Department of the Environment

Strategic Planning Division

Millennium House

Great Victoria Street

Belfast

BT2 7BN

26 July 2013

Dear Sir/Madam

**Proposed Wind Farm at Slievard Mountain, Omagh (Planning Ref: K/2013/0102/F)**

**Proposed Wind Farm Alteration and Extension at Bessy Bell, Omagh (Planning Ref: J/2013/0080/F)**

**Proposed Wind Farm at Lisnaharney Road, Omagh (Planning Ref: K/2013/0181/F)**

I refer to the above proposals as recently advertised in the local press and wish to voice my strong objection to same for the following reasons:

* There should be an immediate embargo imposed upon the processing of all planning applications for wind farm and single wind turbine proposals until meaningful and up to date regulations have been drafted by the Northern Ireland Assembly, consulted upon with all relevant stakeholders and the general public and appropriate legislation introduced. I believe that the wind industry presently can, and is, acting with impunity; total disregard is being shown to the human rights of those living in the immediate vicinity of wind farms and single wind turbines.
* There should be an immediate embargo imposed upon the processing of planning applications for all wind farm and single wind turbine proposals until the full medical impact of their very existence upon human, animal and wildlife health has been researched and fully established. Independent medical research needs to be commissioned by the Northern Ireland Assembly as a matter of extreme urgency. Then, and only then, will the relevant authorities be in a position to consider fully the health impact of wind farm and single wind turbine development on rural communities. Safe set-back distance of dwellings from wind turbines also needs to be independently established. There is very strong medical evidence (produced by eminent physicians) available at present throughout the world to prove that constant exposure to the low frequency sound waves emitted by wind farms and single wind turbines is detrimental to human sleep patterns and ultimately injurious to human health.
* Shadow flicker is a problem that affects human health and those that suffer from epilepsy are particularly vulnerable. The safe set back distances of dwellings from wind turbines quoted by the wind industry at ten times the diameter of the rotor blades is, I believe, not based on scientific research and is totally inadequate.
* The wind industry is primarily focused on profit maximisation and at present is not properly regulated. The applicable guidelines for the wind industry are ETSU-R-97; they are significantly out of date, not fit for purpose and in urgent need of review. The onus is on the Northern Ireland Assembly to introduce appropriate legislation immediately.
* The current and proposed level of development of wind farms and single wind turbines throughout Northern Ireland, and the Omagh District Council Area in particular, is unsustainable and undesirable. Immediate action needs to be taken by the Environment Minister in the same way as was taken when an immediate moratorium was placed on the approval of single dwellings in the countryside under PPS14.
* The United Kingdom as a whole has already met its requirement to produce 20% of its energy from renewable sources by 2020. The 40% energy production from renewable energy sources target set by the Northern Ireland Assembly is totally unrealistic and should be immediately reduced to 20% in line with targets agreed at international level by governments.
* The proposed wind farms will/are located within Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and will be/are clearly visible from the Ulster American Folk Park, one of Northern Ireland’s most popular and visited tourist facilities. The Northern Ireland Tourist Board has identified the Sperrins, within which these wind farms will be/are located, as one of nine key tourism destination areas in their Consultation on a Tourism Strategy for Northern Ireland to 2020.
* The proposed wind farm at Slieveard Mountain would be located within an Area of Special Scientific Interest and would have a detrimental effect on existing flora and fauna. Construction work carried out in the bird breeding season will have significant detrimental effect on birds.
* The proposed wind farms will have significant detrimental impact upon the visual amenity and rural landscape character of the area due to the totally unacceptable cumulative impact, scale, siting and size of the overall proposals. The wind farms are/will be clearly visible for a distance of 20-25 miles away. Local residents will be particularly affected by the blight on their neighbourhood on a permanent basis. Environmental Statements submitted by applicants tend to play down the detrimental impact of their proposals on rural landscapes and rural communities.
* The proposed wind farms, along with other existing and proposed wind farms, will have significant detrimental effect on the peaceful quiet rural environment that residents of Omagh and Strabane District Council Areas currently enjoy as a result of the noise that they generate.
* Wildlife habitats would be adversely affected during the construction phase and on a permanent basis if the wind farms as proposed were to be fully operational. There is strong evidence that a significant number of endangered species of wildlife currently exist in the areas. In addition, there is strong evidence to prove that wildlife has left areas in the proximity of other wind farms in Northern Ireland in the recent past.
* The construction of the proposed wind farm will have a permanent adverse effect on the market value of property in the immediate areas. Are the developers of the wind farms prepared to indemnify local residents for such inevitable loss?
* The construction of the proposed wind farms will have a permanent adverse effect on the rainwater attenuation properties of the areas thus increasing the flood risk in local streams and rivers. Any drainage undertaken during construction will merely discharge water to the existing streams and rivers more quickly and significantly increase the flood risk.
* The applicants would need to produce Environmental Impact Assessment that adequately and fully assesses the long term impact of the wind farm proposals upon their neighbourhoods.
* Wind farms and wind turbines are only 20% efficient at best and are an unreliable source of energy production that cannot be relied upon to supplement electricity supply at times when need is greatest. Britain had to import electricity produced by nuclear power plants in France during the harsh winter of 2010/11, wind energy sources failed miserably to meet energy requirements during that period of peak demand. I believe that government confidence in the benefits of wind energy is misrepresented and misplaced.
* The three mountain areas are popular with walkers and there is risk of injury from ice throw from the turbine blades during periods of frost. That risk of injury will also affect livestock grazing in the vicinity. Ice throw distances are difficult to predict accurately given the many variable circumstances that contribute to their existence.
* There is a communications mast on Mullaghcarn Mountain close to both the Slieveard and Lisnaharney wind farms and I would be concerned that emergency services communication could be compromised if either wind farm were to be approved.

I trust Strategic Planning Division will take my genuine concerns seriously and reject these proposals.

Yours faithfully

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Signature

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