

## **Petitions Committee Visits to Alltwalis and Parc Cynog Windarms**

**27 February 2012**

### **Background:**

In September 2011, the Committee received a petition calling for the control of noise from wind turbines, which collected 1,074 signatures. The wording is as follows:

‘We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to pass a statute controlling the noise nuisance from wind turbines during anti-social hours. We ask for the implementation of respite periods during which time turbines would be switched off.

Noise respite periods are common in public health legislation. They are called for by the World Health Organisation in their Community Noise report; and are currently implemented in the U.K. on airport operations, construction sites and factories and other evening and overnight noise nuisance.

We ask that this applies to turbines above 1.3 MW, and that respite periods be between 18.00Hrs to 06.00Hrs for turbines within 1.5 Km of individual residences; and 22.00Hrs to 06.00 Hrs for turbines within 2Km of communities. Authorities within Wales determining applications under 50MW Plate Capacity, and the Infrastructure Planning Commission determining those over 50MW should make developers aware of this Public Health restriction which may affect individual turbines.’

The Petitions Committee issued a general call for evidence on the subject of noise from wind turbines in September 2011. Responses on both sides of the argument were received, but a significant proportion of the responses in support of the petition came from the village of Gwyddgrug. These responses outlined problems experienced with noise emitted from Alltwalis windfarm.

The Committee therefore decided to visit Alltwalis windfarm to experience the noise for themselves. They also decided to visit Parc Cynog windfarm, which is 10 years older, in order to compare the two.

### **Alltwalis:**

#### **Present:**

- William Powell AM, Chair
- Russell George AM
- Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM
- Joyce Watson AM
- Sergio Castedo, Statkraft
- Stuart Shaw, Statkraft

- Andrew Bullmore, Hoare Lea Acoustics
- Rob Fellows, Quatro Public Relations
- Abigail Phillips, Clerk to the Petitions Committee
- Sarita Marshall, Deputy Clerk to the Petitions Committee
- Helen Roberts, Committee Legal Adviser
- Rhodri Wyn Jones, Committee Support Officer

Statkraft told Members that noise complaints were received from nearby residences shortly after the windfarm was commissioned in October 2009. He told Members that it takes a certain amount of time to gather evidence of noise problems, owing to the fact that weather conditions have an impact on the sound emitted from wind turbines.

Statkraft stated that their first step was to try to establish whether the noise experienced exceeded the maximum levels set out in guidance or whether the noise was something other than the sound that might be expected to come from wind turbines.

Members were told that Statkraft acknowledged the strength of feeling in the community and therefore immediately began monitoring the noise and also implemented a helpline for local residents to contact to report noise.

Statkraft noted at the meeting that there were examples of complaints being received when the turbines were not operational.

After three months of testing and monitoring, a problem with a turbine gearbox was identified, and there was a delay while a new part for the turbine was manufactured. Statkraft stated that once the problem was identified, the turbine was switched off at night. It was also found that wind speed and direction contributed to the problem.

The overall noise levels from the windfarm then fell within guidance limits but residents at a nearby farm continued to experience tonal noise. It was decided that the fix had not worked and Siemens therefore agreed to replace the whole gearbox.

The residents affected made a claim for financial compensation. Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM stated at the meeting that the level of compensation claimed was based on legal advice. Statkraft rejected the claim as they say they acted on complaints and the sound emitted overall fell within guidance limits. Statkraft responded by making their own offer of compensation, which included employing a member of the household to monitor the noise and free electricity, but have not received a response.

The residents have now withdrawn permission to allow Statkraft monitoring equipment to be installed at their residence, so Statkraft can no longer collect data, which is needed for the monitoring work.

Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM stated that the monitoring equipment was no longer allowed to be on that particular farm because permission had not been sought by Statkraft on several occasions before accessing the equipment.

In conclusion, Statkraft stated that they felt they had been transparent in their dealings and had investigated problems in order to attempt to resolve them. However, they can no longer monitor the problem area as they no longer have access to the land where they need to monitor the noise.

### **Parc Cynog:**

#### **Present:**

- William Powell AM, Chair
- Russell George AM
- Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM
- Joyce Watson AM
- Ross Cant, Operations Manager, Vattenfall
- Martin Hooker, Planning Consultant working on behalf of Vattenfall
- Iori Evans, landowner
- Abigail Phillips, Clerk to the Petitions Committee
- Sarita Marshall, Deputy Clerk to the Petitions Committee
- Helen Roberts, Committee Legal Adviser
- Rhodri Wyn Jones, Committee Support Officer

Parc Cynog windfarm sits on a hill overlooking the sea, and the village of Llanmiloe is situated at the bottom of the hillside, next to the sea. Members were told that, apart from one residence, no complaints about noise from the windfarm have been received from the local community. The landowner also told Members that the turbines pose no threat to birds and that many birds use the birdfeeders on his land.

Roughly half of the turbines at the site were built in 2001, and the other half were built more recently.

The windfarm is managed by a community interest company, which makes about £30,000 profit a year for the local community.

**Committee Service  
March 2012**