expectations for developers, communities and other stakeholders, as well as providing guidance on how best to deliver shared ownership projects’. The blurb says the Scottish Government ‘has been supportive of the shared ownership projects delivered in recent years, but recognises that considerable hurdles and issues remain. While progress to date is welcomed, there remains great potential for Scotland’s communities to engage with and benefit from renewable energy developments.’ Plenty of SAS Supporters could write a book on the ‘hurdles and issues’!

And talking of subsidies....

Ever wondered why that small turbine near you is on such a tall tower? Well the answer may be because the turbine has been ‘derated’ by the developer.

Derating is the practice used by some developers in order to claim a higher level of Feed in Tariff than they are strictly entitled to, and The Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) published a short briefing paper in February pointing out that this loophole in the FiTs scheme, if left unchecked through to the end of 2015, could end up costing bill-payers dear – more than £400 million in fact.

Feed-in frenzy: How a wind farm subsidy loophole is short-changing bill payers and damaging Britain’s clean energy market, IPPR - Garman J and Ogilvie C (2015) is available for download at the IPPR website

Wind turbine noise conference in Glasgow....

Wind Ince Europe are hosting the 6th International Conference on wind turbine noise this month, a must for anyone concerned with this particular wind turbine problem, particularly as it’s taking place in Glasgow!

These conferences happen biennially all around the world, (this is the sixth) so this is a fantastic opportunity to go along and hear from world experts in the field, and for ‘all those with an interest in wind turbine noise, its generation, its prediction, its assessment and its effects on people, to meet together and discuss common problems and solutions.’

The new Chair of the organising committee is professional accoustician, Dick Bowdler, (well-known to many SAS Supporters) and SAS will have a stand and representatives present throughout. The conference takes place on Monday 20th April to Thursday 23rd April at the Radisson Blu Hotel, Glasgow.

Further information, including a full programme, prices (not cheap, unfortunately) and details on how to register can be found at the wind turbine noise website.
Conservative promises...  
At Westminster....

On 6 March the Wind Farm Subsidies (Abolition) Bill enjoyed its second reading in the House of Commons. Before anyone gets excited the Private Members’ Bill was roundly defeated with 7 ayes to 38 noes.

The Bill was sponsored by Peter Bone MP, a serial Private Members’ Bill proposer, who is something of a clown, as the debate showed (Mr Bone had another Private Members Bill which sought to abolish DECC). This was perhaps why so few of the anti-wind MPs turned up to support Mr Bone.

During the debate the Energy Minister, Matthew Hancock spoke for the government. His basic argument against stopping subsidies was that the Conservatives were committed to cutting them, and were already doing so. Doing it any faster or more absolutely would endanger business, threaten offshore development, be mean to developers who already had projects in planning etc.

The minister was plainly exploiting the fatal ambiguity of the word ‘cut’ - does it mean ‘reduce’ or ‘abolish’? In a classic piece of triangulation, the Westminster Conservatives seem to be telling the wind industry and their coalition partners that ‘cut’ means reduce gently as developers are able to cut costs while buying off the wind objectors in Conservative constituencies by implying ‘cut’ means ‘abolish’.

Mr Hancock’s speeches were doubtless written for him by DECC. Before he became a Minister, Hancock was one of 100 Tory MPs who signed an open letter opposing continuing subsides for onshore windfarms in England. A vocal critic of windfarms in his constituency and a supporter of fracking, Hancock also welcomed the Tory election pledge last year to end state support for the sector.

Perhaps such slipperiness is the norm when ministers debate. Another MP, Nigel Adams MP whose own 10-minute rule Bill to abolish onshore wind subsidies was timed out before its second reading, reassured anti-windfarm campaigners in England. He said that the sole purpose of Bone’s Bill was to raise the issue of subsidies, get its seriousness recognised and ensure it became an election issue by including abolition of onshore windfarm subsidies in the Conservative manifesto. He said that this would now be the case.

We will have to see. Custom dictates manifestos will not be published until mid-April. Even then, a pledge to cut subsidies is unlikely to have all its i-s dotted and t-s crossed. Whatever Tory candidates say, there will be plenty of room for post-election horsetrading and for fervent lobbying by the wind industry and its allies.

Abolishing wind subsidies with immediate effect is the silver bullet we all dream of. We urge everyone to press their local candidates about precisely where they stand on this key question. If they say anything interesting, please let us know. We’ll publish their words and hold them to account.

In Scotland....

While we may fear that Westminster politicians from all three parties would rather see wind development continuing in the already trashed landscapes of Scotland than in their own backyards in the south, the Scottish Conservatives have again beaten the main parties at Holyrood and Westminster in standing up for the individuals and communities blighted by turbines.

It’s already over two years since the Scottish Conservatives became the first mainstream UK party to adopt an energy policy which radically constrained wind development. Now they’ve launched an action plan for rural Scotland which upholds a community right to block wind farms. Unlike the SNP Government, they would let local councils impose a moratorium on wind farm development, arguing that the Government’s moratorium on fracking has set a precedent. Taking their cue from Denmark, they also propose introducing a compensation scheme for loss of property value due to onshore wind developments, to be funded by the developer.

Finally, they want to bolster the Conservative commitment to ‘ending all onshore wind subsidies for projects granted planning consent after the General Election’ by abolishing business rates exemptions for large-scale renewable projects (ie. ones with a rateable value over £1 million). This would remove another hidden subsidy enjoyed by Scottish turbine operators, namely the renewable energy relief scheme, under which renewable energy projects are entitled to a discount on their business rates.

Of course, the Scottish Conservatives are a long way from forming a majority government at Holyrood, but we applaud their intentions and hope their Westminster cousins are listening.
SNP spring into Glasgow….

The SNP held their spring conference at Glasgow’s SECC this year, and SAS was there again to put our message across to delegates and attendees.

SAS regulars, Aileen Jackson, Angela Shiels, and of course, Graham and Marion Lang braved the fray (and the rather dark and difficult venue at Glasgow’s SECC ‘aircraft hangar hall’ – dark paint and low energy lighting), and reported back on their tiring but successful weekend.

‘There was a noticeable difference in the number of delegates seeking help and advice from SAS on fighting windfarm applications at this year’s SNP Conference…. due largely to the number of applications being submitted and the dawning realisation that wind turbine developments are creeping ever closer to towns and villages, no longer only visible on a hilltop in the distance!

‘Recent articles in the press have highlighted Dr Rachel Connor’s research into the contamination of private and public water supplies in the vicinity of Whitelee windfarm and further afield.* This was obviously a concern for many who visited our stand and a reason for signing up to receive our Newsletter, particularly amongst those who are opposed to fracking and the alleged effects it has on our water supply.’

And a very warm welcome to the many new SNP delegates who have joined us, whether they too wish to campaign or simply to find out more about why wind energy is a negative issue for so many voters in Scotland.

* Rachel attended the Conservative conference earlier in the month – third picture down - and there is a full update of her progress on pg 8 of this newsletter.
**Northern Ireland leads the way on turbine noise....**

In Northern Ireland, politicians have stated that the noise assessment rules for wind turbines (Etsu-R-97) are outdated and need urgent reviewing, as they are inadequate for assessing the impact of modern large turbines.

In a recently released report, the key findings of the Northern Ireland Assembly’s Committee for the Environment were:

- Planning conditions attached to successful applications should put the onus on developers to demonstrate compliance with noise limits, rather than the burden of investigation of complaints being the responsibility of local councils.
- Procedures need to be in place to clearly define when the concentration of windfarms sited in an area reaches saturation point, and to specify how planners should address such a situation.
- The Department should also review the guidelines for neighbour notification in the case of planning applications for wind turbines, with a view to extending the distance from the current 90m radius.

The committee did not make any specific recommendation for planners to take into account any potential adverse impact of wind turbines on the physical or psychological health of those living nearby, but did conclude that any significant evidence of such an impact should be given ‘serious consideration’ in assessing an application.

The committee also recommended:

- The Department should also establish procedures for monitoring wind turbine noise on an on-going basis and should work to establish independent research evidence on the long-term impact of this noise.
- The Department should now specify a minimum separation distance, as opposed to the current practice of advising a 500m set-back.
- The Department should work with local universities and commission independent research to measure and determine the impact of low frequency noise on those residents living in close proximity to individual turbines and windfarms in Northern Ireland.

They commented that, ‘...it seems apparent that the current guidelines in respect of permissible levels of noise are no longer adequate and that the research evidence available has increased significantly since 1997. The committee therefore recommends that the Department should review the use of the Etsu-R-97 guidelines on an urgent basis, with a view to adopting more modern and robust guidance for measurement of wind turbine noise...

‘The committee is also concerned that there does not appear to be continuous long-term monitoring of noise from wind farms, either by developers or by the relevant public sector organisations. If such information were available it would introduce an objective measure of the noise output of turbines, as opposed to the projected noise impact produced by a desk-top exercise as part of the application process.’

_We couldn’t agree more and think it’s about time all the UK Governments urgently reviewed Etsu-R-97 and set-back distances in the light of new and emerging evidence. Thus far though, the Westminster Government ‘has no plans to revise Etsu.’ Shame on them!_

**Planning Democracy Conference....**

Many people who get involved in anti-windfarm campaigns come into contact with the planning system for the first time, and find to their amazement that it is very unfairly biased in favour of developers and against the interests of individual residents.

If this is your experience, then ‘Planning: The People’s Perspective’, is an event you will definitely be interested in as it takes a sharp look at planning through the public eye. The day will allow those who have been affected by planning to share their experiences and look at ways of making planning work better for people.

So if you have been or are about to be affected by planning decisions, or if you have concerns about the way the Scottish planning system works, book yourself in to attend this event at Glasgow’s Trades Hall on Saturday 25th April 2015.

Further information/how to register can be found on the flyer attached to this newsletter and at the Planning Democracy website.
Dr Rachel Connor has sent us an update about her work in getting the risk of water pollution posed by windfarm construction recognised.

Whitelee Windfarm Extension Phase 3

We finally seem to be getting somewhere with our concerns about impacts on public and private water supplies caused by the existing Whitelee windfarm and, potentially, by the proposed Whitelee Phase 3. This Section 36 application is for a further 5 x 111m turbines, and will be determined by the Scottish Government. It’s currently with the DPEA, to whom we submitted representations about water contamination at Whitelee.

For the first time, the Reporters have asked SEPA, Scottish Water, the Drinking Water Quality Regulator (DWQR), and East Ayrshire and East Renfrewshire Councils to respond within 14 days to the evidence alleging contamination of public and private water supplies on the Whitelee site. They have also invited the regulatory authorities to attend the Public Inquiry which will be at the end of June.

This unprecedented consultation should allow closer examination of the role and effectiveness of our regulatory authorities. At long last the authorities appear to be taking notice of the growing concern about the environmental effects and potential public health impacts of siting windfarms on water catchment areas.

Water Catchment Areas: Find out if your water supply is at risk from a windfarm

Quite a number of people have been in touch with me asking for help trying to understand what protection they have for their water supplies if a windfarm has been consented in their area, or if one is being proposed.

I’ve prepared a Scotland Against Spin Guidance Note, ‘Windfarms and legislation protecting water supplies’, to provide a brief guide to legislation you can use to underpin an objection to a planning application, or to understand if your Local Authority or the Regulatory authorities have properly considered an already consented windfarm. It’s attached to this Newsletter, together with some draft pro formas (thanks to Dougie Moir) which can help you in approaching relevant authorities.

In the next Newsletter, I hope to provide more help with legislation which can be used for anyone who is on a private water supply, regardless of whether their water catchment area is in a statutory, designated drinking water protected area.

Unpolluted water is a very precious resource. And it is protected by very powerful Scottish, UK and EU legislation. It is apparent that in using wind farms to ‘save the planet’, little thought has been given to saving one of life’s essential ingredients - safe and wholesome water for all!

A line of wind turbines at the northeast edge of Whitelee

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An appeal from Graham Lang, chair of SAS....

The SAS core team knows very well how stretched we all are by the fight against wind. Whether responding to applications and campaigning locally, or lobbying nationally, the pressure on everyone’s time and resources is immense.

Like other campaigners, we have also been forced to recognise the dangers of chasing after lost causes, however righteous they may be. For these reasons, we are very cautious about asking our Supporters for money to support particular campaigns.

SAS’s own extremely limited funds pay for printing and mailing this Newsletter to Supporters not on email, leaflets and pop-ups, and stands and entry to conferences and events. Very occasionally, we’ve been able to pay for expert professional help (usually on noise) and small contributions to other campaigns such as Sustainable Shetland’s legal action. My colleagues in the SAS core team generously contribute travel and office expenses on top of their time and considerable talents. Blessed as SAS is, it still needs you. Our Supporters were asked to contribute an optional £10 on joining when we first launched SAS, and I have never asked for more money – until now.

A healthier bank balance would enable us not only to carry on funding the work we already do, but also to lend more support to promising fronts in the war on wind. One such is the issue of water contamination, which will be aired at the Public Inquiry for Whitelee windfarm Extension 3 in June. SAS has already contributed £500 but the costs of essential expert geohydrology opinion are considerably higher.

As our newsletters have reported, the threat of water contamination from windfarms has only recently come to light thanks to the pioneering work of Dr Rachel Connor, a semi-retired radiologist. Rachel has discovered that while constructing Scottish Power Renewables’ ‘flagship’ development at Whitelee, ground and surface water became contaminated, with excess organic matter as well as synthetic chemicals. Some of these compounds are associated with long-term toxicity to human health. During construction, the local water treatment works couldn’t cope with the deterioration in raw water quality from the reservoirs dependent on the Whitelee site and public drinking water frequently failed to reach regulatory standards. Much of Whitelee is built on a designated Drinking Water Protected Area (DWPA), which is afforded statutory protection to protect against just such water pollution.

All the turbines proposed in Whitelee 3 are sited on a DWPA, and it is a major coup by Rachel that Reporters will investigate the issue at the Public Inquiry. This will require specially commissioned geohydrology work, and a suitable expert witness in geohydrology, to lend authority, and further evidence, to Rachel’s arguments.

SAS believes this is a landmark case. The risk of water contamination from windfarms could be a game-changer, checking windfarm development across Scotland. (You just have to think of the public outcry about the risk to domestic water from fracking to see the potential.)

Whatever happens, there will be many other windfarms either consented or submitted as planning applications which will benefit from the experience gained in this case.

The geohydrology contribution to the Public Inquiry will cost c. £10,000. The local action group - POW (Protect Our Water) – is a tiny group of local residents immediately affected by Whitelee 3, and there is no other campaign group or NGO supporting Rachel or POW. This is why I think it’s imperative SAS steps in.

Hence my appeal now to you as SAS Supporters to bolster SAS funds, whether you are an individual or an affiliated group. All donations, however big or small, will be warmly welcomed and will significantly help this campaign.

With our grateful thanks,

Graham

Please make your cheque payable to Scotland Against Spin and mark your envelope ‘SAS Appeal’ before sending to me, Graham Lang, at Westermost, Coaltown of Callange, Ceres, Cupar, Fife KY15 5LD. Thank You.
Open season in Shetland...

After the horribly disappointing news that the Viking Energy proposal in Shetland has finally been given the go-ahead at the Supreme Court in London, Shetlanders are preparing to face the grim prospect of other developers jumping on the bandwagon as the first new proposal makes an appearance.

Peel Energy has secured development rights to the Beaw Field windfarm on the island of Yell, having bought it from Enertrag of Germany when they pulled the plug on their UK operations. Peel plan to begin public consultations shortly, but the original Enertrag plan was for 17 turbines, approx. 6MW in capacity.

Frank Hay of Sustainable Shetland sent us this report:

We don’t have much information about this [development] so far, apart from what has appeared on the Shetland News website. Other developers are now diving in to make use of spare capacity on any interconnector. The proposed interconnector is 600MW and Viking require about 400MW so there is at least 200MW spare capacity.

I would think that Viking are encouraging other developers so that the needs case for an interconnector becomes stronger. Conversely the collapse of the proposed 100 MW wave energy project weakened the case for an interconnector.

At the end of the day if an interconnector is provided we will end up with roughly the same number of turbines as the original VE proposal (192 in the VE Windylights brochure), just more spread out through the islands. A ghastly prospect!

The Yell proposal will require a subsea cable to the converter station as well as other grid infrastructure and there may be technological difficulties in this as well as significant costs. We have just put a letter to our councillors on the interconnector situation and it has been published in the Shetland News.

The whole idea of setting up renewable energy projects in remote locations makes no economic sense whatsoever. The cost of grid connections added to the construction cost can never give value for money to the consumer. Even if the proposed renewable projects go ahead here we would still need a replacement power station using gas or light oil.

It seems that Shetland just can’t escape from this. Many of their local councillors have the idea that Shetland can be the powerhouse of Scotland’s (or rather the SNP’s) renewable energy ambitions and are blinded by the prospect of money and jobs. In view of the number of chickens that seem to be flapping down the Royal Mile just now, you would think that even Sturgeon, Swinney and Ewing would realise the urgent need to change course – wouldn’t you?

Sleepless in Aberdeenshire....

Those of you who have been following Rosie’s story (Sleepless in Aberdeenshire), will be pleased to hear that her Environmental Health Officer has finally come to the conclusion that Green Cat Renewables has been unable to mitigate the unacceptable noise at her property or those of her neighbours. Aberdeenshire Council intend to take the matter back to Court for determination based on the evidence they have accumulated, supported by Hoare Lea’s assessment of their readings and the fact that complaints continue.

From a planning perspective Hoare Lea would not be able to measure the GreenCat recordings against the noise conditions as the background noise would have to be monitored again with the turbines shut off.

However, planning conditions require compliance monitoring to be carried out by the Operator every two years and this is now long overdue. It was last carried out in 2012 with the initial report being submitted in April 2013. Environmental Health found the number of errors unacceptable and requested another report which was equally bad!

Rosie’s incredible efforts over the last three and a half years highlight just how much stamina, persistence and determination is required to keep a noise problem in the spotlight and steer it towards what will (hopefully) be a successful conclusion. Watch this space!

Your Contributions:
At SAS we are always keen to hear your news and views on wind issues, and to include them in the Newsletter.
Send your contributions in to us and we will include them in the next Newsletter.
Send them to info@scotlandagainstspin.org
**The wind(?) in Spain….**

In Spain, amidst much fanfare, the first unsubsidised windfarm has just been opened. The Cordal de Montouto project, in the State of Galicia became operational on 18th March and consists of 6 turbines.

Subsidies for new windfarms were axed in Spain in January 2012 as the economic situation there simply made them unaffordable, so that only those in the windiest regions are still economically viable. Gas Natural Fenosa (GNF) owns the project and their president, Salvador Gabarró has stated that onshore turbines must be productive 34.8% of the time or more to pay their way. (Of course, the external costs such as power lines, grid upgrades and back-up power are not factored into this calculation as they are not paid for by the wind developer, but the consumer.)

The economic crisis from 2008 onwards hit Spain particularly hard and as a result, taxes are now being levied on windfarms there as the Spanish government realised that subsidies were inflated. They also backtracked on their commitments to pay huge subsidies for 20 years to all developments and in January 2012 introduced a new subsidy regime:

- No subsidies for new windfarms
- Subsidies slashed to produce a net return of 7% to existing windfarm operators (ie no subsidies to windfarms in windy regions, and variable in other regions according to wind conditions)
- Special taxes on windfarms

(Don’t you just love a subsidy regime that starts with the words No subsidies…?)

However, this has not saved Spain’s poor, beleaguered consumers, who will continue to see their bills soar because successive governments failed (for electoral reasons) to raise the price of electricity fast enough to reflect costs. The resulting accumulated shortfall in revenues for purveyors of electricity amounts to about 30 billion euros, and yet more increases on utility bills are needed to clear that deficit. Thoughts are though that it would be electoral suicide to introduce this, so in the meantime, the deficit is being financed by sovereign debt.

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**Iain Green exhibitions….**

The fabulous cartoons of Iain Green will all be on display in two forthcoming exhibitions and we thoroughly recommend going along.

The first exhibition – The 133 Election Special - is at the 133 Gallery in Great Yarmouth, April 18th – May 16th 2015, and features the works of Iain and fellow political satirist, Brian Adcock.

The second show is at the Leiper Fine Art Gallery in Glasgow, 21st April - 8th May, again featuring Iain and several other political cartoonists.

If you’re in the vicinity of either gallery during those dates why not pop along and have a chortle at the ridiculous antics of our politicians going through trial by election? You really do have to laugh…!

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**Nessie needs help….**

Following a report from Highland Council that there are now over 500 turbines in their planning system or already consented within a 22 mile radius of Loch Ness, a new group of campaigners has come together to save Loch Ness and the Great Glen.

**Friends of the Great Glen** are launching a petition to go to the Scottish Government calling for a halt to turbine development in the area, and to have the world renowned Loch and Glen made into a World Heritage site.

The petition is open until April 23rd and you can find out more about their campaign and sign the petition on their website at **SaveLochNess.com**

You can also view a fantastic new **video from Malcolm Kirk**, which graphically shows both the volume of turbine development and the level of environmental destruction these proposals will bring unless stopped. So please get your pens out or click your computer mice to sign the petition and **Save Nessie**!
Letters to the press....

The fantastic letters that are being written and printed in the national and local press continue as the issue of energy, particularly from wind, continues to exercise people’s patience prior to the election, with the imminent closure of Longannet adding an increasing sense of alarm to the issue. Here are just a few that were published in the Scotsman, all on the same day at the end of February.

I was interested to read the article, “New power station ‘or lights go out’” (25 February).

Scotland uses about 35 TeraWatts of electricity a year. If we divide this by the number of hours in a year we get an average figure of 3,995 MegaWatts/hour.

Between them, Hunterston and Torness Nuclear power stations supply a reliable 2,000 MegaWatts/hour with a load factor around 85 per cent.

Scottish Renewables publish a wind capacity figure of 5,18 MegaWatts, which should easily make up the difference.

The problem is that no one knows when the wind will blow, or not.

Longannet operates when the wind does not blow, but no company is going to spend money building a new large power station to be told to shut down because the wind is blowing.

Companies need to project costs many years into the future and need steady, reliable cost predictions.

The Scottish Government is backing renewable energy which is subsidised by the Westminster government.

There is continual talk of devolution, full devolution, and another Yes vote. The Scottish political situation for the next several years is in turmoil. No company will build a large power plant in Scotland while the electricity supply situation is in such political upheaval.

G WILSON

The grid connection charges for Longannet have been in place since it started operation in 1970.

They have now become an issue for the operators not because they are excessive but because the economics of all conventional generation have been undermined by the consumer paid subsidies awarded to intermittent renewables and the priority given to them on the grid.

Dependable electricity generation from coal, gas and nuclear is crucial to maintaining a secure supply when the wind drops and expensively subsidised turbines fail to deliver.

This is a regular occurrence in the winter. On 19 January, one of the coldest days this winter, peak electricity demand was 53,693MW, but at 2:30pm the UK’s entire stock of wind turbines was generating only 191MW, about 2 per cent of their rated capacity.

It is a dangerous illusion to pretend that our winter heat and light, and the operation of industry can rely on such an undependable resource.

If Longannet closes, the fault will lie entirely with our politicians’ obsession with so-called “green” energy.

(Prof) Jack Ponton FREng

The Borders Network of Conservation Groups
The proposed closure of Longannet of course attracted a lot of attention....

...and below, the ever reliable Geoff Moore got his pen out again. Fantastic!

I am surprised that the SNP has not welcomed the news that Scotland’s last coal-powered generator may close early (your report, 26 February). Is this not the same Scottish Government which boasts of its plans to generate the equivalent of 100 per cent of Scotland’s gross annual electricity consumption from renewable energy?

The poverty of their energy policy is exposed by this recent development as it appears that the lights are only being kept on by a 40-year-old power station which last year was named as one of the top 30 polluting power plants in the EU.

On the same day you report that the destruction of our wild land continues with a proposal to build a wind farm above beautiful Glen Affric.

You could not make it up!

Alan J Black

Winners and losers have just been announced for wind farm-funding contracts. One such loser is Moray Offshore Renewables. Already renewables supporters are prophesising doom and gloom. Alas, thousands more offshore turbines are in the pipeline.

There is an estimate of £40 billion to clean up North Sea oil, despite the fact that rigs can be floated and towed away. Offshore wind turbine bases are pile-driven into the seabed.

I recently e-mailed every offshore wind developer enquiring how they intend to remove them. I didn’t get a single response.

Often, corporations set up new companies to develop individual wind farms. When the subsides for renewables disappear, as inevitably they will, wind farms will be abandoned one by one as they wear out with many of these companies declaring themselves bankrupt.

Vast areas of British waters will be off-limits to shipping and fishing, and the public will face a huge clean-up bill.

Geoff Moore

How did we get here...?

...and in the Scotsman at the beginning of March, Stuart Young, an anti-windfarm campaigner, now of the Scientific Alliance Scotland Advisory Forum and well known to most of us at Scotland Against Spin, had a great piece in the Scotsman explaining exactly how and why ‘Britain’s energy policy went from weird to bizarre.’

So if you’ve ever wondered just how it is that we have gone from being a nation rich in energy resources and distribution technology to one ‘not having a reliable electricity generation and distribution system’, take a look at this article and the sad and sorry tale will become all too predictably clear.
Stock responses on windfarms....

How often do you read a news article in which the Scottish Government trots out the same tired old quote, (or a version of it) when asked to comment on another windfarm development?

‘We want to see the right developments in the right places. All applications are subject to careful scrutiny.’

It’s enough to make you weep!

Brenda Herrick, who runs the Caithness Wind Information Forum recently wrote to the P&J Newspaper pointing out the repetitive nature of these trite quotes, (see left) and has a full record of them on her website. (See the Do they really expect us to believe them? section of the Comment page.) We’re betting that you will recognise at least three of them, if not all!

And in the polls....

The Renewables industry is claiming 71% of the Scottish population are in support of windfarms, after a YouGov survey showed this level of support for the development of wind power. (See Times article reproduced on the Breitbart website, with Kate Mavor the outgoing chief of the National Trust for Scotland’s criticism of current SNP policy.)

Polls however are made up of statistics and how they are interpreted can significantly alter the import and conclusions of any survey. Knowing this, Brenda got busy again and began to look at the reality behind the headlines:

In fact only 1,008 persons took part in the survey and were asked to what extent did they agree or disagree with the statement ‘I support the continuing development of wind power as part of a mix of renewable and conventional forms of electricity generation.’

The result was that 71% (715) agreed ‘in some manner’, although how many strongly agreed and how many didn’t really care is not made clear.

Considering that the adult population of Scotland is around 4,200,000 and that only 715 of those agreed that wind energy should still be developed as part of a mix, this is hardly the overwhelming vote of support for renewables that Scottish Renewables or the Scottish Government would have us believe. It is however, a very good example of how misleading these polls are.

Wind in the history books....

The issue of wind turbine noise and infrasound is still rumbling on, but have you ever wondered just how long it has been an issue, or how ETSU-97 was developed and how we got to where we are now? If your answer is Yes, then there is a fantastic timeline, developed by the Waubra Foundation in Australia, that tells you all you wanted to know about how the woefully inadequate noise guidance was developed (it seems it was the UK’s fault!) and the situation this has led us all to now.

Jan 1st 1995 - In an attempt to kick-start the wind industry again, a group of mostly windfarm developers, calling themselves the Noise Working Group was established in the UK by the Department of Trade and Industry and through the Energy Technology Support Unit (ETSU - now called Future Energy Solutions). They met and created a set of procedures for measuring windfarm noise. Their aim was to promote the development of the wind industry, without the burden of dealing with community annoyance.

Compelling and appalling in equal measure!
A new SAS Supporter contacted us recently asking for a reading list of recommended titles, so rather than review a new book this month, we thought we would gather together just some of the titles we have reviewed over the last two years (yes, it’s that long!) So here they are....

Books

The Carbon Crunch: How We’re Getting Climate Change Wrong... and How to Fix It
Dieter Helm, Yale University Press, 2013

Into the Dustbin
Donna Lafromboise, Ivy Avenue Press, 2013

The Neglected Sun
Fritz Wahrenholt & Sebastian Luning, Independent Minds, 2013

Heaven and Earth. Global warming: the missing science
Professor Ian Plimer, Taylor Trade Publishing, 2009

How to Get Expelled from School
A Guide to climate change for pupils, parents and punters
Professor Ian Plimer (Foreword by Dr Václav Klaus, President of the Czech Republic) Gracewing Publishing, 2012

Sound, Noise, Flicker and the Human Perception of Windfarms....

The Little Green Book of Eco-Fascism

Green Illusions: The Dirty Secrets of Clean Energy and the Future of Environmentalism
Ozzie Zehner, University of Nebraska Press, 2012

The Green Mirage
John Constable, Civitas, 2009

Web resources....

Not a lot of people know that – Meteorology blog by Paul Homewood, just recently awarded the Best European Weblog of the year in the 2015 Bloggies of the Year Awards – well done Paul!!

NOConsensus.Org – Donna Laframboise’ investigative blog, taking a sharp look at the UN’s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

Bishop Hill Blog – Andrew Montford’s lively blog and discussion forum on climate change and politics

Energy Matters – Euan Mearns and Roger Andrews discuss all things pertaining to energy production

The Great Global Warming Swindle (Full Movie) – Channel 4 Dispatches programme, 2007

Coming Up....

In the next Newsletter we take a look at two more books and a well-known website....

The Moral Case for Fossil Fuels, (Alex Epstein, Portfolio/Penguin 2014), The Deliberate Corruption of Climate Science, (Tim Ball, Stairway Press 2014) and Wattsupwiththat.com – ‘the world’s most viewed site on global warming and climate change’. See you in May!