

# **Nuon Renewables Hirddywel Project Drop-ins December 2009 SUMMARY REPORT**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The latest round of drop-in events held in the Llidiartywaun Community Hall in December helped to bring some new faces and perspectives to bear on Nuon Renewables' proposals to develop the Hirddywel Windfarm Project. These two sessions also allowed others who have attended a previous event to link-in and have their say on the progress of plans. As well as visiting Llidiartywaun with an event of this kind for the first time – we couldn't come to you before, because renovation work was underway at the hall – it was also an opportunity to share an update of progress to date and show people how Nuon Renewables had responded to some of the concerns raised by local people at the first events, held in the autumn. Thank you for attending, and sharing your thoughts with us, both personally in conversation with Nuon Renewables' project team and by filling in our questionnaire. Your continued interest in the project will help develop a project that is the most appropriate for your area, and will help ensure that project decisions are influenced the best possible knowledge and understanding of local interests and needs.

All in all the consultation events gave Nuon Renewables the opportunity to meet face-to-face, and look at maps and other visualisations, with **over 100 people**. (They have also talked to many other people through visits with community councils and other outreach work). We have enjoyed hearing your views, and importantly, we feel confident that your contributions have had an effective and positive influence on the final project proposals.

***Thank-you again for your interest; please read on for feedback on what happened and what came out at these drop-in events, and some information on what the next steps of project development will be.***

***Jeff Bishop and Catrin Ellis Jones  
Consultation Team, BDOR Limited***

## **RESULTS**

At these second round events Nuon Renewables were able to show a greater level of detail, including the changes that had been made since round 1. Changes had been made for several reasons – including technical ones, and as a result of discussions with others (eg. the RSPB and the Environment Agency), and also following further research findings highlighting issues where changes were pertinent to comply more fully with national and local guidance on developing wind farms.

Changes were also made as a result of people's comments from round 1. These changes (and other information) were described on display boards covering key issues: Visual Impact, Turbines, Ecology, Jobs, Tourism, Transport and Community Benefits.

Also available were large-scale maps of the area illustrating the old wind farm layout to the revised layout. After looking at all this material and talking to the team, people were asked to complete a short questionnaire.

Most people who signed-in filled in a questionnaire, but only two questionnaires were completed by a person who had attended a round 1 drop-in. When we typed-up your questionnaire results, we had several pages of your thoughts, concerns, objections and encouragement to deliver to Nuon Renewables. That is a really significant contribution to help Nuon Renewables judge how in-tune they are with the key issues for local residents, and if not, where there are problems.

**Visual Impact** was an issue which did not generate that many comments. People's views indicated the local understanding of site design, in response to the information given, participants responded "*All my issues have been covered*", [you have] "*Covered all bases*", and "*No issues*". Another participant gave very detailed feedback, welcoming the removal of two turbines relative to an earlier stage of layout design, although expressing continued concern about two turbines in the southwestern part of the site. One person reflected here a more general concern: "*As a property owner, I am concerned about the effect on the value of my property, and the probable difficulty of selling while building, etc, is in progress*".

In the section of the questionnaire that related to the proposed **Turbines' Technical Specifications**, turbine height was the only issue to raise any concern. Two people specifically asked Nuon Renewables to consider using some smaller turbines in among the larger ones. Others again had "*No issues*". **Noise and Shadow Flicker** did seem to raise a few more comments from participants: "*the only thing that worries me is the noise and flicker destroying the tranquility of this area*" and "*I think that you should let people know how much noise and flicker there will be*" and show people how "*issues are dealt with*". Others again, were satisfied that Nuon Renewables would follow a policy of "*ensuring the noise from the turbines is as low as possible*" and some pointed out that "*I'm sure that the noise and flicker have been so much more researched into this issue than when the first wind farms were built*".

On **Ecology**, most comments simply indicated the confidence participants showed in the diligence with which Nuon Renewables were undertaking their research and consultation with statutory and other environmental organizations. There was a suggestion that land around and under the turbines would be improved environmentally if hosting farmers ceased to plough and use fertilizer here.

A key issue for participants was the **Economy and Tourism**, prompting comments that "*the direct economic benefit of turbines to mid-Wales must be marginal – a few maintenance staff jobs?*" On the effects on tourism, the comments ranged from: "*the sight and noise of them [turbines] will actually put people off coming*", to: "*As there are turbines in the area, this development shouldn't have any significant impact on tourism*". Another participant suggested that the presence of wind turbines in the area could be used to "*encourage the communities to develop low carbon economies in the area. Greater help also needs to be directed to households that suffer from fuel poverty*".

On **Transport and Construction**, several participants indicated hopes that careful planning would minimize disruption to transport networks locally, including a coordinated approach involving all wind farm developers, and with an appropriate level of information being available to local people.

**Community Benefits** raised by far the biggest number and widest range of comments. Asked for suggestions on how the funds could be used to the benefit of all local people, the responses ranged widely, here is a sample: "*leisure facilities - with the downturn in local government financial availability, the money from the wind farms could close the gap!*"; "*Donations to local community centers and halls would be well received, especially in the light of reduced funding from county councils to the halls. If possible, the money should*

*not just be restricted to capital projects but also to be used for maintenance and running costs"; "provide a community turbine". Others indicated a different approach would be more appropriate: "I do not think all local communities should benefit equally. Any fund should be apportioned by reference to the impact of the site on local residents (excluding landowners who benefit directly)". Others indicated that Local schools could benefit, or chapels and community buildings, or be used to promote other renewable energy and energy efficiency schemes.*

In the any **Other Comments** section, several people expressed a concern that an apparently piecemeal approach was being taken to planning these infrastructure projects. They stressed that decisions about upgrading the National Grid to carry the power away from this and other windfarms should not be taken separately.

The final questions on the questionnaire were about whether people felt that Nuon Renewables had been listening and had made changes since the earlier consultation events. The overall result was that more people who filled in questionnaires felt that Nuon Renewables had listening and responding to your points of view and contributions to the ongoing research.

## **NEXT STEPS**

Modifications to the proposed layout have been made throughout the local consultation process and, your comments have influenced Nuon Renewables' design.

Currently, the design features 9 turbines – 4 fewer than were presented in our layout as originally envisaged and publicized in the July/August drop ins. One of Nuon Renewables' objectives in amending the layout was to move turbines eastwards, away from properties to the west, following local feedback. Distances of turbines from sensitive areas have been increased and will be clearly outlined within the Environmental Statement which accompanies the Planning Application upon submission.

You can read all the comments, ideas and opinions shared with Nuon Renewables by you and people in neighbouring communities through the drop-in events. These will be available very soon on the project pages of: [www.nuonrenewables.com](http://www.nuonrenewables.com) Click on Hirdydwel on the map, and look in the Community Engagement pages.

The planning application is expected to be submitted in Mid 2010. Once it is submitted, we will send a newsletter to local households. This will include:

- details of the final proposals;
- details of the research and information that will be available as part of the planning application;
- information on how the planning process works, and how you can view the full information included in the planning application and become involved with the process.

We shall be working with Nuon Renewables' over the coming months to explore how to take forward the Community Benefits package to achieve the maximum positive impact for local communities. We hope to have an opportunity to talk with local communities to help shape these proposals.

***Thank you again, for your interest and views, and for the welcome to your communities.***