

NEWSLETTER

Middlemoor and Wandylaw from Holy Island © Anthony Meikle

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ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Please come along to the
Village Hall on Thursday 19th
December at 7.30pm for
our AGM and find out more
about what's been happening
over the last year

Update since last newsletter

Some time has elapsed since our last newsletter. At that time we believed an application by Air Farmers, the potential developers of the Middle Hill site, would be submitted this summer. However, so far no such application has been lodged.

Air Farmers appear to be concentrating on another scheme near Belford. They recently held a presentation to show their plans to develop a wind farm at Middleton Burn consisting of 14 turbines, 125m high, immediately next to the recent wind farm application at Belford Burn by EnergieKontor for nine, 100m high turbines.

The Air Farmers Middleton Burn proposal may be a 'piggy-back' application linking conveniently with the EnergieKontor Belford Burn application; Air Farmers may see this as an opportunity to connect to the grid using EnergieKontor's infrastructure of underground cabling.

The worrying element in all this is that Air Farmers may employ a similar plan for the grid connection for Middle Hill, should their application succeed. They may be able to take advantage of the Ray 1 development that will only proceed once mitigating factors are found to get around the potential radar problems which will affect the MoD and the Civil Aviation Authority.

Developments in the County

As an action group we have been keeping up to date on turbine developments in the county and further afield. In particular, we have supported Fenrother residents by attending meetings connected with their objection to five turbines. These proposed turbines, if the developers win their appeal, will be just a small part of a huge arc of 230 industrial turbines, either operational, consented, in planning or at pre-planning stages, stretching across central Northumberland from the North Tyne to Lynemouth.

This takes into account the recently mooted 100, misleadingly cited as a development at Kielder. Planning applications for four meteorological masts, precursors to turbine applications, have been made; they will be positioned between Cottonshopeburnfoot near Byrness, through forested land to Lanehead, near Bellingham. They are to be on the southern fringe of Kielder Forest, on the very edge of the National Park, and will certainly impact on Redesdale & the North Tyne valley.

The Future

The long wait for a submission of a planning application for Middle Hill may be because they are looking for ways around issues of NCC concern arising from the scoping report. If a revised application is produced it is hoped that Air Farmers will arrange another public meeting before it is finally submitted. MHAG will certainly organise their own meeting for interested parties including parish residents and others who may be affected.

PLEASE HELP

ALL DONATIONS GRATEFULLY RECEIVED ! DONATE by cheque, payable to Middle Hill Action Group, and post to MHAG, c/o S. Kennedy, The Tower, Elsdon NE19 1AA OR via paypal on our website www.middlehillactiongroup.com.

Could Elsdon residents suffer ill health effects if the Middle Hill scheme goes ahead?

To date, all reported health effects have been due to turbine noise. Noise includes both audible noise and infrasound noise which occurs at frequencies below the human hearing threshold. Infrasound is the primary issue for those concerned about wind-turbine syndrome. Symptoms might include: headaches, sleep problems, night terrors or learning disabilities in children, ringing in the ears, mood problems, concentration and memory problems, issues with equilibrium, dizziness and nausea.

At last, during three recent Public Inquiries, representatives from the wind industry have finally admitted that infrasound **is** a real problem and that planning conditions need to be set to protect the health of residents living near to turbines. This is a significant development!

Separation distances

Studies have found that these effects are real and the main question to be answered is: What separation distance between a residence and a turbine is sufficient to be safe? Expert opinions differ on safe separation distance which depends upon the height of the turbine and the terrain (hilly terrain requires a greater separation distance because of reflections that can "focus" the sound intensity). The expert recommendations typically range from 1km to 3.5 km. The World Health Organisation recommends 2km. The closest residence to the nearest proposed turbine on the Middle Hill site is only 710m! St. Cuthbert's Church in Elsdon Village is approximately 2.38km distant and most village residences will be closer; the nearest house within the village environs (Crawford Close) is actually 2.1km away but that's not accounting for the garden!

The UK government has no minimum separation distance! Instead, minimum separation distance is evaluated for specific

sites based upon the background ambient noise levels at each nearby residence, which is then related to the ambient noise levels measured at each residence. The noise measurement procedure is governed by a government guideline called ETSU-R-97.

This was written 15 years ago when the largest turbine was only 60 metres tall. Furthermore, no measurements at infrasound frequencies are required! Clearly, larger structures produce lower frequencies. Hence, it is argued by many health professionals and acoustic experts that ETSU is outdated and totally inadequate to protect the health of residents. In fact, one expert has published a report which states that ETSU guidelines are "laughable"!

Effect upon homes

It is significant to note that some people living near turbines have had to abandon their homes because the health effects were unbearable. In the UK the 2011 landmark case was the Davis family who lived in Lincolnshire. Their farm was 900 metres from a wind farm. They brought legal action against the developer and land owner which went to a high profile court case. The day before the court was due to resume after a 4-month break at the end of Nov 2011, the case was settled out of court. On Monday 5th Dec the court would have heard about property valuations; we suspect this, along with the noise data, was a major reason for the out-of-court settlement. The Davis family received an undisclosed payment but the out-of-court settlement is highly confidential, so no details have ever been released. Clearly, the renewables industry did not want to risk losing the case (which was likely due to the expert evidence presented) and establishing precedence and open the door to further legal actions! As the Middle Hill turbines will be 25% higher than those with which the Davises had problems (125m as opposed to 100m), the audible & infrasound noise may be worse.

MHAG encourages you to consider the facts cited and to decide whether to object to any planning application for a wind farm near Elsdon. You can make a difference!

Future newsletters

For fear of overload MHAG does not intend sending out any more newsletters until there is further news to report, for example if the developers approach the Parish Council, an exhibition is organised or an application is actually made.

AT THAT POINT WE WILL NEED YOUR HELP!

We will send out a format for you to use, if you wish, so that you can submit a personal objection to the Council. We will also suggest areas, from which there are plenty to choose, upon which you may want to focus the main thrust of your objection. Meanwhile, MHAG is monitoring the situation closely and keeping up to date with any developments.

Elsdon is not the appropriate setting for turbines.

HELP NEEDED

Please continue to support MHAG. Make sure you have sent us your e mail address so that we can contact you quickly when an application is submitted.

You can join MHAG, for only £5 per year. You can also make a donation via the website, or by cheque to the address overleaf.

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