

Middlemoor Wind Farm

Outline Statement to Proposed Wind Turbine Generating Station at North Charlton, Alnwick, Northumberland

The Northumberland Estates



August 2007

Introduction

The Northumberland Estates represents the agricultural and commercial business interests of the Duke of Northumberland. These business interests are inextricably linked to the communities of Alnwick Town and the local rural hinterland and include a number of wide ranging activities such as farming, forestry and gamekeeping together with managing housing, retail units, office units and holiday accommodation. The Northumberland Estates also operates a major tourist attraction at Alnwick Castle.

This statement is submitted on behalf of The Northumberland Estates and all associated interests, but primarily considers the implications for tourism and the potential effects on Alnwick Castle, local businesses and importantly the rural economy.

The Northumberland Estates, or subsequent appointed representative, reserves the right to expand upon issues highlighted within this statement during the process and subsequently at the Inquiry.

Alnwick Castle

During the last three years Alnwick Castle has witnessed a significant increase in visitor numbers from around 50,000 to 200,000 visitors per year. This increase in visitor numbers has greatly assisted the local rural economy which during the late 1990's and early 2000's was in decline due to changes in agriculture. The outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease in 2001 was a further reminder that the rural economy was fragile and that diversification into other sectors, such as tourism, was urgently required.

The initial success of Alnwick Castle in recent years was due to a number of factors such as the filming of the Harry Potter films at the Castle, the opening of the successful Alnwick Garden and Alnwick being voted the 'best place to live in Britain', by Country Life Magazine in 2002. Following on from this The Northumberland Estates has invested significant funding to improve the visitor offer at the Castle in the form of The Knight's School, Dragon's Quest, The Sanctuary Restaurant and Wine Bar, refurbishment of the Guest Hall and numerous improvements to The Castle grounds, to sustain the high level of visitor numbers in the future, which in turn supports the local rural economy. In acknowledgement of the work and success of the last few years Alnwick Castle won Best Large Visitor Attraction of the Year 2007, the Gold Award in the national final of the Enjoy England Awards for Excellence.

However, a major component of the attraction of Alnwick Town, Alnwick Castle and Alnwick Garden to the visitors is the unspoilt stunning countryside that surrounds them, including Northumberland National Park, Northumberland Coastal Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the historic landscape environment designed by Capability Brown, the registered Hulne Park and many rural listed buildings and ancient settlements.

Objections to the Proposed Wind Turbine Station at Middlemoor

The Northumberland Estates is supportive of proposals that encourage the development and use of renewable energy. The Northumberland Estates is currently working on a project to develop a source of hydro electric power on the River Aln and is actively researching the

potential to build a combined heat and power station using renewable sources of energy to serve local businesses in Alnwick.

- However, The Northumberland Estates considers that the development of wind turbines in the rural areas in Alnwick and Northumberland would have significant impacts on the visual amenity and natural and built environment, which would negatively affect the area as a tourist destination and have a detrimental impact on the local rural economy.

The Northumberland Estates therefore objects to the development of the proposed wind turbines at Middlemoor on the following grounds and reasons as requested by the Secretary of State:-

1. The proposed wind turbines will dominate the skyline north of Alnwick and will have a negative visual impact on the Northumberland National Park and Northumberland Coastal Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. (Secretary of State Point 4).
2. The proposed wind turbines will generate noise during their operation which will have a negative impact on the unspoilt countryside. (Secretary of State Point 5).
3. The proposed wind turbines will have a negative impact on archaeology and the historic environment, including listed buildings, registered parks and gardens (Hulne Park and Capability Brown landscape to the north of Alnwick) and ancient roads. (Secretary of State Point 8).
4. Given the above three points the proposed wind turbines will have a significant negative impact on tourism, local businesses and the local rural economy. (Secretary of State Point 10).