

the tourism & planning practice

tourism solutions, planning advocacy, marketing strategies, research & training

Planning Appeal by RidgeWind Ltd

Site at Wandylaw, Chathill, Berwick upon Tweed, Northumberland

Planning Inspectorate Ref: APP/V2913/A/08/2062307/NWF

Inspector: David Cullingford BA MPhil MRTPI



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE

of

Richard Spencer BSc Hons MBA MRTPI

Dealing with Tourism

August 2008

-
- I.0 My name is Richard Spencer I am a chartered town planner, I have a Bachelor of Science (honours) degree in town and regional planning and hold a Masters in Business Administration. I have been a member of the Royal Town Planning Institute since 1992 and a member of the Tourism Management Institute since 1997.
- I.1 I am the proprietor of my own business that specialises in providing generic and thematic business consultancy services. I offer an independently accredited and quality assured professional consultancy service that is registered on the North East Regional Suppliers Register (5 star rating), approved by HaLM (Hospitality and Leisure Manpower) and work as an official supplier for the Governments Planning Advisory Service (PAS). My areas of specialist intervention revolve around my competency base involving planning, economic development and tourism.
- I.2 Prior to setting up my own business I was Director of Marketing for the Regional Tourist Board that represented 1,600 paying private sector members and every local authority in the North East of England. Here, I was responsible for delivering international and national marketing and PR campaigns and managing directly regional and sub regional promotions worth up to £2 million. I was also responsible at that time for managing a regional planning advisory service to the sector on tourism development proposals and commenting on emerging Local Plans and relevant Government policies, including specifically, the consultation stage of the Good Practice Guidance Note on Tourism that subsequently replace PPG21 in September 2006.
- I.3 Previous to this, I have worked in the public sector for a decade firstly as a planning officer working in development control and Forward Plan, then diversifying into economic development and regeneration.
- I.4 As a consultant I have been responsible for writing the business plans for sub regional tourism partnerships and marketing strategies for destinations and businesses. I have worked on a variety of tourism projects in Northumberland from working with the National Park on a tourism sign posting action plan to large country estates wishing to diversify into the visitor economy.
- I.5 I have been asked to represent Berwick upon Tweed Borough Council in defending their decision to refuse permission to site a wind farm at Wandylaw. One of the reasons for refusal concerned the potential significant adverse impact the proposal

would have on tourism and local economy of the area. My proof of evidence should be read in conjunction with the landscape evidence as the two issues inter-relate.

- I.6 I have sought to demonstrate through the critical examination of policy, research, industrial characteristics and application of robust methodologies that the proposed wind farm development at Wandylaw is likely to have an adverse impact on tourism and the local economy of the area over the long term.
- I.7 I have examined the tourism aspects of the proposal in the light of the significant size and fragility of the tourism economy in the sub region. I have reviewed the policy climate for tourism and wind farms and noted that at no time in the emergence of the Regional Spatial Strategy was due consideration given to the impact on tourism of the pursuit of a greater role for renewables in the North East region.
- I.8 I have demonstrated the critical importance of tourism to the sub region and Berwick upon Tweed in terms of value and volume of visitors and the significant downstream jobs their expenditure creates. With tourism in Northumberland being worth in excess of £600 million from 1.8 million overnight guests and 8 million day visitors any potential impact on these figures could create demonstrable harm to the local economy.
- I.9 I have shown that research indicators would anticipate the potential fall in tourism business to be likely in the region of a significant 15%. This figure could be worth some £92 million in lost revenue that would equate to over 2,000 direct and indirect jobs being affected by the reduction in tourism's competitiveness. This, in an industry that is already under considerable growth pressure. Even a 5% impact loss would be felt throughout the economy as this would see £31 million disappear along with over 700 jobs. In a fragile economic climate such as the North East even this level of change would be difficult to recover from.
- I.10 I have shown that the seasonality of tourism represents a real challenge to Northumberland and Berwick area with 42% of the counties visitors coming to stay in the 3 months of July, August and September. This tends to coincide with the better weather experienced in Northumberland with their associated clearer days. This will make the wind farm at Wandylaw even more prominent in the landscape to the detriment of potential long term and repeat business. The Highways Agency have confirmed in excess of 4 million vehicles pass close to the appeal site every year.

-
- I.11 I have highlighted why unspoilt landscape is so important to the UK visitor and that it is the single most important feature or attribute sought out by the holiday maker taking a break in England. We should rightly be concerned at the slow erosion of this unique feature and rightly worried about the longer term consequences of how this will change visitor behaviour in Northumberland and the local area where the landscape is such an important part of the visitor promotion and experience.
- I.12 Indeed, these two critical aspects help to shape the impression the visitor has of a destination and I have shown how this would manifest itself across the two paradigms of perception and reality. The visitor journey maps out the interactions between tourist and destination and explains the relationship between customer and place. Where the brand promise is broken, (i.e. that to come here you will experience unspoilt countryside) trust is lost (because wind farms fundamentally alter the character of the landscape) and the customer changes their behaviour as a consequence – they stay less, spend less or go somewhere else for their holiday. This will result in a downturn in the economic performance of the local tourism industry. Destination management is a complex task and in an increasingly competitive holiday environment every advantage is sought to win the visitor. Wind farms across the special and distinctive landscape of a tourist dependent economy will put Northumberland and Berwick at a potential disadvantage.
- I.13 A wind farm at Wandylaw will have an adverse impact on the tourism economy and the recent approval at Middlemoor for 18 turbines will merely exacerbate the situation from the perspective of those responsible for promoting and managing the destination and cause those visiting the area to pause for thought about the quality of the countryside.
- I.14 I have concluded that the consequences of this appeal decision and that at Middlemoor will be felt across the long term in the tourism industry of the North East of England. As campaign organisation “Views of Scotland” noted:

“The ideal way to measure the effect on tourism of thousands of turbines across your destinations wild places is to count the visitors who stay away. But by then, of course, it is too late.”

ENDS