

## SAVE THE MACHARS OF GALLOWAY FROM FRENCH WINDFARM BLIGHT

Fresh from ravaging the stunning Lammermuir Hills near Duns in the Borders with their massive 48 turbine Fallago Rig Wind Farm, French company EDF Energy Renewables has now turned its attention to another of Scotland's iconic beauty spots in Galloway. Targeting the tranquil Airriequhillart valley in the Machars of Wigtownshire, the French company better known for its nuclear plants, has lodged plans to erect 18 giant – 136.5 metre high turbines, towering over the ancient Roman camps and picturesque cottages and farm steadings of this beautiful valley.

Large swathes of immature forest will be felled and peat bogs 4 metres deep will be bulldozed to make way for the 1,000 tonne concrete foundations for each of the turbines. Trees and peat bogs are natural carbon capture and storage ecosystems. Their destruction will release millennia of stored CO<sub>2</sub> into the atmosphere, negating any potential benefit from the turbines. Borrow pits and quarries will be excavated to provide rock for the miles of roads necessary to service the site. Soon this peaceful Galloway landscape will bristle with pylons, overhead lines and massive, concrete and steel turbines, their vast blades constantly churning, while perpetual noise, vibration and the flicker effect wreck the lives and health of local people, desiccate rare birds and drive away tourists.

The Machars of Galloway has long been a tourist magnet, beloved for its gently rolling green hills, valleys and scattered woodland. It was here near Whithorn that the cult movie *'The Wicker Man'* was filmed. The author and naturalist Gavin Maxwell lived at nearby Monreith, attracted by the rich diversity of fauna and flora in the area, which will now be endangered by industrial wind turbines. Above the braes that line the coast around Luce Bay a completely different landscape can be found, featuring rugged moorland and peat bogs and the highest point in the Machars – Mochrum Fell. Here, in hard-won fields enclosed by centuries-old dry-stane dykes, Galloway cattle and sheep quietly graze. This idyllic setting will soon be crushed beneath the wheels of bulldozers and diggers. Mochrum Fell will be dwarfed by the towering steel giants which on clear days will even be visible from Northern Ireland.

Like other foreign companies, EDF has been lured to Scotland by the windrush Klondyke that has seen huge subsidies paid to landowners and energy companies. The subsidies are passed straight down the line to Scotland's beleaguered electricity consumers, who now find themselves

paying over £1500 per year in household fuel bills, much of it due to the SNP government's obsession with wind and their madcap target of 100% of electricity from renewables by 2020. Over 900,000 Scottish households are now suffering from actual fuel poverty, having to make the difficult choice between heating and eating in the coldest days of winter.

But Alex Salmond's determination to turn Scotland into the "Saudi Arabia of renewable energy" has opened the floodgates to a succession of egregious planning applications set to vandalise some of Scotland's most famous land and seascapes. Meanwhile the profits continue to roll in. Spanish company Iberdrola, who own ScottishPower, sent over £900 million earned in 2012 from their Scottish renewable energy business back to Spain, no doubt helpful to the crumbling Spanish economy; while EDF posted UK profits of £801 million last year, certainly helpful to France. But meanwhile lost jobs and business failures in Scotland are escalating as companies face spiraling fuel bills.

A recent study by economists at Juan Carlos University in Spain stated that 3 jobs are lost in the general economy for every 1 so-called 'green' job created. That has certainly been the experience in Scotland. Our faltering tourist sector saw a 14% drop in visitor numbers last year. But Alex Salmond wants to "re-industrialise" Scotland and that means nowhere is safe from the ravages of the fat-cat energy companies and greedy landowners. Indeed three of the four landowners involved in the Airriequhillart scheme are absentee landlords, who will see hefty rental fees enriching their bank accounts in England, while one of Scotland's most beautiful valleys is trashed.

It is a sad fact that the rocketing costs, soaring fuel poverty, landscape vandalism and impact on people's lives and properties is all for nothing. Even if Scotland were covered from end to end with giant wind turbines it would not make the slightest difference to global carbon emissions. Indeed the Chinese are laughing all the way to the bank as they open a new coal-fired power station every week to supply the UK with the steel we need to build our windfarms. And wind turbines are so unreliable and inefficient, only producing electricity for around 25% of their short 15 to 20 year life, that we have to rely increasingly on expensive imported gas as a backup for when the wind isn't blowing, or is blowing so hard that the useless turbines have to be closed down.

We are the victims of a great folly, perpetuated by politicians who believe, incredibly, that "wind is free" and that the ruination of Scotland's landscape will somehow show our commitment to combatting climate change. Airriequhillart is just the latest target in this relentless conflict. Those of us

who value Scotland and recognize the folly of this policy must stand up and be counted. Sign the Airriequhillart petition at [SayNoToWindTurbines.Com](http://SayNoToWindTurbines.Com). SAVE THE MACHARS!

**Struan Stevenson, MEP**

**Struan Stevenson is a Conservative Euro MP for Scotland. He is president of the Climate change, Biodiversity & Sustainable Development Intergroup in the European Parliament.**

(919 words)