

Property Devaluation from close proximity to Wind Turbines.

A subject, it seems, the media dare not investigate properly.

In September of 2008, after 31 happy years in our house, high up a remote Welsh valley, my wife and I had an unexpected knock on our door. Totally out of the blue a wind farm consultant asked us if we objected to having acoustic monitoring equipment placed installed to measure the pleasant murmurings of the stream below our garden against... the sound of 62 proposed giant turbines, up to 146.5 metres high.

'How close are these turbines going to be?' we asked.

'I should know, but I don't,' was the answer.

It turned out the closest were going to be very close, on the ridge right in front of our bedroom window.

Making a few enquiries what the consequences are of having to live that close to wind turbines brought us in contact with numerous people who were suffering serious noise problems, often causing sleep deprivation, and, during certain hours of the day, light disturbances. Some tried to sell their properties but found no buyers prepared to live in such close proximity to wind turbines. What the general public seem totally unaware of is that no matter how serious such problems are there is no compensation scheme and those who fall victim to such developments have no way out as their homes may well be unsaleable.

As the setting of our property is quite unique, overlooking the hills and yet sheltered with not a single house in view, we often had people knocking on our door asking first refusal should we ever wish to sell. And when we did put our house on the market we could, without the slightest doubt, have sold it within 24 hours to the very first viewer who came to see us, until we informed her of the wind farm plans. The email she sent us in which she gives the reason why she could not go ahead is crystal clear. Indeed we could have sold the house many times over, but every time we mentioned the wind farm project, as is our duty as a vendor, potential buyers immediately back off. Again, we have definite proof of this as our estate agent kept a record of the reasons why potential buyers do not want to buy our house.

The planning process has now dragged on for nearly four years. Four years of uncertainty during which we have had little chance to enjoy our retirement. Turning seventy this year we are now in the position that we shall not be able to move from here even if sickness or old age require us to do so as our property is now worthless and will remain so should the project go ahead.

Meanwhile we collected numerous testimonies from those suffering from close proximity to turbines, from people trying to sell their homes, from estate agencies stating they refuse to take on certain properties that are too close to (proposed) turbines and I sent all this information, well over 40 documents which leave absolutely no doubt about the negative impact of close proximity to wind turbines on the saleability of properties, to the Department of Energy and Climate Change as well as to the Welsh Assembly's Ministry for Environment and Sustainable Development.

Despite this irrefutable proof attached to these emails, both departments responded with the sentence: *'while we appreciate people's concern, we have yet to see any compelling evidence that proximity to wind turbines adversely affects house prices.'* Surprisingly both departments used exactly the same words!!!!

Our very supportive MP who is a fellow party member of the Secretary of Energy and Climate Change was so appalled that he brought this disgraceful reply from the DECC to the attention the Rt Hon. Edward Davey. Mr Davey's reply was: *'while we appreciate people's concern, we have yet to see any compelling evidence that proximity to wind turbines adversely affects house prices.'*

What chance do victims of close proximity to wind turbines have of getting fair treatment if the Secretary of Energy and Climate Change himself simply refuses to take note of any clear evidence that is presented to him and has no compunction about distorting the truth? And what are his motives? Wind farm developers are obliged to pay so-called community benefits to the communities close to a wind farm. In our case this amounts to some £ 20,000,000 .– over a 25-year period. While this pay-out is meant to benefit the villages around the wind farm – which for the greater part will not see or hear even one single turbine – not a penny of it will go to those who are truly affected and may never get their lives back on track again. Such funds must not be seen as a bribe, so DECC and Industry tell us, though Tim Yeo, Chairman of the Energy and Climate Change Select Committee has publicly stated that he is in favour of 'bribing' communities to accept wind farms in their area!

If the Industry and the Department of Energy and Climate Changes are really telling the truth about close proximity to turbines not having a negative impact on property prices, why on earth is it that they point blank refuse to put their money where their mouth is by buying up the properties from those wishing to move away from such projects? If they are really telling the truth they could sell such properties on again, at a profit even since the industry makes the claim that those living close to turbines are their biggest supporters! Such a measure would offer the industry the one and only chance to prove once and for all that they are not making it up! But should they find, after all, that no one wants to buy such properties it would be only fair for the wind farm multinational to bear the cost and not the innocent victim. As long as they refuse to implement such a fair solution the only conclusion that can be drawn is that they know full well they are telling blatant lies and so does the Secretary for Energy and Climate Change. I can safely say so as I have all the documentation to prove my case for 100% and I dare them to sue me for making this claim!

Furthermore, the Valuation Office Agency (VOA) has recently moved a number of properties into a lower tax band as they have accepted that having wind turbines built near homes can sharply decrease their value! It is unlikely that any Government agency should take such a decision without '*compelling*' evidence! Only one of these two government agencies can be right. Which of the two is distorting the truth must be clear enough.

Leaves the questions: do Industry, DECC and Welsh Assembly's Ministry for Environment and Sustainable Development really believe they are going to get away with it in the long run and aren't they hugely shooting themselves in the foot?

Those falling victim to close proximity to turbines have only two choices: to accept the injustice perpetrated against them or to join forces with others in the same position and, together, try and fight the Industry head on! With a decent policy towards those affected by close proximity to wind turbines there would not be half the opposition there is today and, as more and more wind farms are built, unless Governments and Industry finally come to their senses by introducing fair and appropriate measures, this opposition will simply grow and grow.

Wyck Gerson Lohman
Bronion
Cwm Einion
Furnace/Machynlleth
Powys SY20 8TD
tel. 01654 781234