

The Montgomeryshire and Shropshire Wildlife Trusts Position Statement on large-scale wind farms and their associated infrastructure

Scope of position statement

This statement sets out the Trusts' position in relation to large-scale wind farms in mid-Wales and their associated infrastructure. This statement should be read in conjunction with The UK Wildlife Trusts' policies on climate change and wind farms on land.

Context

The Wildlife Trusts believe that climate change is almost certainly the most significant challenge facing nature conservation today, with the potential to have significant impacts on the future of UK and global biodiversity. We consider that wind power can help to meet the energy requirements of the UK in a sustainable manner, but these benefits cannot mitigate or compensate for any impacts on wildlife or on wildlife sites that are associated with wind farm developments.

Up to now every wind farm has been judged under its own merits with objections lodged to those that would cause significant harm to wildlife or wildlife sites. Nevertheless, the Trusts have long been concerned about the cumulative effect of large-scale wind farm development and with many upland areas of Mid-Wales already covered with wind farms, the impact of hundreds more turbines is likely to be significant. To date, there has also been widespread failure of the mitigation measures connected with large-scale wind farms to compensate for the loss of key species and habitats.

Of greatest concern is the huge scale of the new generation of wind farms currently proposed for large parts of the Mid-Wales uplands. These wind farms require major alterations to the rural road network, as well as a new electrical substation and extensive new electrical grid connections. When these new large-scale wind farm developments are considered together with their associated infrastructure, the impact on the area's wildlife could be devastating.

The way forward

We believe there should be a more strategic and long term approach to meeting the UK's energy needs.

The Technical Advice Note (TAN) 8: Planning for Renewable Energy was published by the Welsh Assembly Government in 2005 to provide technical advice on renewable energy to supplement the policy set out in Planning Policy Wales. The Trusts question the wisdom of:

- concentrating wind farms into defined areas that are remote from sources of demand
- locating large-scale wind farms in areas not served by, or in proximity to, existing infrastructure
- so great an emphasis being placed on wind power as the primary form of renewable energy



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TAN 8 also considered wind farm technology of the time and this was at a much smaller scale than that available today. With these points in mind, the Trusts believe that TAN 8 should be reviewed as soon as possible, with greater emphasis on other forms of renewable energies.

The most cost effective and sustainable approach to meeting our energy needs is to reduce demand for energy through effective energy efficiency measures. This should be central to all energy policy and cover all sectors.

When considering renewable energy generation, the Trusts believe that the focus should be on micro-generation. Not only do these small-scale projects have a minimal ecological impact themselves, but they also do not require the massive infrastructure needed for large-scale developments.

**Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust
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