

Cefn Croes Environmental Management Committee

A recent article in the Cambrian News by Patrick O'Brien revealed very disturbing facts about the Cefn Croes wind 'farm' development (the article, published on 23 June 05 is reproduced as an appendix to this file).

Patrick O'Brien's article was largely drawn from the minutes of the Environmental Management Committee for Cefn Croes, which corroborate many objections, and predictions, which we all made before this disaster, came to pass.

The following is a set of extracts from the minutes. Everything square bracketed in blue represents my editorial comment, and matters of importance are highlighted in red.

Black type is the scanned transcript of sections from the original minutes.

I particularly draw attention to the ongoing problem with the RSPB – virtually zero attendance at meetings and a current threat of entire withdrawal. RSPB Energy has already had an Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) complaint upheld against it for falsely claiming that its activities would increase the amount of renewable electricity generated in the UK (8 December 2004 – complaint submitted by the author of these notes). Though RSPB E acquires very little of its electricity from wind power it has for several years been a very persuasive champion of the technology, using its great scientific reputation with the public to 'sell' renewables in general. Questions must be asked about motivation and perception by RSPB members.

John Etherington

Cefn Croes Wind Farm

Environmental Management Committee Minutes of the Inaugural Meeting Held on Tuesday 6th April 2004 in the Conference Room at the ADAS Pwllpeiran Research Centre from 13-45 to 15-45

Present:

Steve Salt -- Planning Director, West Coast Energy Ltd, Mold. (SS)

Ian Dutch -- Ceredigion County Council Coast and Countryside Section, Aberaeron. (ID)

Patrick Lindley -- Species Officer, RSPB, Bangor. (PL)

Chris Hall -- Ecologist, West Coast Energy Ltd, Mold (CH)

Jane Walsh -- Ecologist, West Coast Energy Ltd, Mold (J Walsh)

James Hennie -- Cefn Croes Wind Farm Project Officer, West Coast Energy Ltd, Mold. (JH)

Richard Crompton -- Contact Point for Land Management Issues with the Cefn Croes Wind Farm, Forestry Commission Wales, Aberystwyth. (RC)

Jenny Higgins -- Conservation Officer, Countryside Council for Wales, Plas Gogerddan, Aberystwyth (J Higgins)

Owen Davies -- Research Director, ADAS Wales. (OD)

John Wildig -- Research Consultant, ADAS Pwllpeiran (JW)

Apologies for Absence Jonathon Levell - FC Wales

[Other names and abbreviations, which crop up later: -

Alan Starkey, Head of Agri-Environment and Organic Farming, WAG. (AS)

Roger Jones Cefn Croes Project Officer FALCK (RJ)

Becky Jones Snr Env Officer Ceredigion Environment Agency (BJ)

2 Introduction

SS on behalf of West Coast Energy

..... went on to add that Cambrian Wind Energy, the Company developing the Wind Farm, had signed a legally binding agreement to produce the LMP and part of that agreement was to set up the EMC which would be responsible for the ecological enhancement of the site.

4. Consideration of the Draft LMP submitted to Ceredigion County Council to discharge planning consents

PL asked to see copies of the EIA data sets and was concerned that Section 74 species had not been properly accounted for in the procedures. Once he had the data, he would check it against the section 74 requirements

He also noted the references to Black Grouse in the LMP and pointed out that the re-creation of Black Grouse habitat remains an important priority area for conservationists in order to attract the birds back into areas they were now absent from. As Black Grouse were on the site anyway, albeit in small numbers, there was no alternative but to develop a B A P plan [Biodiversity Action] with associated habitats for them. He also pointed out that as the bird was to be found on the Plynlimon Massif, its dispersal to Cefn Croes could not be ruled out.

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[Wednesday 2nd June 2004]

2 The Initial Updating and the Site Visit

JH informed the committee that:

- Work was now well advanced on the main road artery across the site, with some foundations excavated and reinforcing wires in place which had allowed the first concrete pourings to be completed.
- Each turbine base required a substantial crane hard standing alongside it.

This led to a discussion on the subject of site restoration which will continue to a phased program once Jones Bros. have left the site. R C stated that this would be done by contractor and overseen by FC Wales, with CH having responsibilities to General Electric Wind Energy in overseeing ecological aspects of the restoration. The possible need for additional materials to be brought to site to assist with restoration was raised but not seen as necessary.

CH then gave an overview of the ecological work which he and Jane Walsh had been undertaking. The committee noted:

- no black grouse lecking males seen this year
- the importance of water voles on the site and the need to restore mires ---possible conflicts with Otter conservation
- At brash area 4 --- the site of the substation-- Willow warblers had moved into the cleared site
- the need to increase native broad leaves in selected areas
- the potential of Fire Blight invasion
- Bat surveys were currently awaiting warmer nights before being done building on a methodology started last year [why was this not done BEFORE the development?]
- The positive attitudes by contractors on site to conservation issues

The committee then proceeded via land rover by way of Devils Bridge and the A44 to the main site entrance where the Jones Bros. Project Officer, Hefin Lloyd-Davies, undertook the necessary site briefings and then accompanied the group for the first part of their visit Stops were made for discussion at appropriate points.

Road making operations across the Tyn Bryn Bog prevented the party seeing the Concrete Batching Plant and other work on the eastern side of the site.

[Was this intentional? – the batching plant has previously been a source of criticism]

4. Apologies...

The Secretary said that he had no word of Patrick Lindley's intentions despite contacting RSPB on several occasions to check whether RSPB would be attending.

7 Follow up to the mornings Site Visit ---The Challenges to be faced by the Committee

Considerable discussion had taken place both during the visit and over lunch. Nevertheless a vigorous discussion ensued with all concerned recognising the balancing act necessary between cash available and making the best possible use of that limited resource. It was agreed that Map 1 is seen as the definitive area for the LMP.

RC sought clarification of the committee's role in the construction phase, which SS saw as taking an overview of the work on the ground to see that it met the committee's and the LMP objectives.

CH immediately challenged the need to clear fell Compartment 2784 --Brash area 1. He had records of this area as a past Black Grouse Lecking site. Others questioned the need to clear this area and JH was asked to take up with General Electric.

Secretary's note: GE subsequently agreed to relieve the wood per se and Ian Cowe, the Forestry Harvesting Manager was instructed to thin the plantation and at the same time to remove or reduce in height, all trees over and above 4 m

ID raised the possibility of money being made available for some substantial areas of timber to be removed in the longer term.

OD raised the issue of restoration of the sides of the access roads / areas round turbine bases, once the construction phase was complete, envisaging work being needed for some few years and the need for suitable restoration contracts to be in place.

He further pointed out that good agricultural condition of the land along with water quality issues was a major component in the CAP Reform Cross Compliance. Soil would have to have minimal erosion / run off for this to take place. **He added that stabilising materials could be brought in to particularly sensitive areas in order to protect topsoil.**

As the Jones Bros. contract was a specialist construction contract, JH was asked to:

1. **Check out what is actually in the Jones Bros. Contract with regard to restoration**

[Should this not have been part of the pre construction agreement?]

2. Identify specific planning constraints with regard to restoration and ensure they are adhered to

8 Constitution and Terms of Reference of the E M C

SS opened discussion of his draft paper previously circulated. The following points were noted

- The need for a proper audit trail for the monies involved and the need to establish a separate bank account with 2 authorised signatories
- the need to amend the clauses relating to FC Wales now that RC was the sole representative
- the possibility of an independent chairman
- the right to amend constitution at the end of each year
- **the need for public openness and the possibility of an annual report, although allowing access to the minutes apart from any confidential financial aspects was seen as getting round this**
- The EMC was seen as being responsible to Ceredigion County Council --- Cambrian had fixed financial penalties if they failed to adhere to the planning consents
- OD raised the question of the new ADAS lease post construction in that it would need to be excluding road areas, turbine bases and crane standings. He questioned what conditions would be imposed in the lease as to how land is managed, particularly as there are section 106 obligations on the land. It was agreed that there was a need for urgent clarification from Ian Shaw, the FC Land agent.

All agreed to send SS comments on his draft, which he would incorporate into a second version, and circulate again.

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[Thursday 2nd September 2004]

2. Site Visit

The Committee noted that the last bases for turbines 25 to 30 were now going in and that cable trenches were being dug and cables laid across the site. Road restoration was getting under way once the cables were in place. **Some discussion then took place on the possible impacts of this onsite hydrology.** The Committee noted that **one pollution incident had taken place**, but action had been taken to contain it.

Jane W and CH reported that there was a healthy Water Vole population on the Rhuddnant but **no sightings at all of Black Grouse had been made this year**. Willow warblers had appeared in some numbers on the cleared areas. Both considered the mosaic of habitats being created would have beneficial impacts for a range of species. The Committee noted that with an ongoing survey of bat populations, most of the base line surveys were complete and JH commented on the huge difference between the vegetation on the adjacent triple SSSI and the site per se.

The site visit stimulated much discussion at a number of locations across the site with considerable concern expressed at the huge amount of drying out of the peat and degradation of habitat arising round turbines 25 to 30.

4. Appointment of New Chairman

The resignation of Steve Salt from the Chair was noted and received. James H pointed out that this was a result of West Coast Energy per se no longer having a continuing interest in Cefn Croes. He added that he himself could not take up the post, as he was a West Coast Energy employee on secondment to Cambrian Wind Energy/FALCK RENEWABLES. He added that an Operations Manager for Cefn Croes had now been appointed and would be introduced to the Committee at its next meeting. OD raised the desirability of the Committee appointing an independent chair and the Committee agreed to investigate this with all members asked to submit their organisations nominations to JW by 15 Sept 04.

The Committee agreed to Richard Crompton becoming Vice-Chair of the Committee and taking the Chair at the meeting and being interim signatory to the bank mandate being set up.

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7. Restoration of the Site

This item invoked considerable discussion due to a lack of information as to Jones Bros responsibilities.

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7.1 Brash management

There was some confusion within the committee as to the exact meaning of the term *Brash management* in the LMP and where the responsibility Brash management for funding lay.

Brash Area 6. The cleared raised bog in this area around turbines 25-30 was a subject of great concern to the Committee following the site visit. The consensus was that a fortune could be spent on restoring, it to a mire and that the whole area was seen as becoming a managed Water Vole Habitat provided Jones Bros. could install some sluice gates to hold back water on the site. (The need for the turbine bases to be kept dry was noted as this may prevent this happening) Jane W and CH agreed to discuss the Committee's concerns with Hefin Lloyd-Davies as a matter of urgency.

OD pointed out that Jones Bros would also have some considerable work to do on site regarding the restoration of former fence lines in order to get the grazing area stock proof. This was noted by the Committee.

Brash Area 4 - around substation and Brash Area 3. The Committee in the course of the site visit noted that the removal of brash was highly desirable on both sites and raking to one side and burning was seen as highly desirable. They should then be left to regenerate naturally and vegetation coming in monitored.

*Secretary's note - at the following day's Cefn Croes meeting in Penrhyncoch, Ian Crowe stated that **the brash on Brash Area 4 had been well and truly compacted and to do anything with it would be very costly indeed.***

The Committee discussed the potential for small mire restoration as discussed on the site visit and two possible areas for this in Brash Area 7 were seen as suitable provided brash could be removed - notably below turbines 34 and 35.

7.2 Road Restoration

OD raised the question, arising from the site visit, of the road bunds and their impact on drainage and hydrology and the detrimental effect that the drains, being installed by Jones Bros as part of their restoration work, could have on wet areas particularly as a result of encouraging rush domination.

Secretary's note - He and James H had raised the issue with Robert Griffiths the FC roads engineer at the following days Cefn Croes Meeting and it had been agreed that the standard forestry practice being followed of a regular spacing of drains on the roads could be modified to take into consideration the environmental benefits of wetting up certain areas. Jane W and CH were asked to meet him on site as a matter of urgency.

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10. Presentation by Peter Lloyd Harvey of Llywernog Silver mine

At this point Peter Lloyd Harvey, Chairman of Pentir Pumlumon, Trade Director Mid Wales Tourism and owner of the Llywernog Silver Mine joined the meeting. He gave a talk on his aspirations for Cefn Croes as owner of the Silver mine.

He had owned the mine for 30 years during which time it had become a major tourist attraction in the area but the lessons of Foot and Mouth clearly showed the need to diversify the tourism product and he was developing the concept that Llywernog was the gateway to other interesting tourism experiences interpreting history based on mining heritage and cultural landscapes.

Thus he saw Cefn Croes as an opportunity and had rejuvenated the concept of Cambrian Safaris of 1976 vintage and was envisaging pre booked 4 x 4 tours of site and surrounds from Llywernog and would seek a licence from FC Wales to operate over some of their

roads provided working agreements for such could be created. He added that an Agrisgop similar initiative with pony trekking had started recently in Strata Florida.

In answer to a query from RC on how the concept would fit wind farms, PLH saw it as a project creating a knowledge base to assist members of the public in the appreciation of and acceptance of wind energy with an interpretative exhibition being set up at Llywernog.

JW saw possible links to Hafod and other Pentir **initiatives to increase utilisation of the 4 x 4`s.**

James H then raised the issue of how the concept fitted open access and likely possible demand for access from those who had used the 4 by 4 facility for their own vehicles.

[I also ask, as a generality, whether this sort of thing will lead to an outbreak of 4x4 'boy racers' using the uplands as a motorised playground?]

OD saw the development as very positive and with access and interpretation being a major compartment of the LMP, it could lead to a mechanism for feedback from the public with regard to landscape and turbines etc producing useful data for policy makers and planners.

Richard C agreed to provide PLH with an overall plan of Forest Roads in the area.

James H was asked to provide the Committee with a fully comprehensive composite map of Cefn Croes with existing rights of way, new tracks, open access land etc.

ID agreed to address the whole question of public access to the site and publicising it.

OD raised the issue of a comprehensive photographic record of the site; building on what ADAS holds and offered to show this at the next meeting. JW was asked to contact JH to ascertain what Cambrian had.

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[Tuesday 12th October 2004]

1. Apologies

The Secretary pointed out to the meeting that no apologies had been received from Patrick Lindley of RSPB; despite earlier assurances that he would be attending the meeting. As he had only attended 1 out of the four meetings of the Committee, the Secretary was asked to discuss the question of RSPB representation on the Committee with Tim Stowe, the RSPB Director Wales.

2. Matters arising

7.1 Brash Management and the responsibility for funding brash management activities

There were concerns as to what would need funding from the committee's resources and what the developers would fund. James H stated that as set down in the LMP, Cambrian

would have to pay where the benefits of brash removal could be shown and that removal would be effected through GE Wind Energy and Jones Bros. as site contractors. However, he pointed out that in some areas, the work and cost involved, would outweigh all the benefits accruing.

3. Progress on Site since the Last Meeting

James H reported that the construction and roadwork was virtually complete, with the project overall about 2 months behind schedule. The connection to the National Grid was scheduled for All Saints Day and commissioning of the turbines would follow rapidly thereafter.

Jones Bros as contractors to General Electric Wind Energy were progressing with their site restoration activities. These were repairing fences, and returning topsoil to roadsides. They were expected to be on site until Christmas finishing this work, which was necessary under the planning obligation. Chris Hall and Jane Walsh were overseeing it with regard to the developer and Robert Griffiths from the point of view of the Forestry Commission.

OD was concerned about the warranty issues on damage resulting from construction - such as possible soil erosion after Jones Bros had left the site.

This was seen as a potential problem particularly as the Committee's funding was for ecological enhancement rather than restoration and James H was asked to discuss the Committee's concerns with John Mills of GE Wind Energy.

OD at this point, asked about James H's position on the Committee, as he understood he (James H) would be standing down once a full time Operations Manager for the site Post Construction had been appointed. Replying James H pointed out that the successful applicant for the post, had turned down the job and he would be continuing in post until such time as a new person was appointed.

CH then updated on West Coast Environment's activities and the Committee noted that:

- water voles had declined on the site, with the total population estimated at around 6 animals round the Rhuddnant lake. This was noted with concern
- Jones Bros. had agreed in principle with James H, to clear brash from the substation site and
- Jones Bros. had agreed to install a sluicing system at appropriate points along the Forest Road at the southern edge of the drained raised bog in Brash area 6
- Agreement for both in writing was awaited from Jones Bros

The Committee had continuing agreement for this area to be re-wetted with natural regeneration of the site to be allowed to progress with the object of creating water vole habitat. It also recognised the need for a hydrological surveyor to undertake the necessary surveys to ascertain how far back the water could be pushed before turbine bases 25 to 30 became waterlogged. James H was asked to progress this with General Electric Wind Energy who were seen as the obvious funders for this.

Secretary's note - General Electric Wind Energy have subsequently agreed to pay for this

CH and RC then turned to the subject of Brash removal. The Committee noted the very high cost of the Munching Mulcher machine and that some £200k alone could be spent on using this machine.

Other options were discussed including burning and leaving in situ; the former being seen as unpractical on account of the risk of the fire getting into the peat.

The emphasis in the LMP for mire restoration was noted and it was reluctantly agreed that prioritisation would be necessary for the areas shown on the West Coast Environmental map.

The Committee agreed that this be the 25 plus ha in Brash areas 3, 5 and 8.

With Brash clearance a major problem facing successful habitat restoration, the Committee instructed James H and CH, to have urgent discussions with both G E Wind Energy and Jones Bros to discuss possible ways forward.

4. Proposed Action Plan for the Site

JW and CH then led discussion on the draft action plan maps they had produced for the site and began to consider the general proposals contained therein.

Map 1 /1a

The idea of creating a large area of Molinia dominant vegetation to be grazed by cattle was well received by the Committee; AS commenting that there was increasing recognition in NAW and CCW circles for the need to increase cattle grazing in the uplands

The management of the SNRG dropping down to the Llynoedd Ieuan SSSI had been omitted - grazing of sheep with cattle as appropriate, was seen as necessary for this area.

Map 3/3a

The Committee welcomed the big area of grazed SNRG outside the immediate site boundary

Map 4/4A

CH was asked to draw up a specific Water Vole Action Plan for the site; including the need for linking corridors with conifer being cleared along the edges of these.

OD raised possible CCW interest in this field and J H commented that Species Challenge Funding might be forthcoming, but it was pointed out that funding from this followed 2-year cycles.

The CH Specification Letter was fully endorsed by the Committee and OD requested that management of the clear felled forestry land in the longer term needed to be

brought into it as grazing would eventually be required James H was asked to get it taken on board by GE and Jones Bros.

CH pointed out that Black Grouse would benefit in such areas through some deciduous planting in selected small areas. RC was asked to ascertain FC Wales's aspirations and whether such land could in future be managed for Black Grouse.

Following lunch, the Committee undertook a site visit to further consider the mornings discussions in situ.

5. Site Visit

Three stops were made:

a) Adjacent to proposed cattle grazed area by the substation - dragging material off the Brash area 4 and dumping onto the Molinia Dominant Area was considered an option for removal of the brash

b) Adjacent to Brash Area 5 - the possibility of reducing cost by mulching the wetter bottom areas after pushing into rows and leaving the higher area unmanaged was considered an option and RC was asked to come up with ideas from FC perspective.

c) **At the very degraded northern edge of Brash Area 6 (the cleared raised bog) - ID was concerned as to how the soils could be stabilised and the possibility of contravening EU Regulations if non-native seed had to be used. The Committee considered that the area could not be left as is** and various options such as using Willow poles and direct seeding with Birch seeds were brought up

JH favoured seeding next year with heather and native grass seed but all agreed that extensive seeding in the area would necessitate brash removal for any hope of success.

[Monday 13th December 2004]

Chairman's Introductory Remarks

RC Extended a warm welcome to **Mike Webb, the Planning Officer for RSPB Wales who was standing in for Patrick Lindley**

3. Matters arising

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James H reported that a hydrologist had been engaged and would be making his initial assessments of the hydrology of the degraded bog pre Christmas – **OD commented that carbon oxidation to the atmosphere from the area would be considerable. Thus he saw circulation of the hydrologists report and recommendations to the committee; being a matter of great urgency. The Committee concurred with this view**

[This formed one key point of the Cambrian News article. For credibility it is essential that someone quantifies the oxidation loss of CO2 otherwise it is likely that such remarks – even from the Environment Agency – will be dismissed as scare mongering]

- Brash Removal - overall little progress had been made in this important area and quotations had been obtained from contractors. After considerable discussion, physical lifting off the site by Jones Bros. machines with subsequent chipping or merely piling into heaps and leaving to rot was seen as the best options - the latter seen as a particularly low cost, low tech solution. MW queried as to whether some of this activity was not a component of the developers agreement for the site, and was concerned to learn that it was something of a grey area.

Page 4.

- CH reported that a Water Vole Action Plan for the Site was being drawn up and that the potential to substantially increase the vole habitat alongside the Nant Rhuddnant at very low cost, had been noted and was being acted upon by FC Wales.
- RC reported that Black Grouse would be featuring in the redesign process to be implemented for the clear felled areas by FC Wales. This process was due to be completed by the end of 2005 and would take over from the existing Forest Design Plan for the area. He was asked to ensure that both CH and JW were invited to these important meetings to ensure a properly integrated cross-sectoral approach.
- **Item 5c)** - the Committee noted that the comment made here was by OD not ID. **At this juncture, the further comment was made that re-profiling/restoring roads had resulted in mass oxidation of peat.**
- **Item 6/1** - Landscape - Discs with the recent aerial photographs had been sent to Committee members. It was agreed that ID would bring his landscape assessment packages to the next meeting of the Committee and lead a discussion on landscape - Action: ID
- **Item 6/5** Other monitoring - Access - The Committee commented that it was how access to the site was to be managed that would be all-important for the future of the site

Page 7

JH reported that the present CCW Countryside Management System tools were being updated and may have potential benefits for the Committee in future. A general discussion then followed touching on several aspects of both the minutes and future management of the site overall, including:

- a. The need for Ecological input into the site once CH's and Jane W's current contract expires next year. James H reported that proposals were being discussed with Cambrian for such input in the longer term
- b. The completion of the restoration phase of Cefn Croes and of the Committee's continuing concerns on this subject and the responsibility of the Committee in the discharge of Planning Obligations

It was concluded that the Committee's role was to seek/influence the restoration work in an advisory capacity, which would lead to better implementation of the site LMP and ensure a better more diverse site environment at the end of the day.

5. Update on Ecological work on Site

CH updated the Committee on recent ecological activity on site and the Committee noted:

- That 300 m of stream side felling by hand in FC Compartment 3060 would be implemented in the near future and would effectively create 800 m of good Water Vole habitat and linking corridor towards the proposed Water Vole managed area in the cleared raised bog
- The stream itself was found to be blocked in one spot and the resultant holding back of water and flooding was leading to non site environmental benefits
- He and Jane Walsh were - apart from the areas adjacent to turbines 25 to 30 pleased with the Jones Bros. restoration work with its good cultivated finish, which should aid vegetation establishment
- **A Bat Survey** of the site had been undertaken by Richard Crompton in a private capacity, over the past season. Cefn Croes is a high altitude and hostile site for bats, but will be used by swarming/mating animals from lower old mine working sites in the immediate vicinity.

As the summer of 2004 was poor weather wise for bat populations, the committee considered that a re-survey should be undertaken over the forthcoming summer and James H was asked to see if GE Wind Energy would pay this for.

5. Interim Map of proposed future site management

.... The Committee saw them as an important step forward and as wildlife does not recognise boundaries, very much welcome the wider approach... It was noted that the condition of some of the SSSI is seen as being unfavourable and in need of better management. **AS commented at this juncture that all Cefn Croes Land was owned by the National Assembly for Wales and that under the Government of Wales Act, FC Wales was enabled to undertake activities such as the building of Wind Farms on areas which it managed.**

[\[site visits\]](#)

b. The damaged raised bog in the vicinity of turbines 25 to 30 - there was universal unease at the ongoing degrading of the site and the need to stabilise the ground cover as soon as possible was recognised. The report of the Hydrologist would be particularly relevant for progressing discussions. Seeding with a range of seeds was discussed and CH/Jane W were asked to come up with proposals as a matter of urgency. ADAS was seen as the contractor for the work with the necessary expertise and know how to do a difficult job available.

c. The proposed sluice sites to hold backwater in the bog - the need for these had long been recognised and it was noted that the culverts themselves had to remain in situ to avoid damage to roads and power cables.

11. Final Discussions

The Committee accepted that from an ADAS perspective, the vegetation on the roadside verges and its management would be a negotiable item in any discussion of the new ADAS lease.

ID initiated discussion on the potential of access and interpretation as potential fundraising areas, referring to the recently seen opportunities on offer around turbine 14; the aspirations of Peter Lloyd Harvey for managed 4x4 access; the recent Ysbryd y Mwynwyr Obj 1 success for Ceredigion which would see a lot of money coming into the former mining areas; and the opportunity to integrate community activities/initiatives using some of the monies from Cambrian being given to two local Community Councils. He also referred to Open Access Land being opened up next year. Ceredigion were currently surveying paths etc leading to Open Access land in certain key areas and the way general access was available to these areas.

He agreed to come up with proposals and ideas for increasing access to the site and managing it effectively.

OD raised the potential of inert soil forming waste from the Elan Valley water treatment plants of Seven - Trent Water being brought onto Cefn Croes as a potential enhancing material for some areas of the site. Envar - a business unit of ADAS had the skills and resources to develop this. RC saw this as an opportunity to be brought in onto any areas considered to be struggling to regenerate successfully.

Meeting finished at 15.30
John Wildig

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23 February 05

2. [In apologies] **The RSPB apology was again received with some concern and AS volunteered to have a discrete [sic] word with Tim Stowe, the director of RSPB Wales...**

4. Update on Energisation of the Site and Post Construction Activities - JH and RJ
The Committee noted that at the time of the meeting, 20 turbines had been commissioned and were feeding some 26 M watts of electricity into the National Grid. Thus the construction phase was now seen as completed and the signing off process had started with visits to the site by Ceredigion County Council Planners. They pointed out that John Mills of GE Wind Energy saw this process as virtually complete and the final signing off by John Evans as Head of Ceredigion Planning, was all that was now required.

A very full and frank discussion then ensued. The Committee were very concerned and saw it difficult to understand how signing off could go ahead in view of the amount of erosion going on, on what were being seen by GE as restored areas. In addition, oxidation of exposed peat was leading to a huge loss of carbon to the atmosphere, and mitigating the impacts of the Wind Farm from a Global Warming perspective.

Members felt that the work done by Jones Bros. would probably have been acceptable in a lowland situation, but as the Committee had seen for itself on site visits, it was totally inappropriate for a 100-inch rainfall situation on top of a mountain.

The Committee thus saw that a number of outstanding and worrying matters which it considered to be the full responsibility of GE Wind Energy, needed to be resolved as a matter of urgency to minimise further environmental damage. These included: -

- Receiving the report and implementing the recommendations of the Consultant Hydrologists on the hydrology of the raised bog
- Construction of the roadside sluices to help restore the damaged raised bog
- Seeding of the seriously damaged raised bog round turbines 25-29
- Undertaking the long promised brash removal for environmental benefit

BJ commented that the EA found it difficult to believe that the original Environmental Impact Assessments had not raised concerns about the dire consequences of draining the raised bog.

JH pointed out that Cambrian had yet to see the final hydrologist's report, but had received a draft copy for comment.

RC pointed out that from a FC Wales point of view the site could not be signed off at this stage, as mires are a priority habitat. He saw the recommendations of the Hydrologist being crucial for restoration of the area into better condition. He added that FC was getting increasingly concerned about frost/ melt issues on the site with the current wintry weather.

The Committee also was seriously concerned about the potential risk of serious fire, particularly if there was a prolonged spell of dry and sunny weather this spring and summer

(It was subsequently noted that one of the Cambrian News's investigative Journalists was getting increasingly interested in Cefn Croes.)

5. Update of a meeting between ADAS, FC Land Agents and WAG Estates Department Staff re the Pwllpeiran Lease

OD reported on a meeting that he had had recently with Ian Shaw, the FC Wales Senior Land Agent and Ruth Thomas of the NAW Estates Department re the reinstatement of the Pwllpeiran Lease. This had included a site visit and **Ian Shaw had appeared very surprised by the condition in which the roadside verges had been left and concerned as to who would be meeting the cost of re-instating such areas to acceptable vegetation status.** He agreed that these needing proactive management and that this would cost well in excess of the £ 10 k available to the EMC. The very spongy surface and the need for the application of soil forming materials coupled with the need for consolidation, was seen as major issues to be tackled in the near future. He had left the meeting with a long list of action points and ADA5 awaited further feed back from him in due course.

OD added that he had also raised at the meeting the fact that if any other landowners stock was put onto some of the open space in the Wind Farm site for land management purposes, then Pwllpeiran's herd health status would require double fencing of the area

to be implemented. Ian Shore had reassured him that FC Wales had no intention of introducing stock from any holding other than Pwllpeiran on to any of this land. BJ commented that the EA found it difficult to believe that the original Environmental Impact Assessments had not raised concerns about the dire consequences of draining the raised bog.

OD also pointed out that the Cambrian Mountains ESA project Officer had also visited the site and as a result was seeking an urgent meeting with Alan Starkey to discuss a number of important issues.

The Project Officer had seen Soft Rush (*Juncus effusus*) and Rose Bay Willow Herb (*Chamerion angustifolium*) as the only species likely to get a foothold on many areas. Fox control was also being seen as an issue, particularly through its impact on the low numbers of ground nesting birds on the site.

RC pointed out that the definitive FC policy on fox control was that hunting within the law would be acceptable.

ID pointed out that he saw the management of roadside verges as an increasingly important component of any future management contract.

OD, having glanced through the original EIA Documents commented that Casella had merely considered the need or a full study of peaty areas at the detailed design stage of the application process.

6. The Site Visit

JW stated that with the wintry weather conditions prevailing there was little if anything to be gained by a site visit. However, to fully demonstrate the problems just discussed to the Committee, he and a colleague had produced a set of 25 digital images drawing on 3 separate site visits.

- Images taken by RC and JW just pre Xmas and in dry weather conditions
- Images taken by Gareth Wildig, a final year Environmental Science Student at Southampton, as part of a project, on 06/01/OS in dry weather conditions
- Images taken by Aldwyn Clarke of ADAS and JW, the following day (07/01/OS) after a night of heavy rain

The Committee was deeply concerned about the environmental damage demonstrated by the images.

(Secretary's note -following the meeting, two members of the committee requested copies of the images and they were therefore sent electronically to all members of the Committee)

The Committee considered that a top priority had to be the holding back of water flowing off the damaged raised bog and that RSJ's and Sleepers could suffice. However, even for these, Land Drainage Consents from the EA would be needed by FC Wales and it was pointed out that the lease for the area was still with the developer not FC Wales.

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9. Environment Agency Wales monitoring activities in and around Cefn Croes, and aspirations for the long-term management of the site – BJ

BJ distributed round the Committee examples of the water quality monitoring that EA Wales was doing in the Cefn Croes surrounds. The Committee noted that there was nothing for the upper part of the Rhuddnant and BJ stated that an EA investigation into discharge of solids from the Wind Farm site into the Rhuddnant was ongoing. **Here suspended solids had taken out dissolved oxygen from the water and had had dire consequences for invertebrates as much of the material was of high turbidity.** However, BJ pointed out that river flow data was such that it was difficult to pick up exactly what is happening and to pinpoint it as an impact arising from an incident at one specific discharge point. OD was concerned about the impact of the increased drainage from the site on water flow into the river systems.

In discussing the erosion problems, the Committee noted that the scale of operations had been such that it would be difficult to have estimated its impacts at the planning stage. Erosion of peat from the bog was also likely to have pH implications on river waters.

10. RSPB Monitoring and future aspirations for the Area

With no RSPB representative present, this item could not be proceeded with. RJ commented that Cambrian as the Developers of the site, had specific obligations for birds.

AS commented that research was a high priority with RSPB and the Committee needed their inputs if the EMC was to do its job properly.

JW reported on an initial contact with the Project Officer of an Obj 1 funded Black Grouse Project and that this needed to be followed up.

11. Water Vole Monitoring

RC commented that it could prove difficult to get anything done on this as Chris Hall and Jane Walsh had no guarantee of funding once their existing Contract with GE Wind Energy came to an end and there appeared to be no guarantee of funding from Cambrian for them.

RC commented that he held a Water Vole Licence and saw the monitoring being done by himself - with additional assistance from Roy Bomford - and he was allowing 3 days for this from his FC programme of activities.

The Committee noted that the riparian zone work to create a linking Water Vole Corridor in the action plan had already been implemented.

12. Reseeding of the damaged bog areas

RC saw this being undertaken by ADAS land discussions touched on the problems to be faced in undertaking this, including - necessity to string out the areas to be seeded; the practicality of/ need for consolidation of the area and the potential for hydro seeding. OD ruled out the possible use of hydro seeding with a seed mixture containing heather.

The seed mixture received from West Coast Environmental was noted.

Discussion then turned to the possibility of using the soil forming waste materials from the water industry in the restoration/seeding process. The Committee saw some possibilities with this for the future, and agreed that John Lewis of ADAS would be invited to give a short presentation at the next meeting.

The Elan plant of Severn Trent Water currently produced 1 trailer load a week, which can be stored, and subsequently mixed and incorporated at appropriate times of the year. Compost from a range of waste composting initiatives also had possibilities but could incur heavy transport costs.

13. The Forest Redesign Process

RC stated that this was in the hands of FC Wales Chief Designer - Dafydd Fryer. Only the road line and the power line were visible from the A44 and Fryer would be designing a plan to be implemented after the existing Mynydd y Ffynnon plan expires in 08/2006.

RC saw it as a necessary process for the Committee to be involved with and the Committee's new land use maps would feed into the process.

He saw the priority as softening of the impacts of the access road line from the A44 and the power line, with some additional felling where necessary. No plans would be made for the clear felled areas, which were far in excess of what had previously been planned for removal. **He therefore saw a clear need for the Committee's input into consideration by FC Wales, of the future management of these areas.** RC agreed to copy the latest maps with the Committee's aspirations on this for general circulation. Action: RC/Sec

14. Concluding Remarks OD considered that: -

- costings for dealing with the various problems on the site should be routed to RJ with potential solutions for him to feed onto GE Wind Energy
 - the focus on the problems will be sharpened if John Evans of Ceredigion Planning states that the developers have not discharged planning obligations
 - **Aftercare / maintenance of the site in the longer term, remains very much a grey area; particularly where the material spread by Jones Bros. is being eroded away**
- RJ suggested a warranty report from GE as to what has been done.

Finally, the Committee felt that with consideration of so many serious areas of concern, the implementation of the LMP was being neglected, and bog restoration/brash removal and re-seeding will quickly spend the £ 10k it has at its disposal in a very short period of time without thinking of other LMP needs.

It was agreed that for future meetings either conference calls or video links would be considered. Tuesday 22nd March was seen as a suitable time for the first of these, as by then some progress should be available for the committee to discuss.

The Meeting closed at 14.45 with thanks to all and to the two new members. BJ commented that from an EA perspective she had found it to be a very useful meeting and intimated her willingness to represent EA Wales on future occasions.

John Wildig
10th March 2005

18 April 2005

2. Apologies for not taking Part

These had been received from Patrick Lindley of RSPB Wales. No other apologies had been received.

3. The Continuing Participation of RSPB Wales on the EMC

AS updated the meeting on the discussion he had had following the last meeting of the Committee with Tim Stowe, the RSPB Wales Director, and on subsequent e-mails, which they had exchanged. In short RSPB were failing to recognise the great difficulties that the EMC had been operating under. Their view was that the EMC was not focussing on its main objectives; namely the implementation of the objectives and prescriptions as set out in the Land Management Plan for the site, which had been produced for planning purposes. Thus as RSPB currently saw little of bird interest on the site, they were considering withdrawal from the Committee.

All present gave their reactions and the Sec referred to his conversation with Patrick Lindley at the previous week's Welsh Conservation Management Conference. During this, he had pointed out that RSPB were acquainted with Cefn Croes as a result of previous surveys of the area. The wind farm was now up and running and presented to interested parties an opportunity to implement and monitor sustainable conservation management on a substantial area of formerly degraded SNRG and afforested land, onto which a large wind farm had been superimposed. The many difficulties which the Committee had experienced during the construction and development phase of the Wind Farm, would in the longer term also be of value to RSPB and other parties in any future decisions that they had to make regarding supporting or opposing some of the many wind farm schemes in the pipeline.

The consensus of the discussion was that it would be tragic if RSPB withdrew and the feeling was expressed that they should be contributing to conservation developments on the site, with inputs of specific advice coming rather from their Senior Warden in Ceredigion than from their Welsh Regional Staff.

RJ, in concluding this particular discussion, suggested that RSPB be invited to give a presentation at the next full meeting of the Committee on enhancing bird populations on an upland wind farm sight.

Sec was asked to write to Patrick Lindley and copy to Tim Stowe the committee's views.

4. Feed back from Roger Jones on the visit of the Chief Ceredigion Planning Officer re the Discharge of the Planning Obligations for Cefn Croes

RJ reported that John Evans had visited the site and his view was that for most of the site the Planning Obligations had been discharged successfully. **However, as far as the raised bog area was concerned, the planning obligations had not been discharged.** The outcome of this decision was that GE Wind Energy were now having to go back to the hydrologists and get recommendations from them which will lead to reduced water flow off the site and increase the mire area. The remedial works required to discharge the Planning Obligations would then need to be implemented and paid for by GE. All design and remedial work would need to be to the Ceredigion Chief Planners Satisfaction. RC stated that he saw the reseeded work being done as part of this and RJ agreed with him, although a requirement for GE to do this work would be dependent on the overall solution required to discharge the Planning Obligations.

All noted that the EMC's aspirations for brush removal from other selected areas would not be achieved as a result of this decision.

The difficulties of re-seeding the area round turbines 25 to 30 were then discussed and OD considered that the seeding should be undertaken in summer and that ADAS would re-look at the time the operation would need and get back in touch with RJ. Action: OD RJ added that he was now very positive about seeing some of the committee's concerns being rectified by GE, as FALCK would withhold payments to GE until the necessary work had been completed to Ceredigion's satisfaction.

5. Consideration of the ADAS Baseline proposals for Birds and Vegetation

Proposals had been circulated earlier and RC invited comments

- JH felt that from a CCW perspective Objective targets were needed, setting out what the Committee wants to see achieved and establishing a process to show what has happened after 5 years on
- OD responded, saying that the updated maps produced for the Committee, (and brought to the meeting by RC) show what the site management and Objectives are
- Sec reported no other feed back from members and agreed to send out copies of the maps to members who had not yet received them Action: Sec

The Committee agreed that the Vegetation Monitoring Proposal from ADAS, based on the Common Standards Monitoring technique developed by ADAS and CCW for Tir Gofal, be accepted. Work costing £2800 plus VAT would be put in hand and will be paid for by the Committee from EMC Funds from the first year payment of £10k.

RC stated that with regard to any Bird monitoring on the site, Red Liford a local ornithologist much used by both FC Wales and CCW, had intimated that he would like to be invited -to put in a bid for any such monitoring work. This was discussed and the Sec was asked to get in touch with Liford and ascertain a price from him for Moorland Birds Surveys and Breeding Bird Surveys as detailed in the ADAS proposal. Action: Sec and to report back

RC stated that if Liford did the work, FC would see it as being a Forestry Operation and a FC Contract, which he would contract, manage; with FC subsequently reclaiming the money from the EMC.

6. Any Other Business

Re-leasing of land back to ADAS OD enquired of progress with this as the deadline for IACS is rapidly approaching and he needed to know what land is being lost to agriculture.

RJ reported that re-leasing is now progressing and land 10 metres on either side of the road and 10 m beyond the over-flight of the turbine rotors creating a circle of diameter 90 metres at each turbine position. The same principle of a 10 m zone will apply to building structures -- substation and met mast.

OD felt that this immediately raised the issue of management of / responsibility for the roadside verges as these would be leased to FALCK; and cited a number of concerns including: -

- Soft rush and Rosebay Willow herb domination
- Problems where there was no vegetation cover and problems of how to restore some cover

A joint meeting between FALCK, ADAS and FC was seen, as being needed asp to sort the whole IACS business out. Action: FC Wales (as landlords)

AS pointed out the need to involve Ruth Thomas of the Assembly Estates Department in the proposed meeting. He saw this as very necessary as she had expressed concerns after her recent visit to the site with the FC Land Agent.

The meeting then closed at 15.05

John Wildig

28th April 2005

Secretary's Note to Committee on subsequent Developments

I met Red Liford at Pwllpeiran on the afternoon of Wednesday 21st April and he was very pleased to learn that some initial post construction monitoring would be initiated this year. However, he had reservations about his being able to do any of the work due to his other commitments.

He went away to consider this further and came back on the following afternoon, to inform me that he regretted that he would not be able to do any of it. However, he was particularly helpful in passing onto the Committee his ideas as to what would be needed and where, seeing a minimum of 10 days being needed for the Breeding Bird Survey alone. He had also identified suitable transects and a route for a Moorland Bird Survey. This was conveyed to our Chairman and as a result of further discussion, it was agreed with him that ADAS Ecologists undertake both a breeding bird and Moorland Bird Survey in 2005 in addition to the vegetation work referred to in the minutes; and for payment to come from the EMC's resources.

Calculations showed that this would take most of the £10k when VAT is added, and we will be left with just over £200 left in the account.

John Wildig 3rd May 2005

Appendix

Cambrian News 23 June 05

BY PATRICK O'BRIEN

CEREDIGION's new Cefn Croes windfarm was plunged into fresh controversy this week as scientists revealed that development of the £50 million scheme had caused serious environmental damage.

They warned that disturbance of rare raised bog on the upland plateau near Ponterwyd had led to a "huge" loss of carbon to the atmosphere, severely diminishing one of the main claimed advantages of windfarms that they can replace power stations burning fossil fuels which emit vast tonnages of the greenhouse gas carbon dioxide.

The disclosure came as the Assembly Government's economic development minister, Andrew Davies, said that a strengthening of renewable energy production was vital if Wales was to achieve "measurable reductions in carbon dioxide emissions." He was commenting before officially opening the 58.5-megawatt Cefn Croes installation, the UK's most powerful onshore windfarm.

A committee of experts monitoring environmental management at the windfarm site also warned that populations of water voles had declined, and that contamination of watercourses had drastically reduced numbers of invertebrates' insects and other tiny creatures, many of them important for fisheries. Freshwater invertebrates are used as a key indicator of environmental quality.

One member of the committee, Becky Jones, the Environment Agency's senior environment officer for Ceredigion, told the group: "The agency found it hard to believe that the original environmental impact assessments had not raised concerns about the dire consequences of draining the raised bog."

The committee was told of "considerable concern" about a "huge amount" of drying peat around some of the turbines, and that oxidation of exposed peat was leading to a "huge" loss of carbon to the atmosphere.

Conservation organisations are campaigning to protect the UK's remaining raised bogs because of their importance for wildlife and their role in affecting carbon dioxide levels, and thus climate change.

Last week's opening of the windfarm coincided with the launch of the British Wind Energy Association's "Embrace the Revolution" campaign, with a new public opinion poll claiming to show that three quarters of people in Wales back the need for electricity generation from wind-power.

The 39 Cefn Croes turbines can supply the equivalent of 42,000 homes, and with existing windfarms in the county, and the Rheidol hydroelectric power plant, will make Ceredigion more than self-sufficient in renewable

electricity. The windfarm is owned by Falck Renewables Limited, a leading European developer of wind projects and a subsidiary of the Milan-based Falck Group.

Unveiling a plaque on a stone plinth close to one of the 39 turbines some twice the height of Nelson's column Mr Davies said: "This is a historic day for Wales." The ceremony conducted in thick mist and fine, driving rain was attended by senior Falck executives from Milan.

Mr Davies said before the opening: "The future of energy generation in Wales is dependent on securing the right mix of energy production and ensuring a security and diversity of supply with minimal environmental impact. An increased focus on energy efficiency and a strengthening of renewable energy production are vital if we are to achieve measurable reductions in carbon dioxide emissions, whilst simultaneously supporting the energy needs of a strong and dynamic economy.

"Wind power is currently the only viable option to provide the bulk of our renewable energy needs, and with excellent wind resources in Wales, sensitively designed wind farms can play an important role in achieving these objectives."

He said Cefn Croes would "save the emission of 160,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide every year" a claim repeated by Falck and therefore represented "a significant milestone in the global fight against the effects of climate change."

Falck Renewables managing director Willie Heller said they were working with partners to improve the ecology of the land surrounding the windfarm, "providing suitable habitats for local wildlife and protecting indigenous species of plants. We have also set up the Cefn Croes Wind Farm Community Trust and will contribute nearly £60,000 annually into the fund, which will be administered by local trustees."

Challenged on the claim that the windfarm would save the emission of 160,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide a year, Falck Renewables said the National Grid could predict electricity demand and therefore plan for a lesser contribution of energy from fossil-fuel power-plants and more from windfarms, thus cutting greenhouse gases.

But this was denied by National Grid, which said that most wind-generation did not connect to its network, and pointed out that electricity demand was in any case rising by more than one per cent a year. The Department of Trade and Industry later agreed that energy output from UK windfarms was not sufficient to enable a reduction in output from conventional fossil-fuel power stations.