

Pumlumon under Threat.

Pumlumon, the mountain massif right at the very heart of Wales is once again under threat from Developers. Now it is Lluest y Gwynt Wind Farm Ltd who have designs on what is regarded as Wales' third mountain massif, alongside Snowdonia and the Brecon Beacons.

For those not familiar with Pumlumon, its main peak, Pumlumon fawr (752m/2467feet) sits toward the southern end of what is best described as a 10km (6 miles) whaleback ridge, a ridge which never drops below 610m (2000 feet). From the whaleback a series of spurs branch off to east and west separated by valleys, one of which holds Craig y March at the top of which Owain Glyndŵr is reputed to have celebrated victory following the Battle of Hyddgen in 1401.

Along, or just off, the ridge lie;

- four further tops, which alongside "fawr" lead to the name Pumlumon (five peaks, or beacons),
- the sources of three major rivers, Hafren/Severn, Gwy/Wye and Rheidol,
- a string of Bronze Age funereal cairns,
- a long walk, along which you will meet very few people apart from, perhaps, on Pumlumon fawr, and maybe, at the source of the Hafren/Severn. Some of this walk includes a section of "The Cambrian Way", the long-distance path linking Cardiff to Conwy.

But what of this emerging proposal for a large wind farm – "Lluest y Gwynt" (LyG)? Firstly, you won't find this place name on any Ordnance Survey map of the area, perhaps it is one of those fabricated names so beloved of wind farm developers. So where is the proposed LyG? Looking at the Developer's website the "farm" is to spread down the southern slopes of the Pumlumon massif to include Y Garn, the most southerly of Pumlumon's tops, complete with Bronze Age Cairn. The Developer's map of the proposed site also shows the boundary going right up to the summit of Pumlumon fawr, and even though the Developers assure us that they will go nowhere near the actual summit with a turbine, it will be hard to miss a 180m.(590 feet) tall 'cloudscraper' even if sited hundreds of metres from what is mid Wales' highest mountain. Also included in the proposed wind farm are; 1) significant blocks of the Pumlumon "Site of Special Scientific Interest" (SSSI), 2) tracts of Common Land, 3)an NRW managed block of forest and 4)part of the largest watershed in Wales, its soils a massive sponge for both rain water, and carbon.

As well as the above, in their Local Development Plan, Ceredigion County Council has designated the whole of this area as a "Special Landscape Area" (SLA). But the Local Planning Authority will not be the decision-makers for this wind farm when it goes to planning consent, they will be reduced to "statutory consultees" in the process alongside the likes of; The Coal Authority and The Ministry of Defence. The decision will be made by a Welsh Government Minister having taken advice from an Inspector within the body - "Developments of National Significance" (DNS) part of Planning Inspectorate Wales.

Lluest y Gwynt Wind Farm Ltd's literature points to the wind farm consisting of up to 24 turbines and that each, to blade tip, may reach 180m (590 feet) into the sky. To put things into perspective, Mynydd y Betws wind farm above Swansea has 15 turbines each with a blade tip height of 110m (360 feet) and even more into perspective, the towers of the First Severn Bridge are just 136m (446 feet) tall. As yet what has not been made clear is, how many km of access tracks will snake over these rolling hills? Also, how will the electricity generated be carried away from the site?

The Cambrian Mountains Society (CMS), a registered charity whose raison d'être is the protection and conservation of the whole of the Cambrian Mountains, is very concerned over this industrialisation of what is an iconic wild landscape. The Society sees the development as extremely damaging to all aspects of the landscape, its ecology, hydrology, archaeological setting, and culture

(including tourism). As such CMS will be formally objecting when, and if, the plans go to DNS. The Society, however, stresses that it supports low impact renewable energy generation in the Nation's campaign to ameliorate climate change, it just cannot see the justification in siting a wind farm in such an outstanding landscape, a landscape that 'The Countryside Commission', a precursor to the 'Countryside Council for Wales' and 'Natural Resources Wales', thought worthy enough to be designated a National Park. This is not the place to go into a detailed description of the case against the wind farm but perhaps it is time for Lluet y Gwynt Wind Farm Ltd to reflect on their proposed plans. One of the two partners forming LyG Wind Farm Ltd. is Statkraft, a State-owned Norwegian Company – Europe's largest generator of renewable energy. One of Statkraft's interests in Wales is the Rheidol hydropower plant which it owns and operates. This plant sources its 'hydro' from Pumlumon and surrounding hills, via the extensive Nant y Moch reservoir. The plant generates 89GWh of reliable renewable electricity per annum, enough to power the equivalent of approximately 23,000 homes. The question then is: - Is this not a sufficient contribution for one, much loved, mountain to make to the Nation's energy needs?

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