Broughderg Area Development Association

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Mr Jonathan Bell MLA Minister

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment

Netherleigh

Massey Avenue

Belfast BT4 2JP

October 13th 2015

Dear Minister Bell,

Closure of the Northern Ireland Renewables Obligation to new onshore wind in 2016

Broughderg Area Development Association wishes to record our support for the plans to remove the subsidy incentives for onshore wind energy developments from 1 April 2016.

In our experience the subsidies encouraged non-resident speculators to use our area as a base for the installation of multiples of single wind turbines and wind farm developments without due regard for the wishes of the residents. This was enabled through landowners (some of them non-resident) making long-term leases of sites to distant wind development firms. In fact by this means application I/2011/0460/F in the name of Broughderg Area Development Association was approved. The applicant, a wind energy firm from outside our area, made the application totally without the knowledge of the Group, that the application was being processed. That Application had absolutely nothing to do with Broughderg Area Development Association.

Numerous other single wind turbine applications were made for this part of the Sperrins Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The local area has also been the subject of numerous applications for windfarms including the largest proposal in Northern Ireland which is just in the initial stages. Thankfully none of these Applications have as yet been successful given the distress that the whole community is suffering as a result. They are therefore not contributing to the renewable targets already met and nowhere near contributing to substantial additional extra capacity already approved. Therefore it is prudent to implement the policy as proposed.

Our area also has the distinction of being within the Beaghmore Area of Significant Archaeological Interest (ASAI). This ASAI and its surroundings is described in Landscape Character Area 25 Beaghmore Moors and Marsh as being *highly sensitive to any wind energy development due to its high visual sensitivity, wild character and important heritage sites.* None of this deterred applications being made for numerous wind turbines which would encroach on our archaeological landscape. Obviously the prospective financial return by way of renewal obligation certificates encouraged these speculative applications. However most of these applications were vigorously opposed by members of our community and did not achieve approval.

Such developments would have been totally incompatible with the overall economic value that tourism has for our area. Local councils, local businesses, local communities and many individuals have invested and continue to invest a lot of energy, time and finance into developing the area as a visitor destination. The main attractions include the recently developed Davagh Mountain Bike Trails Resort and the numerous archaeological sites within the ASAI which incidentally includes the iconic Beaghmore Stone Circles (an archaeological monument on a par with Stonehenge). It is estimated that in recent years over one million pounds was contributed to the local economy by way of the visitor spend. The introduction of large scale vertical turbines would distort the natural composure and rhythm of our historic landscape and detract from the scenic value within this Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Infrastructure for electricity generated from wind technology has by its very nature a limited capacity for development and has an absolute saturation point. West Tyrone is already saturated with wind turbine development. Essentially it would be very difficult to site additional wind energy developments, in the west of Northern Ireland which would not have a negative impact on the amenity, landscape character, tourism and ecology of the entire region.

We note that at the present time due the rapid increase in recent years to 20% of electricity being generated from renewable sources that the Executive's Programme for Government target for 2015 has already been achieved. We also note from your consultation that within the time scale of the present arrangements that onshore wind energy is on course to deliver more than 30% of electricity requirements from renewable sources.

The thrust of the consultation indicates that Renewables Obligation to onshore wind could not be sustained indefinitely. As such Broughderg Area Development Association is in support of the proposal for closure of the Northern Ireland Renewables Obligation to new onshore wind from 1st April 2016 as proposed.

Yours sincerely

Mary McKenna

Secretary

Broughderg Area Development Association