



## SALOP LEISURE

Go Explore!

Salop Leisure Limited [REDACTED] Tel: [REDACTED] Fax [REDACTED]  
Email [REDACTED] [www.salopleisure.co.uk](http://www.salopleisure.co.uk)

ATB

August 25, 2011

Lord Elis-Thomas  
National Assembly for Wales  
Cardiff Bay,  
Cardiff,  
CF99 1NA

Dear Lord Elis-Thomas,

Thank you for giving my company the opportunity to contribute to the National Assembly for Wales' Environment and Sustainability Committee's inquiry into energy policy and planning in Wales.

Tourism in Mid Wales is of key importance to Salop Leisure, as we supply caravan holiday homes and luxury lodges to most of the caravan holiday home parks of the region. Our company also has a strategic sales centre in Machynlleth, which serves parks along the Cambrian Coast.

In addition, we own several caravan holiday home and touring parks within Mid Wales, each of which has the highest five star grading.

Park owners in the region have invested millions of pounds in developing facilities of the highest quality that attract thousands of people to the region annually. To emphasise this point, Mid Wales has some of the highest quality caravan holiday home parks in Europe, with 24 currently possessing a five-star grading.

I am also a director of Mid Wales Tourism, an independent, not for profit company representing around 550 tourism and hospitality companies in Powys, Ceredigion and Meirionnydd. I therefore have a good knowledge of the tourism industry in Mid Wales and my company invests heavily in marketing the region to visitors.

## 1

Your inquiry is of particular interest to me, as I think the tourism industry in Mid Wales is facing one of its greatest ever threats. The current controversial proposals to expand the number of windfarms in the region, supported by electricity infrastructure, is already having a major detrimental impact on tourism.

Proposals to construct up to 600 more wind turbines, which will be connected to the National Grid in Shropshire via high powered overhead or underground lines and a 19-acre substation at either Abermule or Cefn Coch, are already discouraging visitors and causing major concern within the tourism industry and local communities. The power line proposals would scar for life the unspoilt Severn and Vyrnwy Valleys.

We have heard numerous reports from park owners of caravan holiday home sales falling through when the prospective purchaser discovers details of the wind turbine and power line proposals for the region. These prospective buyers are opting to purchase holiday homes in other parts of the country, often outside Wales, where there is no similar threat.

The reported cost of the Mid Wales Connection Project is unbelievable in the current economic climate and is impossible to justify. Rather than supporting proposals that damage the tourism industry, which is the backbone of the Mid Wales economy, the Welsh and UK Governments should be investing in projects that create employment and bolster the region's economy. To underline the importance of tourism to Mid Wales, the industry was valued at £1,228m and supported 24,500 jobs in 2009.

Salop Leisure believes that not enough consideration has been given to the economic and cumulative impact of the proposals for more wind turbines and related infrastructure. We fear these proposals will have a hugely detrimental impact on the whole business community of Mid Wales, where the existing road network has not been built to cater for one of the largest infrastructure projects ever seen in Wales.

## 2

According to the latest report by Capita Symonds, the proposed wind turbines will require an estimated 401,633 HGV movements over five years. Already the traffic systems in both Newtown and Welshpool are at gridlock at busy times and the addition of windfarm and pylon transport will only worsen the situation. Both towns are key gateways to Mid Wales, as traffic must pass through them to get to the Cambrian Coast.

On a Bank Holiday weekend in May, we received reports that it took four hours for people to drive from the West Midlands to the Cambrian Coast because of the traffic gridlock in Welshpool and Newtown. Our concern is that tourists travelling either to or through Mid Wales en route to the Cambrian Coast will not be prepared to put up with long queues every time they wish to escape for a relaxing break to Mid Wales. Worryingly, some existing owners have told park owners that they are contemplating giving up their holiday homes because of the potential delays in travelling to their dream destination.

Obviously, Salop Leisure has a vested interest in Mid Wales and we have no desire to see decades of investment being destroyed by the Welsh and UK Government's quest for renewable energy. Instead of subsidising inefficient wind turbines, which only work in favourable weather conditions, we would encourage the National Assembly for Wales to support other less obtrusive forms of renewable energy, such as solar panels, whilst also mounting a major public information campaign to save energy.

Renewable energy projects within Wales need to be supported by local communities, who directly benefit from the power generated. The current proposals for Mid Wales bring little benefit to local communities. Large corporations, who are behind these windfarms, are seeking to become rich at the expense of thousands of people's livelihoods, the region's economy and the unspoilt landscape, which is the main reason why tourists visit Mid Wales.

Whilst supporting the principle of the Welsh Government having jurisdiction over major onshore and offshore energy infrastructure projects within Wales, we are cautious about this change.

### 3

Having expressed its ambitious wish list in terms of renewable energy generation and Green House Gas emissions, the Welsh Government risks becoming blinkered when making future decisions to achieve its goals. Local democracy is paramount in the decision making process and the ground swell of public opinion in Mid Wales is that the Welsh and UK Governments must not allow the industrialisation of the region with wind turbines and related infrastructure.

Yours sincerely,

  
**A.T. DWYER**  
**CHAIRMAN**