

A response to the Article – “What Residents of East Bridgford need to know about the Gunthorpe Wind Turbine Development – August 2011”

I was interested to read John O’Hare’s article following his visit to Loscar Wind Farm. I too, went on the same visit, but had a somewhat different experience.

John makes only one direct observation from his visit. The rest of what he says seems to be either conjecture (as he does not quote his sources) or personal opinion.

His one observation, in which he includes everybody present, was that “...’we’ were unable to hear the noise generated by the wind turbines as they were either stationary or not rotating at operational speed”. It is true that they were not turning when we arrived, but the wind increased during our visit and the two nearest ones started turning and reached what seemed to me to be quite an effective speed, at least for a short time. I could hear the one I was standing under, but the noise level was so low, it was hard to hear it over other noises on the ground. I’m not sure what John means by “operational speed”. The group I was with were told by the engineers running the site that if a turbine was turning, it was generating electricity and the inbuilt computer was designed to stop the blades if the wind was not sufficient for this purpose.

In my small ‘sub group’, we worked out that as the wind speed increases, the noise of its passing through trees and other structures also increases, and this may offset or even exceed the increased noise of a turbine. This was later confirmed by the visit organisers and I’ve heard it from other experts, too.

From numerous enquiries over time, one thing I cannot find is an ‘official’ specific radius within which a wind turbine ‘could be disturbing’ to people (and what does ‘disturbing’ mean?). Where did John get the information that “800 metres” was a critical distance.....and, if so, for what sized turbine? Was it from one of the Loscar site staff (Partnerships for Renewables say not) or from another source unrelated to the visit? It’s important that those reading his article (including me) know that, or they could be misled.

Having never been to a wind farm before and for the first time being able to stand right underneath a large turbine, two things struck me (and from my discussions with others, I was not the only one):

1. That how graceful and, yes, beautiful was this large slim structure with its 21st Century contours.
2. That how noisy the countryside is when you actually stop and listen! We were trying to focus on what sounds might be coming from the turbines, but people talking nearby, a gun going off every so often, animal noises and various other sounds, made that quite difficult. Many wind turbines would be closer to main roads (and other noise sources) than the 2-3 miles from this site.

At least we all went to have a look (which is not always the case before views on this subject are expressed). To see how representative John’s article is of the views of the visiting group, I have obtained the results of the survey that Partnerships for Renewables carried out after the visit of those attending it (see below). I think this speaks for itself.

How Important do you feel Renewable Energy is for UK energy security?	1 – Not at all	2 – Not Very	3 – No Opinion Either Way	4 – Quite	5 – Very	Total
				4	24	29
How Informative have you found this visit?	1 – Not at all	2 – Lacking Information	3 – No opinion either way	4 – Informative	5 – Very Informative	
		2	3	13	11	29
Had you seen a wind farm up close (stood by an operating turbine) before this visit?	YES		NO			
	3		26			29
Did you find it useful to visit the windfarm at Loscar?	YES		NO			
	26		2			28
Overall what is your opinion on windfarms?	1 – I’m very against them	2 – A bad idea	3 – No opinion either way	4 – Good idea	5 – Excellent idea	
		2	2	19	7	30
What is your opinion on the Gunthorpe wind energy project after seeing the Loscar windfarm?	1 – I’m very against them	2 – A bad idea	3 – No opinion either way	4 – Good idea	5 – Excellent idea	
	1	2	4	17	4	28
What were your thoughts on the noise from the turbines after seeing the Loscar windfarm?	Noisier than expected	Same as Expected	Quieter than expected	Other		
	1	2	18	Not Enough Wind so n/a 5		26
What were your thoughts on the views and landscapes around the wind turbines after seeing the Loscar windfarm?	Landscape negatively affected	Landscape neither positively nor negatively affected	Landscape positively affected	Other		
	2	19	4			25

(Partnerships for Renewables told me the survey forms (anonymised) could be inspected if these figures were disputed.)

As regards leaving a pleasant valley (with, to be honest, its existing blemishes, which include pylons of various sizes, mobile phone masts and a large fossil fuel power station at each end) to our children and grandchildren, I agree we should act now. However, I suspect that a very large proportion of informed young people are not at all concerned about wind turbines and similar structures (being interested in them is more likely); but they are concerned about global warming. In fact, they are speaking for themselves. A group of local young people are campaigning under the headline banner "If Not Then What?". They are engaging with the community and have interesting material on Facebook about this, but their title says it all.
<http://www.facebook.com/pages/IfNotThenWhat/164308130316661>

If we really want to leave a pleasant valley to our children and grandchildren, then I believe we must indeed take action. We all need to play our part to combat global warming, as individuals and communities all over the country. It is climate change that threatens the Green Belt, not wind turbines. So, If Not Then What?

Jerry Moore
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