

From the ThWart (The Wight Against Rural Turbines) Website 5th October 2008

Wind Turbines could lose island £60 million a year in tourist income

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Predicted loss is comparable to figure in Scotland and Wales - Tidal and solar power are best alternatives for renewable energy.

The Isle of Wight stands to lose 15% of its tourist trade - a loss of more than £60 million in annual income - if giant wind turbines are built at Wellow in the West Wight, according to a large majority (88.5%) of people answering questions in an opinion survey carried out for **ThWart** (The Wight Against Rural Turbines).

“The survey results are remarkable because they show that a huge majority of the informed public are aware of the potential damage these massive wind turbines will inflict on the local landscape, which visitors come to enjoy,” says Ray Tucker, **ThWart**’s Campaign Manager. “The developer has failed to understand the harmful effect their proposals will have on tourism which is responsible for about a quarter of the island’s gross domestic product, while any real benefits will be restricted to itself and the landowners involved.”

Recent opinion poll data collected for tourist boards in Scotland and Wales puts the predicted drop in tourist numbers in those countries at comparable levels – 25% and 13% respectively. The Chairman of the Highlands of Scotland Tourist Board, David Govan, recently called for a moratorium on wind farm development in the Scottish Highlands and Islands. He linked increase in wind farms with a potential “downturn in economic activity generated by tourism.” (Press & Journal”, 8th January 2005).

In the Isle of Wight survey, the key question people were asked was: “Do you think that more or fewer people will visit the island if the wind farm is built at Wellow?” 88.5% of residents and visitors answering this question said fewer tourists would visit and only 11.5% said more would come. If results from visitors only are taken into account, 98.5% said that fewer tourists would come.

The 88.5% of all responding residents and visitors were also asked to estimate how many fewer tourists would come, with an average outcome of 15.3% less visitors. Since the island’s tourist economy generated a total income of more than £400 million last year, this 15.3% represents a potential drop in annual revenue in excess of £60 million. (In 2002/2003, tourism generated £324 in direct income, plus a further £100 million in indirect revenues.)

Before answering, interviewees were shown a photograph of the proposed site, taken from the Lymington ferry outside Yarmouth Harbour. Seven wind turbines, as identified and located in the developer’s original feasibility study, were superimposed on it. People questioned were given the dimensions of the turbines - each standing 105m (344ft) high above ground level.

Since **ThWart**'s survey was carried out (in October and November) and before the results could be collated and fully analysed, developer Your Energy Ltd, announced that six wind turbines are now proposed – two of them standing six metres taller than before, four of them five metres shorter and with all 18 blades 1 metre longer, at 41 metres.

“These changes have done nothing to decrease the overall impact the wind turbines will have on the Isle of Wight landscape and we are confident that the public will agree with us,” says Ray Tucker. “Our survey results are therefore still valid and indicate the scale of risk for all island tourist businesses, whether large or small.”

Those unable to answer the survey questions ‘positively’ one way or the other, were classified as ‘Don’t Know’. Some 43% of those approached to answer the key question about ‘more or fewer’ tourists were placed in this category overall, indicating a lack of knowledge, understanding or awareness of the issues surrounding the subject of wind turbines and the specific proposals for building them at Wellow.

The survey data has been collected, verified and presented by a market research professional commissioned by **ThWart**, as part of a research programme for their campaign against the proposals to site wind turbines up to 111 metres (364 ft) high – among the tallest so far proposed in the UK – on farmland at the village of Wellow.

The opinion survey was conducted randomly among 1,117 members of the public, both in the street and in the home, in nine separate locations on the island: Newport, Cowes, Ryde, Sandown/Shanklin (one location), Ventnor, Godshell, Freshwater, Shorwell and Yarmouth. The consistency of the results, from location to location, show a remarkable, island-wide consensus.