

Why we should not farm the wind

Two new reports raise serious questions about its viability and cost. Professor Philip Stott adds scenic impact to the list of reasons to cry Havoc! and resist

PROPOSALS to site new wind farms on the Isle of Skye, on the margins of the Lake District National Park at Whinash, and across the ancient landscape of Romney Marsh, have aroused deep anger in all who care for

et's Fairfield, still adrift in its lonely water-meadow. Moreover, the wide Romney Marsh skies match those of the Dutch painters, while the Saxon Way crosses the Marsh in the west. Any industrial plan to compro-

ed by two timely reports, one stressing the problems of managing wind power in the electricity supply industry; the other, its high costs relative to alternative power sources. Both these reports must cause Government

man has a deep knowledge of the wind power industries in Denmark and Germany, and his experience causes him to highlight a major problem in implementation of wind power in the UK.

He argues that it will prove extremely difficult to manage reliably much more than 10 GW of unpredictable wind power without a major, and very expensive, programme of new storage schemes and inter-connectors. The difficulty lies in enmeshing the unpredictable output of wind, from remote areas,



The largest wind farm in Scotland, Bowbeat Hill: it has 24 turbines, each one 75 metres tall.

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the British countryside. Simon Jenkins, former Editor of *The Times*, wrote of the Romney Marsh proposal, 'The decision is astonishing. Romney Marsh is still one of the most precious corners of England. Barham's Ingoldsby Legends claimed that "the world is divided into Europe, Asia, Africa, America and Romney Marsh".'

Its churches are legendary, with the box pews of Old Romney, the wood-boarded belfry of Brookland, and Thomas Beck-

mise such an iconic landscape as this should be countenanced only if the known gains are absolutely assured and massive.

In the case of wind farms, they are not, and the expansion of wind turbines into such areas of outstanding beauty and historic value can only be regarded as an act of Government-encouraged vandalism. Our nation should be issuing Government with ASPOs—Anti-Social Planning Orders.

The serious limitations of wind power have now been highlight-

to think again about the foolish drive to force wind farms on to a reluctant public that is increasingly incensed by loss of wilderness and historic amenity for little or no gain. It is a strange 'green' policy that wilfully destroys both habitat and heritage.

The first report appears in the November issue of the journal *Civil Engineering*. It was written by Hugh Sharman, principal of the international energy consulting and broking company Inco-teco (Denmark) ApS. Mr Shar-

with the national grid system.

As Mr Sharman points out, wind power poses an entirely new challenge to the grid operator, above all because big wind farms tend to be remotely located, most of them sited in the North and West of Britain. By contrast, the demand load lies in an epicentre lying between London and Birmingham. First, wind generators are paid at the station boundary and they do not carry a financial penalty for the fact that up to 15% of the

power they generate is lost during transmission. Secondly, of the additional 10.7 GW being built or planned, 6.8 GW will be generated in Scotland. Scotland's electrical inter-connection is currently limited to 0.5 GW with Northern Ireland and 2.2 GW with England. Even with upgrading, it seems that only a small part of the total 7.3 GW ultimately proposed for Scotland can ever be connected.

In Mr Sharman's words, 'How much can actually be accommodated will depend on the willingness of the politicians and the public to make very large investments in grid upgrades and, possibly, power storage, but these issues are not currently at the forefront of debate, and there are no mechanisms in place to pay off these investments.'

One is tempted to add, 'So much for integrated Government thinking on energy.' To date, the Government has been claiming that the UK's system can accept anything up to 26 GW of wind power. By contrast, Mr Sharman's detailed analysis illustrates that this is not the case, and that, as witnessed in the much larger wind systems of Denmark and Germany, 10 GW (+/- 25%) will prove to be the safe upper limit of all wind capacity.

This means that the push for wind power inevitably fails to fulfil the Government's aim of using wind to offset some of the generating capacity now being lost through the closure of coal- and nuclear-powered generators. By 2020 we will require up to 50 GW of new generating capacity.

This is Alice-in-Blunderland thinking, and, as Mr Sharman rightly concludes, wind power cannot be used 'at the expense of renewing existing firm generating capacity'. Moreover, as a second new report demonstrates, wind power is a taxpayer's nightmare, being by far the most expensive option on land and at sea.

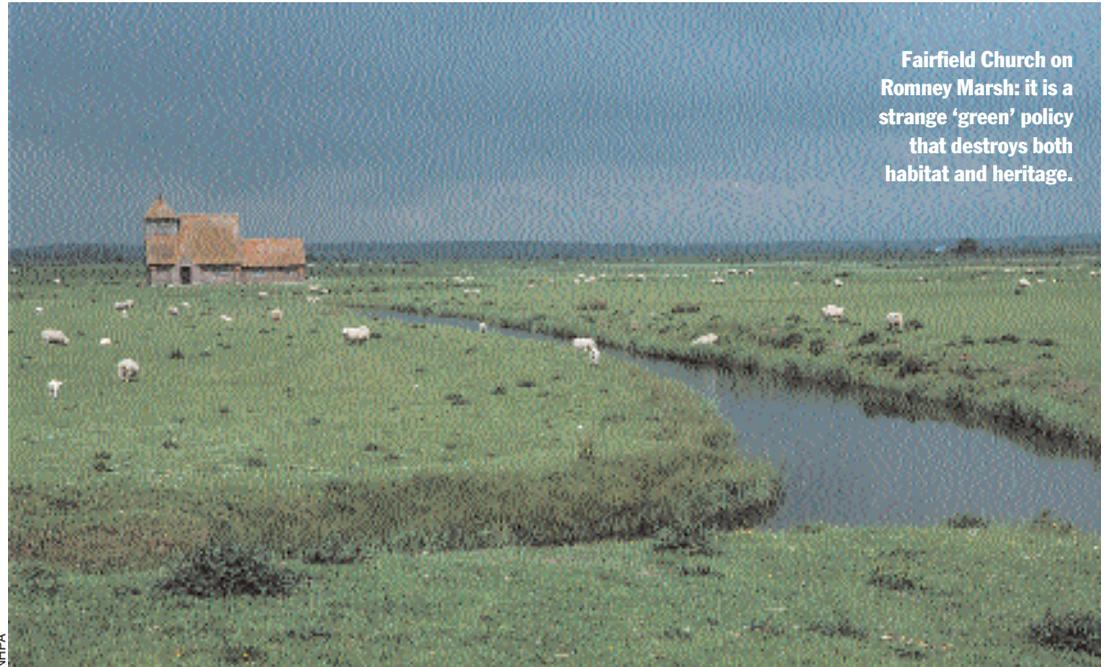
This second report emanates from EEF, the leading manufacturers' group in the UK. The analysis presented makes one wonder whether wind power should even be on the starting grid. This comparative report argues that, when gas and carbon

prices are high, nuclear power is the most cost-effective energy provider, at less than £40 per Megawatt hour (MWh). Gas comes a close second (also less than £40 per MWh), followed by conventional coal and clean coal (less than £50 per MWh). By contrast, onshore wind is nearly £60 per MWh and offshore wind,

call for an urgent rethink on nuclear power, stating that, 'EEF, the manufacturers' organisation, has urged the Government to back replacement nuclear build as part of a balanced, sustainable long-term energy strategy for the UK. The energy supply has taken on a renewed sense of urgency, given large rises in

brave, and to face up publicly to Britain's energy realities.

The rest is ephemeral—just blowin' in the wind. I feel increasingly sorry for manufacturing and industry, not to mention the domestic consumer. Government policy will lead to tears—perhaps even before this winter is out, if we experience the



Fairfield Church on Romney Marsh: it is a strange 'green' policy that destroys both habitat and heritage.

at more than £70 per MWh, is simply punitive. Government must have money to burn to contemplate offshore wind.

These rankings and differentials remain effectively the same even when fossil fuel prices are low, except that gas then re-

prices (50-80% for manufacturers contracting since the summer) and fears over supplies in the next two winters ...'

In the light of these two detailed and meticulous reports, it is abundantly clear that we British will pay dearly for Government's prevarications over developing a realistic energy policy. To date, the approach to energy has been a disgraceful shambles, and one which has not succeeded in meeting even its own farcical 'green' targets (carbon dioxide emissions have in fact risen since the Labour Party came to power).

But, worse still, along with all the other political Parties, there has been a culpable failure to address our central, core energy requirements for the next 50 or so years. These cannot be supplied by so-called 'renewables', such as wind. The only viable option has to comprise some mix of imported gas, clean coal, and nuclear power. There is no other reliable and practical choice. It is time for the politicians to be

severe cold weather presently predicted by the Met Office.

But when we consider once more the loss of wilderness and historic landscapes to such industrialisation, we should not hold back from pointing out the sheer folly of the Government's heavily-subsidised wind power policies. Those who inhabit and love the countryside have a duty to stand firm, and together, against such wanton vandalism:

*First they came for the Welsh
And I did not speak out
Because I was not Welsh.
Then they came for Scots
And I did not speak out
Because I was not Scottish.
Then they came for the West Country
And I did not speak out
Because I was not Cornish.
Then they came for the flat and
rolling South ...'*

It is time for all rural Britain to speak out against the Government's wind turbine follies. □

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'Those who love the country have a duty to stand against such wanton vandalism'

places nuclear as the most cost-effective (at less than £30 per MWh), which makes offshore wind more than three times the cost of gas. The promulgation of wind energy is thus the surest way to undermine UK competitiveness and growth; to punish the domestic consumer and the voter; and to destroy landscape.

Unsurprisingly, EEF regards wind farms as an unrealistic option for providing one-fifth of UK energy needs. Instead, they