

# **'The impact of wind farms on the tourist industry in the UK'**

**Prepared by the British Wind Energy Association (BWEA)  
For the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Tourism  
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## Executive Summary

1. Introduction
  2. Benefits of wind energy
  3. Overview of tourism
  4. General Public Attitudes and Tourism Studies
  5. Case Studies & Anecdotal Evidence
- Annex: Tourism Survey Details



©E.ON UK, open day at Out Newton wind farm 2002

## Executive Summary

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- A diverse range of influences affect the UK tourist industry including September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001, the war in Iraq, high fuel prices, foot & mouth disease, the strength of the pound, weather conditions, economy airlines & increased holiday home ownership abroad – issues unrelated to wind farm development.
- It is not feasible to attempt to draw any conclusions about the effect of wind farms on tourism from national tourism statistics. There is no possible way that any cause and effect could be established for such a massive industry with such a multitude of influences.
- There have been several surveys and reports investigating wind energy and tourism conducted by reputable poll companies and consultants.
- The results from all these surveys demonstrate that the effect of wind farms on tourism is negligible at worst, with many respondents taking a positive view to wind farms, and saying it would not affect their likelihood of returning to an area.
- Whilst carrying out research for this paper, BWEA contacted national and regional tourist boards for information and any views. There was a modest response – the tourist boards contacted did not give references for any tourist surveys/studies, and there were no particular comments raised on the issue. If wind farms did have any significant effect on tourism, the tourist boards would have held a strong line on the issue, and been able to provide references to surveys and research.
- Whinash, near Tebay in Cumbria, was arguably one of the most controversial wind farm applications to date and subject to intense scrutiny at public inquiry, yet it was not refused on tourism grounds.
- Wind farms can themselves be tourism destinations, with the wind turbines at the Ecotech Centre and the Gaia Energy Centre proving to be very popular visitor attractions, despite difficulties encountered by the separate visitor centres.
- Other wind farms without visitor facilities are also popular with tourists, and there is often a demand to provide information boards and location details on tourist websites.
- The type of tourist may be an important factor to consider e.g. fell walker, surfer, business visitor, golfer, mountaineer.
- For future wind farms, the judgment of acceptability based on landscape protection will provide ample protection for the protection of tourism. The threshold of landscape protection is more sensitive to wind farm development than tourism, therefore if there is deemed to be no damage to landscape at the planning stage, there will be no damage to tourism.

## 1. Introduction and Context

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- 1.1 Climate change is the most serious environmental threat to the world, indeed Sir David King the UK's Chief Scientific Officer, considers climate change to be the most severe problem we are facing today. Climate change caused by greenhouse gas emissions, in particular carbon dioxide, will put millions of people at risk and cause irreversible loss of many plant and animal species. Sea levels are expected to rise by over 40 centimetres by the end of the century with many of the poorest countries in the world experiencing flooding, drought, food shortages and disease.
- 1.2 The Kyoto Protocol is a legally binding agreement that commits signatory countries to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and was formally ratified in 2005. The UK is committed to a 5.2% reduction in greenhouse gases below 1990 levels by 2008-2012, and the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution has called for a 60% reduction of carbon dioxide emissions by 2050. The UK is also committed to providing 10% of its electricity from renewable energy sources by 2010. The Renewables Obligation places a requirement on electricity suppliers to provide an increasing proportion of electricity from renewable sources; the current Obligation is 5.5%, rising to 15.4% by 2015.
- 1.3 Onshore wind energy is the most economically and technically advanced of all renewables, increasingly able to compete in cost with conventional generation, and can be delivered on a large scale. A recent report by BWEA<sup>1</sup> demonstrates that onshore wind will make the largest contribution to renewable energy capacity by 2010, installing at least 6,000 megawatts (MW). Onshore wind is now a well established renewable energy industry offering significant benefits through the reduction of carbon dioxide emissions, meeting renewable energy targets, securing electricity supply and delivering investment to UK plc. BWEA estimates that up to £4.2 billion<sup>2</sup> of economic benefits related to onshore wind energy developments alone could accrue over the period 2006-2020, including existing and forecast development.

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<sup>1</sup> BWEA (April 2006) Onshore Wind: Powering Ahead, [www.bwea.com/pdf/OnshoreWindPoweringAheadFull.pdf](http://www.bwea.com/pdf/OnshoreWindPoweringAheadFull.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> BWEA (April 2006) Onshore Wind: Powering Ahead, [www.bwea.com/pdf/OnshoreWindPoweringAheadFull.pdf](http://www.bwea.com/pdf/OnshoreWindPoweringAheadFull.pdf)

## 2. Benefits of Wind Energy

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- 2.1 Electricity generated from the wind replaces generation from conventional power stations, thus preventing the emissions of several greenhouse gases, including carbon and sulphur dioxides. Wind turbines in the UK currently prevent the emission of three and a half million tonnes of carbon dioxide each year.
- 2.2 Our energy future is uncertain. As energy demand increases, our country's traditional fuels of oil, coal and gas are running out. By 2020 we may need to import gas to cater for up to 80%<sup>3</sup> of our electricity needs. Electricity generated from the wind will be vital in building a secure and sustainable energy future that will help keep the lights on in Britain.
- 2.3 Wind energy is the fastest growing energy sector in the UK creating jobs with every megawatt installed. To date, over 4,000 jobs are sustained by companies working in the wind sector, and this is projected to increase as the industry grows<sup>2</sup>. The Department of Trade and Industry has estimated that Round Two of offshore wind developments alone could bring a further 20,000 jobs for Britain<sup>4</sup>. Recent examples of industry growth in the UK include the Vestas (previously NEG Micon) manufacturing facility on the Isle of Wight which employs over 500 people, 420 of whom live on the island, making this company one of the island's largest employers. In addition to manufacturing, various other sectors are involved in wind energy development, ranging from environmental consultancy, electrical and civil engineering to financial and legal services.
- 2.4 Some wind energy developers give direct financial benefits to local communities who can spend this income on their choice of environmental or educational projects. Generally this is in the region of £1,000/MW annually for local projects which have included for instance energy efficiency programmes.
- 2.5 Wind energy can be generated locally and distributed directly to the local distribution network; this is known as embedded generation. This reduces the distance over which electricity has to travel, meaning less electrical losses in transmission and distribution, and therefore saving energy.
- 2.6 Wind energy is one of the safest energy technologies, and enjoys an outstanding health & safety record. In over 25 years of operating experience and with more than 85,000 machines installed around the world, no member of the public has ever been harmed during the normal operation of wind turbines. High standards exist for the design and operation<sup>5</sup> of wind energy projects as well as close industry co-operation with the certification and regulatory bodies in those countries where wind energy is deployed. Wind energy is a benign technology with no associated emissions, harmful pollutants or waste products. Part of its popularity can be attributed to its safe and reliable method of operation.

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<sup>3</sup> DTI (2003), Joint Energy Security of Supply Working Group (JESS), DTI and Ofgem, Third Report, November 2003

<sup>4</sup> DTI Press Release, 14 July 2003, Hewitt Announces Biggest Ever Expansion in Renewable Energy

<sup>5</sup> BWEA (1994), Best Practice Guidelines for Wind Energy Development, [www.bwea.com/ref/bpg.html](http://www.bwea.com/ref/bpg.html)

### 3. Overview of Tourism

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- 3.1 The nature of tourism is changing in the UK, as more people decide to take mini-breaks and main holidays abroad with the availability of budget flights. It should be noted that tourism data for 2004 is uncertain due to a change in survey methodology that appears to have skewed the results<sup>6</sup>.

Extract from: 'Impact of Wind Farms on Tourism', Biggar Economics, May 2006

*'There has been a general decline in recent years in the volume of global tourism, due to several factors such as the Iraq War, September 11th 2001, and high fuel prices. The strength of the Pound has made Britain a relatively expensive country to visit, particularly for American tourists. Foot and mouth disease has also contributed to a decline in rural tourism in Britain.*

*International Passenger Survey (IPS) data confirms that there was a decline in overseas tourism between 1998 and 2001. During 2001 the number of overseas visitors to the UK fell by a considerable amount, 17% for European visitors and 16% for North American Visitors. Scotland suffered the largest decline in overseas visitor numbers between 1999 and 2003, with a 16% reduction, although spending increased by 2.4%. A recovery in international tourism to the UK is now evident. Since 2002, there has been an increase in overseas visitors to the UK and Scotland, with a return to 1998 levels by 2004.'*

- 3.2 In the UK there are currently 121 operational wind farms, equating to 1,385 MW of generation capacity, with a further 164 wind farms in planning (6,445 MW). The distribution of wind farms in the UK tends to be in places of higher wind speed, away from heavily built up areas. These sites often correlate in broad terms with popular tourist areas, including Cornwall, Wales, Cumbria and Scotland.

All Domestic Tourism Trips (Millions) 1995-2003 <sup>7</sup>				
	UK	England	Scotland	Wales
1995	147.79	114.05	17.53	12.79
1996	154.22	117.33	19.63	13.60
1997	162.23	125.55	21.19	12.25
1998	148.82	115.43	18.91	12.27
1999	173.10	137.71	18.53	13.37
2000	175.37	140.43	18.96	13.35
2001	163.10	131.90	17.50	11.60
2002	167.34	134.90	18.53	11.95
2003	151	121.3	16.5	11.6

- 3.3 Since the first wind farm opened in Cornwall in 1991 there have been numerous surveys investigating the effect of wind farms on tourism. During this period tourism in the UK as a whole has grown and is one of the largest industries in the UK - worth approximately £74.2 billion in 2003<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> [www.staruk.org/default.asp?ID=730&parentid=469](http://www.staruk.org/default.asp?ID=730&parentid=469)

<sup>7</sup> [www.staruk.org/webcode/contents.asp?id=388&parentid=512&bg=white](http://www.staruk.org/webcode/contents.asp?id=388&parentid=512&bg=white)

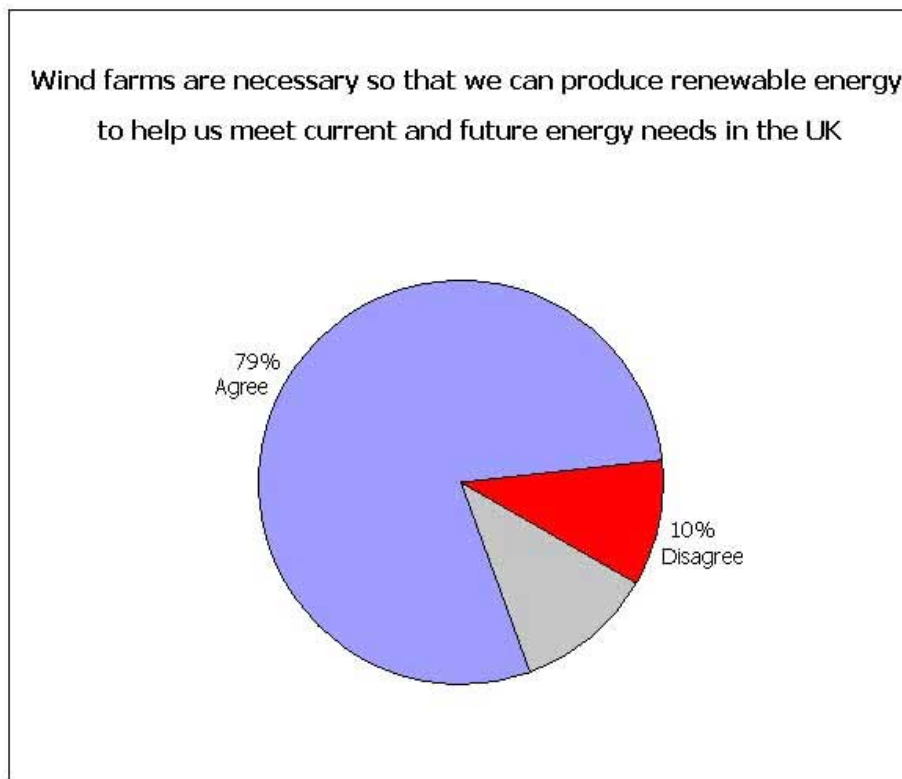
<sup>8</sup> [www.tourismtrade.org.uk/MarketIntelligenceResearch/KeyTourismFacts.asp](http://www.tourismtrade.org.uk/MarketIntelligenceResearch/KeyTourismFacts.asp)

## Visitor numbers in popular tourist areas with wind farms

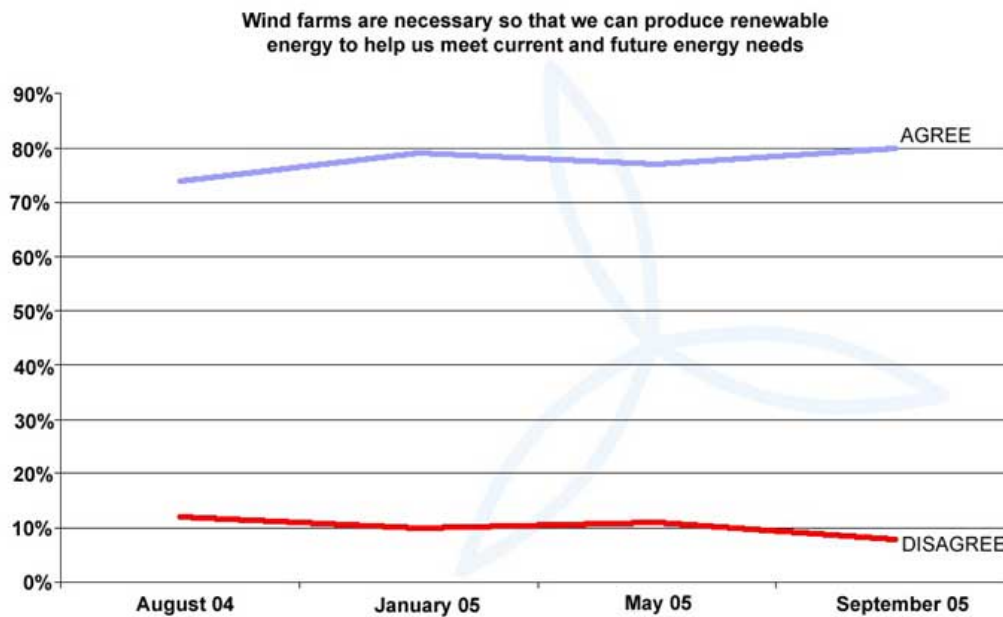
- 3.4 Cumbria visitor numbers have increased from 14.27 million to 15.77 million between 2000-2004 ([www.cumbriatourism.info/pressimage/pdf/research/Cumbria-2000-2004.pdf](http://www.cumbriatourism.info/pressimage/pdf/research/Cumbria-2000-2004.pdf)).
- 3.5 In Northern Ireland between 2001-2004 out-of-state visitor numbers grew from 1.68 million to over 2 million; during this period 10 wind farms were operational.
- 3.6 Between 2000-2003 visitors to Cornwall increased from 4.2 million to 4.9 million; in Devon where there are no wind farms visitors fell from 6.6 to 6.4 million (Key facts of Tourism in the South West 2000-2003, [www.swtourism.co.uk/additional/docsys/KEY%20FACTS%20OF%20TOURISM%20IN%20THE%20SOUTH%20WEST%202000%20to%202003%20\(RDA%20REGION\)\\_2.pdf](http://www.swtourism.co.uk/additional/docsys/KEY%20FACTS%20OF%20TOURISM%20IN%20THE%20SOUTH%20WEST%202000%20to%202003%20(RDA%20REGION)_2.pdf)).
- 3.7 Between 1992 when there was 1 wind farm to 2003 when there were 7 wind farms, visitor numbers in Cornwall increased from 3.4 to 5.1 million ([www.cornwalltouristboard.co.uk/files/pdf/Revised\\_Tourism%20in%20Cornwall.pdf](http://www.cornwalltouristboard.co.uk/files/pdf/Revised_Tourism%20in%20Cornwall.pdf)).



#### 4. General Public Attitudes and Tourism Studies



The NOP Wind Tracker (results for the year 2005)



The NOP Wind Tracker (2004-2005)

4.1 **The following paragraphs are the conclusion of 'A summary of research conducted into Attitudes to Wind Power from 1990-1996' compiled by Anne Marie, Simon Planning and Research, Sept 1996.**

*'Between 1990 and 1996 thirteen different research studies were carried out by different research groups into public attitudes to wind power. All, with one exception - the Mynydd Yr Hendre Community Survey - were done by independent bodies.*

*In total, these surveys canvassed the opinions of 3,549 people, people who were able to have an informed, first hand view of wind farms by virtue of living close to a live, or proposed, site.*

*Every single study shows that the overwhelming majority of residents in areas with a wind project, are pro-wind power, both in theory as a renewable energy source and in practice in their area, with an average of 8 out of 10 supporting their local wind farm.'*

4.2 Summarised below are key surveys relating to wind farms and tourism. Scotland, Cornwall and Cumbria are often cited as top tourist destinations, which gives added piquancy to the results of these surveys:

**Cornwall and South West**

4.3 University of the West of England 'Fullabrook Wind Farm Proposal, North Devon – evidence gathering of the impact of wind farms on visitor numbers and tourist experience', 2004.

93.9% of those surveyed would not be discouraged from visiting the area if there was a wind farm.

4.4 Cornwall Tourist Board, Cornwall Holiday Survey, 2000

The Cornwall Tourist Board stated that for the years 1996 to 2000 wind farms did not alter the percentage of tourists returning for repeat visits. In 1996, 79.6% of those responding to the tourist board questionnaire said they were returning to Cornwall, in 1997 the figure was 81.2%, in 1998 it was 80.1%, in 1999 it was 79.2% and in 2000 it was 81.5%.

4.5 Robertson Bell Associates 'North Cornwall Tourists Survey', September 1996: 94% of interviewees say that the presence of wind farms has had no impact on the likelihood of them visiting North Cornwall again.

4.6 Nicholas Pearson Associates, May 1996

"Analysis of the visitor figures (source: Cornwall County Council) to important tourist attractions within 10km of the Delabole Wind Farm since 1991 indicates no decrease in the numbers since the advent of the wind farm. Indeed there has been a marginal increase to some attractions including Tintagel Castle."



© Embrace the Revolution: celebrating Wind Weekend 2005 at Delabole in Cornwall

## Somerset

- 4.7 Centre for Sustainable Energy, 'Martin's Hill Tourism Survey, 2002  
91.5% said that the proposed development would make no difference to how often they visit the area.

## Cumbria and North West

- 4.8 Extract from Whinash Wind Farm Inquiry Inspectors Report 2006  
*'...the Cumbria Tourist Board undertook its survey, at the same service area, which could have distorted the outcome. Nonetheless, the results were still strongly in favour of wind farms and of Whinash (71% indicated it would make no difference to visits; 28% thought it would be an additional attraction; 79% indicated it would not reduce their enjoyment on visits; and 91% indicated it would not discourage them from visiting the Lake District).'*  
([www.eden.gov.uk/docs/whinash-windfarm-inspectors-report.doc](http://www.eden.gov.uk/docs/whinash-windfarm-inspectors-report.doc))
- 4.9 Star Consultants, Leeds Metropolitan University, 'A Study into the Attitudes of Visitors, Tourists and Tourism Organisations towards Wind Farms on the Boundaries of the Lake District National Park', for Friends of the Lake District (FLD), October 2003.
- 87% of visitors/tourists and 88% of tourism organisations felt positive towards wind farms.
  - The vast majority of tourism organisations reported no effect on their business from the presence of an existing wind farm in their vicinity, nor did they expect any effect associated with the proposal for a new wind farm.

- 75% said that increases in the number of turbines in the next few years would not have any effect on them visiting in the future.



© Cumberland Foxhounds annual gymkhana at Siddick & Oldside wind farm, Cumbria

#### 4.10 RBA Research, Lambrigg wind farm survey 2002

- 3% of respondents believed that the wind farm had caused a fall in visitor numbers.
- 11% believed it had caused an increase and the remainder felt there had been no effect.

### **Northern Ireland**

- 4.11 Where there is demand for it, B9 Energy - a key wind farm developer in Northern Ireland - carries out an ongoing annual programme of wind farm schools open days and visits for community groups and professional bodies. Large public open days are usually held in the first summer that the wind farm is operational. Between 1995 to 2005 there have been over 25,000 visitors to B9's eight wind farms in Northern Ireland.

### **Scotland**

#### 4.12 NFO System Three, 'Investigation into the potential impact if wind farms on tourism in Scotland', for VisitScotland, 2002.

BWEA considers this survey flawed, due to the methodology adopted. The following observations on the methodology were made by David Stewart Associates (March 2005) as part of wider evidence for the Whinash Wind Farm inquiry:

- only 180 people were interviewed.

- interviewers were instructed to 'deselect' certain of potential respondents if they failed to give the right answers to some of the questions, and one of the key ones was whether they described the natural landscape and natural scenery as 'not at all important' to their stay.
- there was another elimination test to remove anyone visiting the area on business and visiting friends and relatives, rather than because they were on holiday.
- there was another elimination test to remove anyone who did not fulfill certain criteria of activities. Thus, while they included hill-walking, short walks, cycling, mountaineering and sightseeing, they eliminated those doing other 'active country pursuits' (golfing, fishing).
- There is criticism of the way the later parts of the interviews were developed: when asked to identify aspects of the Scottish countryside they particularly disliked, there was just one respondent who mentioned wind farms. However the researcher went on to prompt a list of possible aspects of potential likes and dislikes to each interviewee. At this stage 29% stated that wind farms detracted from their experience of the countryside.

This survey is certainly not the view of all tourists, and has used an exclusive approach that has excluded certain types of visitors and tourist activities. David Stewart Associates further point out that the economic value of contributions from a golfers (who were excluded) would be expected to be greater than a fell-walker or sightseer.

Nevertheless, bearing in mind the flawed methodology and for a study that is cited as being proof of the potentially serious threat of wind farms to tourism, the outcome is very positive:

- 70% said it would make no difference to their likelihood to return to an area if a wind farms was developed there in the future.
- 61% said that they would be interested in visiting a wind farm development with its own visitor centre.



© Commissioning of wind turbine at Ladygrove Primary School 2005

4.13 Extract from 'Green on Green: Public perceptions of wind power in Scotland and Northern Ireland' Journal of Environmental Planning and Law, November 2005

*'Opponents not only highlight the scenic impact of the turbines themselves, but also emphasize the visual impacts of the associated construction and upgrades to the electricity transmission grid. Further, they assert that the landscape impacts of wind farms will damage tourism. However, an investigation of the potential tourist impacts in Scotland found a mixed picture (NFO System Three, 2002). Concerns that some visitors might find*

*wind farms offputting were counterbalanced by positive reactions, and by arguments that wind power could be used to promote Scotland's reputation as a 'green', environmentally-friendly country. Far more tourists associated wind farms with clean energy than with landscape damage, although all regarded sensitive siting as critical.'*

4.14 Extract from the Scotsman, 13<sup>th</sup> April 2005

'Scotland's tourist figures surge ahead of rest of UK'

*The number of international tourists visiting Scotland jumped 20 per cent last year, outstripping the growth in the rest of the UK, new figures have shown. The data reveals Scotland is benefiting from the growth of direct air and sea routes to Europe and North America.*

*The International Passenger Survey (IPS) shows that in 2004, people from overseas made 1.877 million overnight visits to Scotland in 2004, compared to 1.565 million in 2003 - a rise of 20 per cent. 2004 was also up on the 2002 figure of 1.581 million.*

*Speaking ahead of the launch of VisitScotland's Expo, the tourism industry's annual trade fair, at Aberdeen Exhibition and Conference Centre, tourism minister Patricia Ferguson said:*

*"Data from the International Passenger Survey is excellent news. Tourism is crucial to Scotland's economy and I am heartened to see that we are competing very well in an increasingly competitive global market."*

4.15 MORI Scotland, 'Tourist Attitudes towards Wind Farms', for BWEA and SRF, September 2002

Likelihood of visiting Argyll in future:

- 91% said made no difference.
- 4% more likely to return.
- 2% less likely to return.

## **Wales**

4.16 'Investigation into the potential Impact of Wind Farms on Tourism in Wales', for Wales Tourist Board, 2003

- General reactions: 78% of all respondents had a neutral or positive view on wind farm development 21% had a negative view.
- 68% would be interested in attending a visitor centre at a wind farm development.
- 68% said it would make no difference to their likelihood to take holidays in the Welsh countryside if the number of wind farms increased.

4.17 'The Impacts of wind Farms on Tourism in Wales', a thesis undertaken for the Wales Tourist Board (WTB) in 2001

- 96% of the respondents would not be put off visiting Wales if more wind farms were developed.
- almost 70% would visit a wind farm if an information centre was built.

4.18 Robertson Bell Associates, Taff Ely Residents Survey, December 1997

*68% of respondents said that the number of people visiting the area has not been affected, but of those who thought there had been some effect, many more say that visitor numbers have increased (15%) than have decreased (1%)."*



©T  
 riodos. Locals gathering to watch the installation of the 1<sup>st</sup> turbine at Moel Maelogan wind farm, Conwy, Wales

4.19 ETSU, 'Cemmaes Wind Farm Sociological Impact Study' 1994

"Following the construction and 12 month operation of the Cemmaes Wind Farm in Mid Wales 62% of respondents thought that the wind farm should be promoted as a tourist attraction with 25% saying 'no' and 14% 'don't know'. The consensus of opinion was that 'people still believe that the wind farm is more likely to attract visitors than it is to deter them - even though the novelty value has more or less disappeared over the past year.' Moreover 92% of the respondents were 'not bothered' by the look of the wind turbines."

**Overseas**

4.20 "Tourism and green industries such as wind turbine manufacturing and wind turbine deployment co-exist happily in Denmark. Eco-tourism has even become an industry in its own right, with new companies setting up shop as tour operators... One of the popular tourist attractions on the Danish west coast is the Vestas wind turbine factory with its two adjoining wind farms. There has even been basis for establishing a local village museum for modern wind energy."

*(Soren Krohn, Danish Turbine Manufacturers Association, June 1999)*

## Offshore Wind

### 4.21 Scroby Sands Wind Farm, Norfolk

E.ON UK's Scroby Sands Information Centre welcomed a staggering 30,000 people through its doors its first six months open (from May 2004), and 2005 saw 35,000 people visiting during the summer opening months. Holidaymakers from near and far, the local community and senior government ministers have all enjoyed visiting the centre and finding out about the wind farm and how it was built.

Dave Atherton, Scroby Sands wind farm operations manager, said: "We're delighted with the number of visitors we've had so far... We've even had visitors from as far away as Azerbaijan, the United States and Canada dropping in to the centre."

Some of the visitor comments are shown below:

- "Interesting, I want one in the garden" R Leicester, Leicester
- "Well worth a visit, lots of information, child friendly & pleasant informed staff. Thank you" The Crave Family, N Yorkshire
- "Thank you for building the centre to explain things. Very interesting. First of many we hope. Keeps the air clean." Suffolk

### 4.22 North Hoyle, North Wales. RBA Research for npower renewables, 2004

- 96% of tourists expressing an opinion on the effect of North Hoyle on visitor numbers to the area said there was "no effect".
- Only 4% of tourists surveyed felt that the presence of the planned Gwynt y Môr offshore wind farm would make them less likely to return to the area.

### 4.23 Scarweather Sands, awaiting construction, South Wales

A poll of tourists gives evidence that Porthcawl's visitor industry could actually benefit from the construction of the Scarweather Sands wind farm three miles off its coast. Visitors were asked whether they would be more likely to return on holiday to Porthcawl, just as likely or less likely, if the development went ahead.

The vast majority (96%) said they would be just as likely or more likely to return to the resort if the turbines go up. Just 4% said they would be less likely to return. These were outweighed by three-to-one by those who said they'd be more likely to return (13%). Most people (83%) said it would make no difference. A total of 650 people were questioned.

([www.greenpeace.org.uk/contentlookup.cfm?ucidparam=20030826181034](http://www.greenpeace.org.uk/contentlookup.cfm?ucidparam=20030826181034))

## 5. Case Studies & Anecdotal Evidence

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- 5.1 People are fascinated by wind turbines. When new wind farms are built, the plans often specify the construction of lay-bys so passing traffic can pull over and watch the turbines. Many recent planning applications have been modified by the developers to incorporate the local community wishes of a viewing platform, visitor centre or information boards to maximise on the tourism potential of the project.

*'I have visited a number of Gamesa's operating wind farms in Spain, where public rights of access seem to more widely used, perhaps because of the better climate. However, it is always striking to witness the large number of walkers, mountain-bike riders and picnics I see close to the wind turbines – picnics below the blades are a common sight.'*

Matt Partridge, Gamesa

*"When the wind turbines were erected at Deli Farm, Delabole in 1991, we had reservations in connection with visitors to our caravan park... We also found that far from putting visitors off, the opposite happened - tourists were intrigued and liked them. With regard to the Riding School, which has been established just over a year, we have never experienced any problems with riding in close proximity to the wind turbines."*

Lakefield Caravan Park and Equestrian Centre, Camelford, Cornwall, July 1998

*'I live close to the Lynch Knoll Wind Turbine in the Cotswolds AONB. A small lay-by is provided there which is regularly occupied by 1 or 2 cars when I pass by, particularly in the summer (tourist) months.'*

Matt Partridge, Gamesa

*'I've spent occasions sitting at the pull-in of Lambrigg Wind Farm in Cumbria (J37 off the M6) and seen many cars pull in...take some pictures and then drive off...one guy who'd just bought a new BMW and drove to the spot to take a picture of it with the wind farm in the background.'*

Simon Holt, npower renewables

- 5.2 Case Studies: B9 Energy & Wind Energy Developments Ltd
- Rigged Hill Wind Farm: the Council is currently investigating the reinstatement of the Ulsterway across wind farm with the landowners. Limavady Council have displayed Rigged Hill wind farm on their economic development video (c. 1996), and previously organised visits to the site.
  - Altahullion Wind Farm: local community groups requested tourist facilities at the site. Developers were able to persuade the DoE Roadservice to provide brown tourist signs from the main Dungiven to Derry A road right up to the site. The site has a car park and specially designated turbine which people can walk to. Limavady BC with the help of Sperrins Tourism added some nature and landscape interpretation signage. Sperrins tourism is organising a group visit there this year.



© Visitor information board at Altahullion Wind Farm

### 5.3 Case studies: ScottishPower

- Sponsored publication tourist guide to the southern uplands of Scotland, allowing it to be placed free in every hotel and b&b in the region
- Sponsored last 2 world championship sled dog racing events in Dumfries which attracts over 3000 visitors in an off-season month (March) and provide a free marquee for local businesses to sell to visitors.
- Encourage public access to wind farms - people do like to walk in wind farms, and there is now even a new sport - turbine bagging - walkers are actually seeking to visit every turbine in every British wind farm!
- At Black Law - a 100MW plus wind farm in deprived central Scotland, there is an access strategy. ScottishPower will be creating a sled dog racing training venue, and hosting the 'Embrace the Wind Weekend'. Aiming to bring over 2000 visitors from Glasgow and Edinburgh to this area, and bring in local food/tourism businesses (for free) to sell their goods and services.
- At Whitelee, multi-million pound visitor centre planned, the first wind farm visitor centre in Scotland. Anticipate over 50,000 visitors a year.
- At proposed Arecleoch wind farm in South Ayrshire, working with the local community to develop an access strategy, linking the wind farm to the Southern Upland Way and the Carrick Way (two long distance footpaths), making the local village a major hub for walking in south west Scotland.
- At proposed Lynemouth wind farm in Northumberland, we are working with the local Woodhorn Mining Museum to develop a "future of energy" visitor experience.

5.4 Other case studies:

- From an open day held at the Beinn an Tuirc wind farm, in the Mull of Kintyre, 77% said that the wind farm had added to their holiday experience, and 84% said it would not influence either way their decision to return. Interestingly, around 13% said they would be more likely to return, and less than 3% said they would be less likely to return. The popularity of this open day has prompted the local council to investigate the possibility of introducing a new bus route to take visitors to visit the wind farm.
- 'Discover the Borders' website lists Dun Law wind farm as a visitor attraction and provides directions and some facts. ([www.discovertheborders.co.uk/places/33.html](http://www.discovertheborders.co.uk/places/33.html))
- The Cornwall Tourist Board has featured wind farms on its advertisements and publications.

*For news, sport and information online visit [www.watfordobserver.co.uk](http://www.watfordobserver.co.uk)* Watford Observer, Friday, May 5, 2006 25

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**FEATURE**

# Vote for your favourite icons



**KINGS LANGLEY WIND TURBINES:** They can be loved or loathed, but they can't be ignored by motorists travelling on the M25. The only facility in Greater London generates power for a new environmentally friendly office development. The 50-metre high turbine stands on the former Ovaltine Egg Farm site.

WHEN the British public were asked to help update a list of English icons, Hadrian's Wall, the mini-skirt and Morris dancing were all named as national treasures deserving of icon status.

The results of the poll, released last week, were an eclectic mix of the classic – the Domesday book – and the idiosyncratic – London's famous curry road Brick Lane. People were not included, but their creations were.

This week the Watford Observer is launching its own bid to find South West Hertfordshire's top ten icons.

We have compiled a list of ten local landmarks and institutions we think are worthy of icon status and are inviting readers to vote for their favourite ones.

Readers are welcome to disagree with any or all of our suggestions – but only on the proviso they come up with some suggestions of their own.

To have your say on the icons of south west Hertfordshire e-mail [editors@watfordobserver.co.uk](mailto:editors@watfordobserver.co.uk)



**CASSIOBURY PARK:** From lazy evenings in the Cha Cha Cha cafe, to feeding the ducks in the canal or competing in the Watford Half-Marathon or 10K, Cassiobury holds special memories for many. Thank heavens town planners had the good sense to stop the Metropolitan Line from cutting a swath through the park and built the tube station on its border. Cassiobury Park is a true haven.



**WATFORD OBSERVER:** We may be blowing our own trumpet, but the Watford Observer is undeniably a part of the town's fabric. Published for more than 150 years, as well as reporting on the news and events, not to mention sport, in south west Hertfordshire, we also play an active part in the community and lend support to charities through schemes such as the Gannett Foundation Grant and the Times and Observer Golf Day.



**BUSHEY ARCHES:** If nothing else, the Arches provides a staple excuse for employees to give their bosses if they've overslept. "I was stuck in traffic at Bushey Arches," is undoubtedly heard in offices all over Watford every day. Built in the early 1800s, and used as a toll gate until 1872, the Arches has stood up against the test of time and is one of Watford's most noticeable visual landmarks.

RES turbine at Kings Langley voted as a local icon 2006

- The Watford Observer launched a competition for their readers to select the top ten icons that best represent S.W. Herts. The wind turbine at Renewable Energy System Head Office in Kings Langley is the first option (May 2006).

**Visitor Centres**

5.5 Wind farm developers have long known that tourism and wind farms go hand in hand.



The UK's first commercial wind farm, at Delabole in Cornwall, received 60,000 visitors in the 1<sup>st</sup> year and total of 350,000 visitors in its first eight years. In response to this high

level of interest the Gaia Energy Centre was opened in August 2001, as the existing facilities could not cope. A survey of visitors carried out in summer 2002 showed that 7% had visited the centre as a result of passing by and seeing the wind turbines. In order to open, the Gaia Energy Centre had been promised funding that was not in the end delivered; therefore the necessary funds were borrowed. Despite healthy visitor numbers, servicing the debt proved too much, and unfortunately the centre has closed. Whilst open, this ambitious project remained a popular tourist attraction despite the lack of funding and minimal marketing budget.

In Norfolk, visitors can be found queuing to climb the 300 steps to the top of the UK's tallest turbine at the EcoTech Centre. A specially designed viewing platform situated below the turbine nacelle gives views over the surrounding countryside, making this a popular destination for family days out. 70,000 visitors have climbed the turbine since it opened, with many thousands more visiting the centre and learning about sustainability issues. Approximately 200 people per day can climb the turbine, but in summer months as many as 500 might want to take the tour. A survey of local residents showed that at least 90% would be in favour of having another turbine 'in their back yard', and indeed a second turbine was erected near the town in July 2003.



The turbine at Swaffam is not actually part of the EcoTech centre, which is largely a business, conferencing and educational centre, but leases the land in its grounds. Therefore, the performance of the EcoTech Centre cannot be judged by the presence of the turbine – the centre is intended to exist in its own right. However it is certainly the case that if the turbine was not present, there would have been many less visitors to the centre.



The newest visitor centre in the UK is E.ON UK's Scroby Sands Information Centre which has welcomed a staggering 30,000 people through its doors in the six months since it opened in May and closed for the winter months at the end of October – and all before the wind farm started generating!

From VIPs such as Lord Whitty and local MP Tony Wright to the local community and holidaymakers from near and far, all have enjoyed visiting the centre and finding out about the wind farm and how it was built.

Dave Atherton, Scroby Sands wind farm operations manager, said: "We're delighted with the number of visitors we've had so far. We've even had visitors from as far away as Azerbaijan, the United States and Canada

dropping in to the centre. We expected it to be popular but this has really exceeded our expectations."

"The vast majority of people have been impressed by what they've discovered and our comment book is full of supportive comments for Scroby Sands and renewable energy."

## **Annex: Tourism Survey Details**

### **Cornwall and South West**

University of the West of England 'Fullabrook Wind Farm Proposal, North Devon – evidence gathering of the impact of wind farms on visitor numbers and tourist experience', 2004

93.9% of those surveyed would not be discouraged from visiting the area if there was a wind farm. Only 6.1% said they would be 'marginally' or 'strongly' discouraged from visiting, a higher percentage (7.2%) stated that they would be more encouraged to visit if there was a wind farm. Contrary to this the Devon Marketing Bureau has conducted a survey which suggests that visitors would be discouraged from returning to the area if there was a wind farm, however the survey has not been released for public view.

Cornwall Tourist Board, Cornwall Holiday Survey, 2000

The Cornwall Tourist Board stated that for the year's 1996 to 2000 wind farms did not alter the percentage of tourists returning for repeat visits. In 1996 – 79.6% of those responding to the tourist board questionnaire said they were returning to Cornwall, in 1997 the figure was 81.2, in 1998 it was 80.1%, in 1999 it was 79.2% and in 2000 it was 81.5%.

Robertson Bell Associates 'North Cornwall Tourists Survey', September 1996

"Nineteen out of every twenty tourists (94%) say that the presence of wind farms has had no impact on the likelihood of them visiting North Cornwall again - the majority of the remaining 6% say that the presence of wind farms will actually *encourage* them to visit again with only one respondent stating that the wind farms will discourage them from visiting the area in the future."

Nicholas Pearson Associates, May 1996

"Analysis of the visitor figures (source: Cornwall County Council) to important tourist attractions within 10km of the Delabole Wind Farm since 1991 indicates no decrease in the numbers since the advent of the wind farm. Indeed there has been a marginal increase to some attractions including Tintagel Castle."

### **Somerset**

Centre for Sustainable Energy, 'Martin's Hill Tourism Survey, 2002

A survey was commissioned in order to answer the concerns of a number of people in Brean, Sedgemoor about a proposed wind farm having a detrimental impact on the local tourism industry. Of the 331 people who were interviewed: 91.5% said that the proposed development would make no difference to how often they visit the area

- 3.6 said they would visit less often
- 3.9% said they would visit more often
- 0.9% had no opinion

Other key findings were:

- The majority of respondents supported wind technology, with a total of approximately 8 out of 10 in favour or strongly in favour of wind power
- Approximately 7 out of 10 respondents viewed the proposed wind farm as a positive development for the area.

## **Cumbria and North West**

### Evidence given at Whinash Wind Farm Inquiry by David Stewart Associates, 2005 Lambrigg Wind Farm Survey

- 3% of respondents believed that the wind farm had caused a fall in visitor numbers;
- 11% believed it had caused an increase and the
- remainder felt there had been no effect.

### A separate survey for the Lake District found:

- 87% of visitors either approved or strongly approved of wind power.
- 75% of respondents claimed that significantly more wind farms would make no difference to the number of times they visited.
- 2% of respondents claimed they would visit more often
- 22% claimed they would visit less often.

### Star Consultants, Leeds Metropolitan University, 'A Study into the Attitudes of Visitors, Tourists and Tourism Organisations towards Wind Farms on the Boundaries of the Lake District National Park', for Friends of the Lake District (FLD), October 2003

Opinions were sought near three wind farms all situated on the borders of the Lake District National Park; Lambrigg, near Kendal, Kirkby Moor near Ulverston and the proposed development at Wharrels Hill near Bothel, this still at the proposal stages at the time, but now approved and awaiting construction. Responses were collected from 143 tourists and 24 tourism organisations; although a small and possibly not statistically relevant sample size, these responses are worth noting given the location, the nature of the respondents and also the commissioning organisation – a group with a history of not viewing the development of wind energy positively.

- Primary research found that the majority of visitors and tourism organisations interviewed within the Lake District and Cumbria feel positive about renewable energy and wind farms with 87% of visitors/tourists and 88% of tourism organisations felt positive towards wind farms.
- The three sites under investigation were found to have little or no effect on tourism within Cumbria and the Lake District. The majority of visitors / tourists were not aware of the wind farms under investigation and after being made aware they felt it would not impact on future visits.
- The vast majority of tourism organisations reported no effect on their business from the presence of an existing wind farm in their vicinity, nor did they expect any effect associated with the proposal for a new wind farm.
- The vast majority of visitors (75%) said that increases in the number of turbines in the next few years would not have any effect on them visiting in the future, although 22% of visitors said that if the number of wind turbines increased considerably over the next few years, they would be discouraged from visiting the area.

It is interesting to note how the opinion of tourism organisations differs to the actual tourists themselves: when asked how they would react if a wind farm were to be developed near them, the majority - 46% - said that they would have a negative reaction and only 21% said that they would react positively, compared with the 75% of tourists who said that increases in turbine numbers would have no effect on their visiting the area in future.

Amongst those that said they would react negatively were attractions and ramblers clubs. This is in keeping with their previous views towards wind farms in general. Hotels were also amongst those that had a negative reaction towards proposed

developments near them. This contrasts with their positive opinions towards renewable energy and wind farms in general.

### **Summary**

***The responses to most questions were that the presence of a wind farm made no difference, or that for the minority who felt that it did, twice as many were positive as were negative. The only significant difference was in response to the question on achieving Government targets for renewables in Cumbria, where 22% of tourist said that this would put them off visiting the area. This perhaps illustrates fear of the unknown, which is borne out by tourist responses to questions about specific wind farms.***

### **Scotland**

NFO System Three, 'Investigation into the potential impact if wind farms on tourism in Scotland', for VisitScotland, 2002

BWEA consider this survey flawed, due to the methodology adopted. The following observations on the methodology were made by David Stewart Associates (March 2005) as part of wider evidence for the Whinash Wind Farm inquiry:

- only 180 people were interviewed,
- interviewers were instructed to 'deselect' certain of potential respondents if they failed to give the right answers to some of the questions, and one of the key ones was whether they described the natural landscape and natural scenery as 'not at all important' to their stay
- there was another elimination test was to remove anyone visiting the area on business and visiting friends and relatives, rather than because they were on holiday
- there was another elimination test to remove anyone who did not fulfill certain criteria of activities. Thus, while they included hill-walking, short walks, cycling, mountaineering and sightseeing, they eliminated those doing other 'active country pursuits' (golfing, fishing).
- There is criticism of the way the later parts of the interviews were developed: when asked to identify aspects of the Scottish countryside they particularly disliked, there was just one respondent who mentioned wind farms. However the researcher went on to prompt a list of possible aspects of potential likes and dislikes to each interviewee. At this stage 29% stated that wind farms detracted from their experience of the countryside

This survey is certainly not the view of all tourists, and has used an exclusive approach that has excluded certain types of visitors and tourist activities. David Stewart Associates further point out that the economic value of contributions from a golfers (who were excluded) would be expected to be greater than a fell-walker or sightseer.

Nevertheless, bearing in mind the flawed methodology and for a study that is cited as being proof of the potentially serious threat of wind farms to tourism, the outcome is very positive:

- 70% said it would make no difference to their likelihood to return to an area if a wind farms was developed there in the future
- 61% said that they would be interested in visiting a wind farm development with its own visitor centre

Key Players responses (including Area Tourist Boards)

*'In summary, most respondents were of the view that as long as wind farms were 'sensitively sited' i.e. outwith designated areas such as National Parks and National*

*Nature Reserves as well as those areas which are regarded as key tourist 'honeypot' locations then wind farms should have few negative impacts on tourists and tourism businesses. At the existing level of wind farm development in Scotland, the impacts of wind farms on tourists were felt to be relatively minimal.'*

Tourism Trade responses

*'In general, the respondents tended to be more positive than negative towards the impacts of wind farms on tourism, although most of the views presented had a conditional aspect to them. A few could be said to be strongly in favour of wind farms and a similar minority three expressed views strongly against. The majority had more neutral opinions, where most of them tended to be in favour if certain conditions were met, regarding, for example, the siting and scale of new wind farms developments.'*

Both groups were of the opinion that VisitScotland should support and promote Scotland as a 'green' country with renewable energy.

See [www.scotexchange.net/windfarm\\_main\\_report.pdf](http://www.scotexchange.net/windfarm_main_report.pdf) for full details

MORI Scotland, 'Tourist Attitudes towards Wind Farms', for BWEA and SRF, September 2002

More than 300 face-to-face interviews were conducted among tourists visiting Argyll and Bute, which had 3 large commercial wind farms in operation at the time the survey was undertaken. Interestingly, despite the presence of 3 large wind farms, 3 in 5 of tourists questioned were not aware of their presence, and the majority - 71% - had visited areas close to the wind farms.

Presence of wind farm on impression of Argyll as a place to visit:

- 43% said presence of a wind farm had positive effect
- 43% said made no difference
- 8% said had a negative effect

Likelihood of visiting Argyll in future:

- 91% said made no difference
- 4% more likely to return
- 2% less likely to return

Interest in visiting a wind farm if opened to the public with a visitor centre:

- 80% would be interested, with 54% 'very interested'
- 19% not interested

The majority of tourists who knew about the wind farms came away with a more positive image of the area because of their presences

See [www.bwea.com/media/news/tourism.html](http://www.bwea.com/media/news/tourism.html) for full details.

## **Wales**

'Investigation into the potential Impact of Wind Farms on Tourism in Wales', for Wales Tourist Board, 2003

WTB commissioned NFO to carry out a study to establish the impact (both positive and negative) that the existing/proposed/anticipated development of wind farms in Wales (onshore and offshore) is likely to have on tourism in Wales.

- General reactions: 78% of all respondents had a neutral or positive view on wind farm development 21% had a negative view

- 68% would be interested in attending a visitor centre at a wind farm development
- 68% said it would make no difference to their likelihood to take holidays in the Welsh countryside if the number of wind farms increased

*'Most respondents were in principle supportive of renewable energy and the development of wind farms in Wales. However, the general view was that wind farms should be very carefully sited and not in areas which were deemed to be particularly sensitive to their development. There were variations in the explanation of what constitutes a 'no-go' area with some organisations more explicit than others in their definition. Nevertheless, there was general consensus that they should be located outside of designated areas (e.g. National parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Sites of Special Scientific Interest) and in areas in which the visual and environmental impacts would be minimised'*

(This is generally the approach already taken by the wind industry, however wind energy development in Wales is now restricted to 7 designated Strategic Search Areas).

*'In the absence of any research in Wales that has attempted to quantify the impacts of wind farms on tourists, most respondents found it difficult to assess these types of impacts. Amongst those that did provide an opinion most believed that the impacts of tourism were negligible, although these views are based on anecdotal evidence.'*

'The Impacts of wind Farms on Tourism in Wales', a thesis undertaken for the Wales Tourist Board (WTB) in 2001

Key conclusions:

- 96% of the respondents would not be put off visiting Wales if more wind farms were developed
- almost 70% would visit a wind farm if an information centre was built.
- There is not a large difference in opinion on wind farms between people that have seen a wind farm during their stay and people who have not.
- Most people believe that their contribution to renewable energy outweighs their impact on the landscape.

Robertson Bell Associates, Taff Ely Residents Survey, December 1997

"It is generally felt by the majority of residents (68%) that the number of people visiting the area has not been affected, but of those who thought there had been some effect, many more say that visitor numbers have increased (15%) than have decreased (1%)."

ETSU, 'Cemmaes Wind Farm Sociological Impact Study' 1994

"Following the construction and 12 month operation of the Cemmaes Wind Farm in Mid Wales 62% of respondents thought that the wind farm should be promoted as a tourist attraction with 25% saying 'no' and 14% 'don't know'. The consensus of opinion was that 'people still believe that the wind farm is more likely to attract visitors than it is to deter them - even though the novelty value has more or less disappeared over the past year.' Moreover 92% of the respondents were 'not bothered' by the look of the wind turbines."

Chris Blandford Associates, February 1994

A social survey of public attitudes towards three wind farm sites in Wales commissioned by the Countryside Council for Wales, provides further evidence that local people felt wind farms were a tourist attraction. For Llandinam, Rhyd-y-Groes and Llangwryfon Wind Farms, 65%, 59% and 49% respectively, of local people believe the wind farms would attract tourists.