

## **BWEA's stage-managed Cefn Croes 'Touch a Turbine Day' backfires.**

The BWEA's big PR push to 'win hearts and minds' with 'embrace the revolution' WIND WEEKEND proved a bit of a damp squib in Ceredigion.

Not many people wanted to visit Cefn Croes, despite the incentives of a free coach trip to the site, information packs, toy models of turbines & the opportunity to touch and "make your mark" on a turbine.

The lack of visitors was hardly surprising as there was no local newspaper advertising and no posters or directional signs to the Cwmrheidol Visitor Centre venue. Participants were recruited via the BWEA website – presumably therefore people directly supportive of wind developments. This is a tactic to prevent any opposition groups from joining in. It was employed for the official Cefn Croes opening – no-one, except invited wind supporters like sympathetic politicians, potential developers, Friends of the Earth Cymru, was informed about venue or times. Even the local press was denied this information. This allowed the developers, and Assembly politicians to say...

"There is no local opposition. No campaigners demonstrated"

Very defensive, but this weekend, the tactic misfired on this stage-managed event.

The Cefn Croes activists boarded the 2<sup>nd</sup> coach to Cefn Croes (Mid-Wales Travel). Mr. Roger Jones, assets manager from Falck Renewables, hosted the trip. This was interesting as, only a week earlier, the same Mr. Jones had told Mark Williams office that the MP could not visit with Martin Wright and Kaye Little... "The track is rough, and there are men working on site."

The 'track' that we travelled in the coach is in the same condition as it was a week ago, and there were technicians on site repairing one of the turbines, so what was the difference?

Coach trip 2 consisted of two families – one definitely pro-wind, including a photogenic 3 year-old, and the other, threatened by turbines in Brechfa Forest ambivalent. John Vidal, Guardian environmental correspondent, together with his girlfriend, and a Guardian photographer also came along.

We drove up the devastating new access road, cut as a wide zigzag through the forest. The extent of tree felling, the subsequent wind throw, the opportunist quarrying, the amount of stone and aggregate spoil, bunding, etc, became apparent. We passed the old site compound, now covered with dead peat and soil. We observed the encroachment onto the SSSI of Llyoedd Ieuan. The sinister sub-station, which looks like a prison or military establishment with transformer, loomed into view, and beyond, the rows of turbines.

By a strange coincidence, turbine 5, which we were to touch, was not rotating. Mr. Jones professed not to know why, and claimed it was faulty. However we all had to don hard hats (Why? Were they frightened that bits of turbine blades would fall on our heads?) due to Health & Safety regulations.

People 'oohed' and 'aahed' at the turbines, exclaiming about their size, and the lack of noise (hardly surprising as T5 wasn't working). I suspect that BWEA knew that people find blade tips travelling at 100 mph close to them, quite disturbing.

The stone plinth used in the opening ceremony on June 16<sup>th</sup>, with Andrew Davies, Assembly Minister for Economic Development, now has an inscribed late plaque. After photo opportunities of white turbines, blue sky, and 'embraces of the revolution', we were invited to make our mark on a turbine. Dipping hands with disposable gloves into a red paint pad, we placed handprints at the turbine base. Under normal circumstances, I doubt that daubing red paint onto new turbine towers would be appreciated by the site owners. It remains to be seen how subsequent graffiti artists are dealt with. Arrests?

Roger Jones was asked some questions which he declined to answer, viz:

"How much CO2 has the peat disturbed during construction, discharged?"

In response to "How many jobs", he claimed 4 full time technicians - one site manager in Aberystwyth, one from Newtown, and these other 2??

Mr Jones himself lives in Cardiff and spends much time looking after Falck's other assets in Spain.

He denied that any electricity from the Grid is 'imported' onto the site in order to overcome resistance and restart turbines. He claimed that the turbines were not working on August 24<sup>th</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup> due to maintenance work on the Grid.

Trip 1 had around 12 adults and 4 children. Trip 3 – around 9, mainly elderly adults. It will be interesting to see how BWEA report the 'Cefn Croes Experience.'

August 28<sup>th</sup> 2005  
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