

Statement to be read out in the absence of Nick Bourne AM at the Nant-y-moch Windfarm Protest (20.06.09)

In the first instance, I am very sorry that I cannot be with you all here today to vocally share my concerns with you at this peaceful protest about what is proposed for this beautiful and historically significant landscape. I'm afraid I have had a long-standing engagement in my diary which I must honour and this prevents me from being with you in person.

As you know, the developers for this project, Airtricity, are hoping to apply for planning permission early next year and because of the size of the proposals, the decision on this will ultimately be made by the Westminster Government's Department of Energy and Climate Change rather than Ceredigion and Powys County Councils as would be the case with a smaller development. Once more, we are assured that there will be 'consultation'.

However, the facts are that no proper research has been conducted into how these plans will affect our communities -

From their impact upon the local tourism economy and changes which will have to be made to the surrounding infrastructure,

to what sort of effect this development will have on the peaty soil in the area, the hydrology associated with that, and whether or not large scale excavation will exacerbate flood risks further downstream in the Severn and Wye Valleys.

I don't believe that an application to build some of Europe's tallest generators, as well as a conglomeration of sub-stations, overhead power-lines and probable disruption to our roads is something that should be decided in London. Matters directly affecting Wales which are likely to impact on local communities and their economies should be debated in the Chamber of the National Assembly of Wales and not decided by Westminster departments.

As far as I'm concerned, real devolution is meant to be about empowering communities.

Nor do I believe that it is in the long term interest of Wales to place all of our bets on a single technology such as wind, particularly one that imposes such a big cost on our landscape.

Not far from here at Hyddgen, in 1401, a battle was fought which marked a turning point in the campaign of Owain Glyndwr. Six hundred years on we find we have another battle on our hands. Owain, who believed in democracy, would probably turn in his grave at these proposals. It is imperative that we keep making our voice on this heard.

Please be assured, that in my role in the National Assembly, I will continue to fight to ensure that it is heard loud and clear.

Nick Bourne AM

Leader of the Official Opposition in the National Assembly for Wales