

In the Press

The public meeting held at Halwill Village Hall has generated front page coverage in this weeks local press. Click the thumbnails to zoom in.

{rokbox album=|press|}images/stories/press/North-Devon-Journal.jpg{/rokbox}

North Devon Journal, 3rd July 2008

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Okehampton Times, 3rd July 2008

North Devon villagers oppose Scottish Power wind farm

A packed public meeting in Halwill this week sent out a unanimous message to windfarm developers — keep out of Devon. The meeting at the Halwill Junction Village Hall on Monday saw more than 200 angry locals turn out to oppose plans for a wind farm at the nearby Chilla Moor site.

National energy company Scottish Power are looking at the possibility of installing 15 turbines at the site, measuring around 400ft high. The meeting was chaired by Dr Harry Riches, a local retired consultant physician, who opened the meeting by saying: "Renewable energy projects are entirely acceptable provided they do not have adverse effects on local residents or degrade the local environment."

Dr Riches went on to outline the general problems associated with turbines, particularly noise, that could affect many residents and visitors and the health problems that he believes can also arise.

He said: "I am particularly concerned about the close proximity of the enormous turbines to the Burdon Grange Nursing Home for the young disabled. "The site will also have a negative effect on the visual amenities of the landscape and this could discourage tourism and depress property values."

There were also contributions from several other speakers, including Bob Barfoot of the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England, Gary Jennings and Angela French from the Parkham Parish Conservation Association, and Paul Mills, an energy consultant, who stressed the negative effects such a development could have on the local economy.

Geoffrey Cox, MP for Torridge and West Devon, was not available to attend the meeting but assured local people his support to their campaign. Mr Cox said: "I have had a visit from the heads of all the local parish councils and promised them that I will be strongly supporting their opposition to these turbines.

"I am a firm believer in the need to combat climate change and even have solar panels installed on my own home. However, I strongly believe that onshore wind farms, such as the one proposed at Chilla Moor, are the wrong solution to our green energy problems and that they also do damage to rural communities and the economy."

Mr Cox also believes that large, commercial wind farms could pose a bigger threat to the future of sustainable energy.

He said: "The only reason the Government is pursuing these wind turbines is because it has failed to invest in appropriate green energy. "I think that large wind turbines will put the public off the whole idea of combating climate change which could be disastrous. "The Government has chosen a very negative way of going about this."

A spokesman from Scottish Power Renewables said: "At this stage it is nothing more than a potential project.

"We have made initial contact with the land owners but the project is still in its very early stages.

"We have a very good track record of being open with our projects and consulting the public is a big part of this."

Crowds at the meeting at Halwill voted unanimously to oppose the wind farm at Chilla Moor and an opposition committee is in the process of being formed. Protestors are also planning to launch a giant balloon in early August which will be tethered at the height of the proposed turbines to illustrate their concerns.

Joel Cooper

North Devon Journal

3rd July 2008

Wind Scheme Sparks Outrage

APPALLED and horrified were the buzz words at a public meeting held this week to discuss potential proposals for a new wind farm. The meeting, held on Monday in Halwill Village Hall, was to discuss the possibility of a large wind farm on Chilla Moor and the negative impact such a development could have on the area. Everyone who attended the meeting was unanimous in voting to oppose any such development.

The meeting's organisers described the turnout of more than 230 people as 'fantastic', with residents coming from across the area which stands to be affected if a wind farm is developed — including Halwill, Chilla, Black Torrington, Highampton, Odham, Northlew, Sheepwash, Shebbear and Beaworthy. Concerns were raised after representatives from energy company Scottish Power began surveying the area and approaching landowners.

Chair of the meeting, Dr Harry Riches of Black Torrington, said: 'It is known that Scottish Power is investigating the site for the possibility of erecting 15 huge turbines, each of which will be over 400 feet high. 'They will be detrimental to the rural peace and beauty of the area, which is so attractive to both residents and visitors alike, and they will be destructive to the wildlife for which the area is well known. 'They will have a negative effect on house prices and businesses who rely on tourists. 'We are not against alternative sources of energy, far from it, we are against the siting of turbines close to houses.'

Dr Riches further stressed that renewable energy projects were entirely acceptable, provided they did not have adverse effects on residents or degrade the environment. Chief among his concerns is the noise from the turbines, how it will affect residents and how it could lead to health problems. He told the Times that, speaking at the meeting, Paul Mills, an energy consultant, outlined the negative effects such an inappropriately sited wind turbine development would have on the economy, while Peter Hadden and Barbara Frey described the research they had conducted over many years into the effects of noise on health.

Dr Riches concluded: 'It was a hugely impressive that the meeting was unanimously opposed to a wind farm on Chilla Moor. 'It was agreed to proceed further and arrange an organising committee to oppose such development.' Bob Barfoot, from the North Devon Branch of the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England, added: 'The main concern of the CPRE is the impact this will have on the rural way of life and the rural economy — they may well have a negative effect on this. 'As no plans have been submitted yet we want to help and advise in any way we can.'

So far no plans have been submitted to Torridge District Council, but Scottish Power confirmed they have been surveying the area. In a statement, the company said: 'We are constantly looking for future development sites and at a very early stage this would include approaching land owners. 'If we were to progress with any site development, there are very strict rules we have to adhere to as well as going through the full planning process.'

Government plans, recently outlined in the Renewable Energy Strategy, want to see 15% of the UK's energy come from renewable sources by 2020 — a move that will require a tenfold increase in the level of renewable generation and use in the UK across the next 12 years. Maria McCaffery, chief executive of the British Wind Energy Association, said: 'Wind energy could be delivering 33GW, nearly 30% of the UK's electricity by 2020. 'There are already 19GW at one stage or another in the system, either in operation, being built or waiting for planning. 'The Renewable Energy Strategy has the chance to make a giant step forward for the UK's economy, energy security and our ability to tackle climate change. 'The Government must not be deflected by ill-informed critics and NIMBYs pursuing their own agenda.'

Tommy Tonkins

Okehampton Times

3rd July 2008