

## 12. **Public Consultation**

This section comprises 6 sub-sections:

- 12.1 Best Practice: Involving the Community early
- 12.2 The Website and the Online Survey
- 12.3 Malpractice: Wider area 'consultation'
- 12.4 The Community Newsletter
- 12.5 The Public Exhibition and the Paper Survey
- 12.6 The Public Meeting

Planning Policy examined in this section:

NATIONAL: PPS22: Renewable Energy

### 12.1 **Best Practice: Involving the Community early**

12.1.1 The guidelines to PPS22, paragraph 4.22, page 51 state:

#### ***'Involving local communities***

*4.22 For most people, renewable energy generation will only become a big issue when they can relate actual proposals to a particular geographical area. In some cases, this may not happen until a developer submits a planning application, by which time several opportunities to engage constructively with local people may have been lost.'*

12.1.2 The Sustainable Development Commission (SDC) report, 'Wind Power in the UK', section 9.5, page 92 states:

#### ***'Good practice in public consultation***

*Good practice in public consultation would involve the public at an early stage. Pre-planning public consultation can yield benefits for both the developer and the public. The developer will gain valuable insight into the issues of local concern and can plan the development of the scheme to mitigate any negative impacts at an early stage. The public benefits as it gives them time to become informed about the scheme and much more time to prepare a response to the proposal. The consultation process may involve many stakeholders, including the developer, landowners, NGO's, regulatory authorities, local communities, neighbouring property owners and anyone or any organisation that may be affected by the development in either a positive or negative way.'*

12.1.3 The first thing any member of the local community knew about the Bolsterstone Dunslund Cross Wind Farm proposal was in May 2008. This was when Mr. Mike Bird of Arcus Consulting contacted a very small number of residents by letter or telephone to see if they would be prepared to have background noise measuring equipment on their properties.

12.1.4 The site assessment work had started some considerable time earlier, probably towards the end of 2006. Western Power Distribution has confirmed to DTOG that they received an application relating to a grid connection at the site at that time. The Data Protection Act prevented them from naming the applicant but DTOG would not be surprised to learn that it might have been Bolsterstone. Thus, up to 18 months of potential public consultation time was allowed to slip away.

12.1.5 In the very first sentence of its Statement of Community Involvement, Bolsterstone states:

*'Since the outset of development of the Dunsland Cross Wind Energy Scheme, Bolsterstone Plc, on behalf of Bolsterstone Innovative Energy (Holsworthy) Ltd., has actively engaged with the principal communities in the local area through public notification and consultation.'*

12.1.6 TDC may wish to ask Bolsterstone to list precisely the details of the public notification between December 2006 and May 2008. No ordinary member of the public, no local residents, save for the landowner and his acquaintances, knew anything about the proposed wind farm.

12.1.7 The grand statement in paragraph 12.1.5 is then qualified by splitting the time period into early and late, with the early consultations not involving the public or local residents at all. Eventually the truth appears at the start of paragraph 2 of the Statement of Community Involvement:

*'This Statement of Community Involvement sets out the programme of community involvement undertaken by Bolsterstone since October 2008.'*

12.1.8 DTOG accepts that there is no point in alerting the local community too early in the scoping process in case it becomes obvious that a site is unsuitable and the project is not to be continued. As far back as November 1994, however, the British Wind Energy Association (BWEA) booklet, *'Best Practice Guidelines for Wind Energy Development'*, section 2.4, page 7, was stating:

*'Dialogue between the developer and the public should start early, just prior to erection of the anemometer masts.'*

12.1.9 This is eminently sensible, because it enables the community to relate to the scale and location of the proposal and still have a full year to learn more and formulate an appropriate response before the main wind farm application is submitted. It clearly presented a problem for Bolsterstone, however, since this developer had no intention of erecting a hub-height anemometer mast at the site to collect the 12 months' worth of wind data as required in PPS22. Only when Bradford & Cookbury Parish Council and others spelled it out in their responses to the request from Arcus for a Scoping Opinion did Bolsterstone realise it was not going to be able to disregard the recommendation in the guidelines to PPS22.

12.1.10 Anemometers are not Bolsterstone's strong point. In its Carlisle City Council submission for the Newlands Wind Farm it submitted the main wind farm application without bothering to erect any anemometer in advance. Only when it realised this would not be acceptable did it submit a subsequent anemometer application 5 weeks later. Carlisle rejected both applications. It also rejected the subsequent re-application for the anemometer alone (see Section 2, paragraphs 2.6.1 and 2.6.2). In its Reeves Hill Wind Farm application, Bolsterstone is using wind data from an anemometer which a previous developer had used 12 years earlier (before rejecting the site). At Dunsland Cross, Bolsterstone erected a 10 metres anemometer in May 2008, **without the required planning permission from TDC**, in order to correlate weather

data with background noise measurements. When the company relented over the requirement for a 60 metres hub-height anemometer at this site, it took three attempts to get this simple planning application right. (TDC ref: 1/1088/2008/FUL) Such incompetence and disregard for planning permission will not have gone unnoticed by TDC planning department. Neither will the fact that the anemometer is being erected for fiscal reasons, as opposed to supplying meteorological data to inform the final turbine positions as required in PPS22.

12.1.11 Bolsterstone's original intention was to submit the main wind farm application in November 2008, having engaged the public in meaningful dialogue from October 2008, when its website went live and its Community Newsletter was released (See sections 12.2, 12.3 and 12.4 below). For a process which had started some two years earlier it had intended to allow the local community only the final month to make their views known. That the company had no intention of accommodating the wishes of the public is shown by the fact that it had published the intended application submission date in the October, 2008 newsletter. This does not accord with the recommendations of PPS22, the SDC or the BWEA given above.

12.1.12 Bolsterstone would do well to learn from Bradford & Cookbury Parish Council. This PC, which represents the residents of Brandis Corner and Dunsland Cross, is investigating ways the community can reduce its carbon footprint, pool resources and reduce energy consumption and thus energy bills. At the present time the PC is collating responses from a questionnaire sent to all local residents asking about their present energy arrangements. This is right at the start of the process and residents will have a full say in shaping the future of the Parish's energy supply, efficiency and consumption in the years to come.

## 12.2 The Website and the Online Survey

12.2.1 Bolsterstone is not a true wind farm developer. It has ambitions to become one but, at the present time, it has little in-house expertise. It is a project management company and virtually everything to do with wind farm development is contracted out. Public relations is no exception.

12.2.2 Bolsterstone has hired the firm Consense to try to persuade the public to support its wind farm proposals. Consense is a public relations company based in Ipswich with a second office in London.

12.2.3 Consense is a relatively new offshoot of its parent company, 2Cs Communication (UK) Ltd. It is staffed by a small number of young, enthusiastic personnel who are overseen and guided by a more senior member of staff from 2Cs. It is attracting clients like Bolsterstone because it has developed an online Open Debate System. It uses this to try to elicit support for clients' projects from people in the immediate wind farm area and the wider area beyond.

12.2.4 In this way Consense can dilute the strong anti-wind farm feeling often encountered in the immediate vicinity. Online questionnaire responses can then be reported as being in favour of the proposal overall, despite the strong objections of the people truly most affected by it. It has also created a template-style website into which clients can pour core information, relevant to all projects, before incorporating site-specific information for each individual wind farm.

12.2.5 In its Newsletter of February 2008 to the wind farm industry, Consense stated:

*'It goes without saying that the community engagement process is dominated by the NIMBY vocal minority. So what changes can be made to consultation to attract those who understand the issues our country is facing, and change the minds of those with predetermined opinions? Developers need to show communities that it's not just about them - it's about the future of the country: their support will help secure our country's energy supply ... of generations to come.'*

12.2.6 On Consense's own website is a pseudo dictionary entry for the word 'consense', which, of course, is an invention of the creative mind and not a real word. However, Consense defines it as:

*'Engaging with the silent majority. Encouraging positive debate through online and offline consultation.'*

12.2.7 DTOG notes the use of the word NIMBY by companies trying to promote wind farms. It suggests a knee-jerk reaction by residents whose minds are already made up and who have never studied (or do not understand) the issues. The implicit assumption that the 'silent majority' is in favour of wind farms is not proven. No reason is offered as to why members of the 'silent majority' might suddenly wish to become members of a 'NIMBY vocal minority'. DTOG is one of over 200 groups in the UK opposing inappropriately sited wind farms (see <http://www.countryguardian.net/Campaign%20Windfarm%20Action%20Groups.htm> for full list). These groups include intelligent, highly educated and highly qualified people who do understand the issues surrounding climate change and security of energy supply. They can also see through the half-truths and misrepresentations of wind farm developers and their supporters.

12.2.8 Communities know it may not be 'just about them', but they also know that they are not willing to be sacrificed for a 'greater good' when the project being proposed will contribute very little, if anything, towards it. This report has shown that the costs of this wind farm proposal far outweigh any benefits it may bring (see Section 3, paragraphs 3.3.59 to 3.3.64, Section 4, all paragraphs, Section 7, paragraphs 7.3.11 to 7.3.13 and Section 9, paragraph 9.2.4).

12.2.9 Statements such as those made by Bolsterstone and Consense above suggest that pro-wind farm companies do not have properly substantiated arguments to back-up their claims and so must resort to name-calling at the outset. Their desperation to be part of the present day Klondike-style dash for the substantial rewards on offer is such that they will use any means available, fair or foul, to sweep aside objectors.

12.2.10 Examples of the numerous inaccurate comments and misleading or unsubstantiated claims made on Bolsterstone's website for this project ([www.dunslandcrosswindfarm.co.uk](http://www.dunslandcrosswindfarm.co.uk)) have been given throughout this document. Bolsterstone's online questionnaire will now be examined.

12.2.11 Online questionnaires are gaining in popularity as a way of engaging public responses to current issues. They have their drawbacks, of course. They exclude those members of society who do not use a computer in their daily routines, such as the more senior members of our communities, and they are open to abuse if they are not properly secured.

12.2.12 Bolsterstone's online questionnaire is deeply flawed. It is designed to manipulate the respondent to give the answers required to classify them as a supporter of the project. For example, Question 1 is:

*'Are you concerned about climate change and energy security?  
Answers available: "Yes", "No" or "I don't have sufficient knowledge".'*

It is quite possible that someone can be extremely concerned about energy security but not so concerned about climate change, if they believe that the nation's generating plant is being earmarked for premature decommissioning to solve a problem which they do not recognise as being man made, namely anthropogenic global warming. Given the choices, how does this person answer question 1?

12.2.13 Question 8 asks:

*'The Government has set a target of generating 10% of our energy from renewable resources by 2010 and 15% by 2015, for 2 main reasons.*

- To reduce carbon dioxide emissions, which are contributing to climate change.*
- Provide energy security for the UK*

*Do you support these targets?  
Answers available: "Yes", "No", "Unsure".*

Assuming our aforementioned person does not agree that carbon dioxide emissions are responsible for climate change he or she will probably answer "No" to this question. The problem is not so much with this question but with Question 9 which follows:

*Are these targets...      Ambitious Enough?  
   Not ambitious enough?  
   Unsure*

The answer our person will look for, *'the Government's targets are misguided, meaningless and irrelevant'* is missing. An answer must be chosen or the questionnaire cannot be submitted.

12.2.14 Question 15 asks:

*'We would like your views on the number of turbines we are proposing to install.*

*Do you think:      There should be more  
                                 There should be less  
                                 You are happy to leave the number to the decision of the  
                                 Local Authority.'*

Is Torridge District Council aware that it has *carte blanche* to choose the number of turbines? The subliminal thrust of this question is to make the respondent think that TDC has already agreed a wind farm in this location.

12.2.15 Question 16 asks:

*'The project is expected to deliver enough "clean" electricity every year for up to between 5,144 to 7,326 homes. Would you like to see:*

*More output from the site  
Less output  
I don't mind  
Unsure'*

Ignoring the fact that the questionnaire was just cut and pasted from another application so that the predicted number of homes supplied does not agree with the number shown in the community newsletter (4,206 to 5,991 homes), and ignoring the fact that this prediction is wildly inaccurate and inflated (see section 3.2), how is anyone supposed to take this question seriously? Why would anyone want to see less output from the site? Whom are they hoping will spend hours agonising between *'I don't mind'* and *'Unsure'*?

12.2.16 The final comment, number 25, is not a question. It starts:

*'We would like to be as open as possible about our plans for the windfarm ...'*

If that is true, why was the consultation period restricted to just the final month of a two year exercise?

12.2.17 The most telling condemnation of Bolsterstone and Consense's failure to win over public opinion and gain any substantial support for this project can be found, or rather can *not* be found, in any of its application documents including the Statement of Community Involvement. Nowhere in this document, or anywhere else in the application, is any mention made of the results of the website questionnaire or the paper questionnaire available at the public exhibition (see Section 12.5 below). **It is thus fairly obvious that public opinion is very much against this wind farm proposal.**

12.2.18 When it was known that Galsworthy Wind Farm proposal was likely to be consented and that Wheeler's Cross, Chilla Moor, Dunsland Cross and Meeth Clay Pits were in scoping, the Ruby Country website started its own public consultation, asking, 'Is there a place for more wind turbines in Ruby Country?' It ran from Tuesday 1st July, 2008 until Wednesday 27th August. 174 respondents voted in the online poll. **The results show that 147 people (84.5%) do not want more wind turbines in Ruby Country:**

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL [http://www.therubycountry.com/index.php?option=com\\_poll&id=16:windfarm-survey](http://www.therubycountry.com/index.php?option=com_poll&id=16:windfarm-survey). The page title is "Is there a place for more wind turbines in Ruby Country?". The main heading is "Welcome to Ruby Country!". Below the navigation menu, there is a poll section titled "Is there a place for more wind turbines in Ruby Country?". The poll results are displayed as follows:

Response	Count	Percentage
No?	147	84.5%
Yes?	27	15.5%

Additional information provided includes: Number of Voters: 174; First Vote: Tuesday, 01 July 2008 15:32; Last Vote: Wednesday, 27 August 2008 10:55. The page also features sections for "LATEST EVENTS", "FROM THE RUBY DIRECTORY", "WEATHER", and "RUBY SURVEY".

12.2.19 In a recent offline survey, Nick Harvey, MP for North Devon, asked the question, 'Renewable energy takes many forms. Which of these are appropriate in North Devon?' Only 31.3% thought that Large Onshore Wind Turbines were appropriate.

**NICK HARVEY MP for North Devon**  
**"Your Views Matter" Report - Back on the Environment & Energy**

Constituency Office: The Castle Centre, Castle Street, Barnstaple EX31 1DR. Tel: 01271 - 328631

**First - a huge "Thank You" to over 2000 households who took part in my Constituency wide survey this Spring!**

My researchers have been busy collating the results and following up on the other issues that people wanted to raise with me.

This is the first of a series of report back leaflets on the issues covered in the survey that will be available either on my website or in print from my office in Barnstaple.

The results will provide useful evidence when I have to deal with Government Ministers or your local Councils. They will also provide valuable information when working alongside a range of non governmental bodies and charities.

Thank you again for taking part.  
*Nick Harvey*

Printed (hosted), published and approved by Brian Mitchell for and on behalf of Nick Harvey MP both at The Castle Centre, Barnstaple

**"Compared with other issues, how important are environmental issues to you?"**

Importance	Percentage
Much less important	2.9%
Slightly less important	3.9%
The same as others	42.0%
Slightly more important	22.3%
Much more important	28.8%

**Comment:** Even before the sharp fuel price rises in recent months awareness of Environmental Issues has been growing. The debate over peoples' contribution to Global Warming, changes in weather patterns, and competition for fuel and energy resources has filled our TV screens and newspapers on a daily basis. A small majority sees the Environment as much more or slightly more important than any other issue, with only a small minority seeing it less important.

**"Renewable energy takes many forms. Which of these are appropriate in North Devon?"**

Renewable Energy Form	Percentage
Solar panels on all new buildings.....	77.7%
Tidal barrage across the Severn Estuary.....	56.1%
Marine Current Turbines as off Lymouth.....	77.6%
Large Offshore Wind Turbines off Lundy.....	62.6%
Large Onshore Wind Turbines like Fullabrook.....	31.3%

**Comment:** These are approval ratings for the various forms of renewable energy listed, with solar panels on all new buildings just in the lead (with many comments saying they should be on most older buildings too!) closely followed by Marine Current Turbines which were particularly popular in communities along the Bristol Channel coast. There was twice the support for offshore wind turbines like the Atlantic Array off Lundy than the onshore version which were consistently relegated to bottom of the poll in all parts of North Devon.

**"Do you support Government proposals for new nuclear power stations, probably next to existing ones such as Hinkley Point in Somerset?"**

Response	Percentage
Support	42%
Oppose	21%
Unsure	38%

**Comment:** People who said that Environmental Issues were much more important to them were split down the middle for and against a new nuclear power programme. A significant number everywhere were unsure on the issue and will need to be convinced on issues such as security and storage and disposal of nuclear waste. More debate is needed on our future energy supplies and conservation.

© 2008

## 12.3 Malpractice: Wider area 'consultation'

12.3.1 Bolsterstone, in common with other companies trying to develop wind farms, is not averse to casting a wider net in an attempt to overpower local resistance so as to claim majority support for its wind farm proposal when the application is submitted. As stated in paragraph 12.1.1, PPS22 observes:

*'For most people, renewable energy generation will only become a big issue when they can relate actual proposals to a particular geographical area.'*

Another way of phrasing this very accurate observation is:

*'Most people will be prepared to allow a reasonable degree of renewable energy generation providing it does not adversely affect their own quality of life or the value and marketability of their homes, and providing that it seems to be a worthwhile, cost-beneficial project.'*

To put this more bluntly, for many people, as long as they cannot see or hear the turbines, they are not bothered. These are the people Bolsterstone are seeking to give support to their projects by going outside the immediate area.

12.3.2 In seeking support for its Newlands Wind Farm project next to the small village of Cumwhinton in Cumbria, Bolsterstone was approaching people in Carlisle City Centre and asking them to sign up as supporters of the project. The Whitehaven News covered the story (<http://www.whitehaven-news.co.uk/1.207553>):

## **ACTION GROUP'S ANGER AT WINDFARM FIRM'S TACTICS**

***By Thom Kennedy***

*Last updated 13:10, Tuesday, 22 July 2008*

**An action group has accused developers of 'underhand' practices in gathering support for a windfarm.**



*Go with the wind: The stand in the city centre supporting the windfarm proposals*

*Bolsterstone plc, the company behind the Newlands Windfarm on the edge of Cumwhinton, put up a stand in English Street, Carlisle, yesterday and today where they have offered passers-by the chance to sign a letter in support of the development.*

*However, Alison Stamper, chairwoman of the Newlands Windfarm Action Group, said she felt such activity was unfair. She said: "Stopping random people who have no idea about the development and who haven't put time into looking at the site is a very underhand way of doing things. I have done it myself – when you are stopped on the street you will sign anything. They have got a matter of minutes to say 'do I want to sign this or not', you are just pressured into signing something you have not even thought about. I was most annoyed and disgusted with their approach."*

*Formal plans for the site were recently submitted to Carlisle City Council. The project's director Mike Corker said: "I don't see why they are not happy with this. The people who are there have all the environmental information with them including copies of all the data that went to the planning office, and photomontages. They can show people the nature of the development and people who attend can go into as much detail as they require."*

*The letter which people were being asked to sign was addressed to the planning officer dealing with the proposal, and asked people to state they were expressing 'strong support' for the wind farm.*

*Mrs Stamper added that her group had been distributing information on the plans, and were asking people to make an informed decision.*

12.3.3 It was all to no avail. The combined might of Consense's Open Debate system and Bolsterstone's street canvassing resulted in 1 petition and 1,303 letters (84.4%) **opposing** the wind farm and only 242 (15.6%) supporting it. This is within 0.1% of the result of the Ruby Country survey shown above.

**12.3.4 Bolsterstone did the same thing for its Reeves Hill application, where it was signing up supporters in Leominster, 20 miles away, and got the same angry reaction.**

The Leominster Journal carried this story on 3rd September, 2008 (<http://www.herefordshirejournals.com/2008/09/03/angry-shopper-fears-turbine-gold-rush/>):

***Angry shopper fears turbine 'gold rush'***

*As angry feelings continue to grow over plans for a wind farm in North Herefordshire, moves to get a thumbs-up from shoppers in Leominster have only added fuel to the fire.*

*Amid allegations that the controversial plans for a wind farm on Stonewall Hill near Lingen could lead to something of a "gold rush" in the area, there are accusations that the applicants, Bolsterstone plc, have set up information points for collecting signatures more than 20 miles away in Leominster.*

*One woman who was approached in Corn Square by two men with a range of information and photo-montages of the four proposed 105-metre turbines, claims they told her that Leominster was a "really good spot" for raising the issue. She alleges they told her they could "get more people to sign than they could in the areas where the turbines are going to be".*

*The woman fears that if the wind farm gets the go-ahead from Herefordshire Council, it will set a precedent and the development could spark something of a "gold rush" in the area. She claims this "absolute gold rush" will have "nothing to do with renewable energy". She adds: "It's simply about money, a staggering amount of money and it's a financial scandal."*

*The woman, who refuses to be named claiming she fears reprisals if she speaks out, is angry at what she describes as the style and technique adopted by two men representing Bolsterstone plc during a street consultation on the*



subject in Leominster's Corn Square recently. "I was shown photographs of the landscape with four tiny wind turbines and commented that you could hardly see them," she reports. She said that one of the representatives replied: "They are hardly noticeable and most people find them attractive." Asking them to identify the area, she received a reply that the name 'Presteigne' was "just some small village in Wales". She continued: "I asked if the locals were aware of the development and they said yes, absolutely everyone has been informed and there are just a few 'whingeing locals' who, as usual, are just trying to spoil it for everyone else."

Letters of support have been submitted to Herefordshire Council as a result of setting up an information point in Leominster on June 5 and 6, where a range of photo-montages and maps of the proposed site were displayed.

Replying to accusations that the Stonewall Hill application could lead to a local "gold rush", Bolsterstone plc's development manager Mike Corker told the *Journal* that it would not set a precedent. "Every application is a separate application and is judged on its merits," he said. "Because of the 'cumulative visual impact' it would be difficult to come up with a case for having turbines in another part of the valley." Mr Corker added: "One small wind farm can actually be protective to the landscape view." He said that due to the very limited grid connection, it was very unlikely that further developments would be in the pipeline.

On the question of why an information point was set up in Leominster, Mr Corker said: "We did go to Knighton and Presteigne but there weren't many people about, so by going to Leominster we picked up more people. "A stall gave environmental information plus photo montages and people came to look at that information."

12.3.5 The tactic of employing activists to get people further afield to sign up in support of specific wind farm projects, as described in paragraphs 12.3.2 and 12.3.4 of this report, **has been used by Bolsterstone in this application too.**

12.3.6 On Wednesday, 21st January, 2009, the same activists who set up a stall in Leominster appeared with their stall in Holsworthy market (photo below). It was reported to DTOG that they had been running the stall in Hatherleigh market the previous day as well.



Holsworthy Market 21st January, 2009

12.3.7 There is nothing illegal about this activity, but the 'facts' about wind power, specifically in relation to the Dunsland Cross proposal, being promulgated at the Holsworthy market stall do not accord with those presented in this report. Accordingly, people who are most unlikely to be affected in any way by this application are being asked to sign up in support, under possible misapprehension of the issues, and on the spur of the moment.

12.3.8 As the press reports in paragraphs 12.3.2 and 12.3.4 show, this tactic of gaining support for a proposal is regarded as underhand and serves only to generate anger in those who will be most affected by the proximity of these turbines to their houses. The people of Hatherleigh, 10 miles away, will certainly not be affected by this wind farm.

12.3.9 TDC planners should, therefore, scrutinise any letters of support written on the proforma below very carefully to verify authenticity:

Date:

Mr R Williams  
Torrige District Council  
Community Planning & Development Services  
Riverbank House  
Bideford  
Devon EX39 2QG

Dear Mr Williams,

Dunsland Cross Wind Farm, Planning Application No: 1/1263/2008/FUL

I am aware of the location and scale of the proposed Dunsland Cross Wind Farm and am writing to express my **support** for the development.

I support this proposal for the following reasons:

Please register my support for Dunsland Cross Wind Farm.

Yours sincerely,

12.3.10 Bolsterstone's employment of activists to canvass in the wider area may still not be gaining it enough support for its projects. On 24th May, 2008, Bolsterstone's Amy Woodgate sent a letter into the Ecozine website (<http://www.ecozine.co.uk/talk3.htm>) pleading for support from anyone and everyone in the world:

*'24th May 2008*

*Get the wind up*

*Dear Eco,*

*We all know that Wind Energy needs OUR energy for promoting this valuable resource to an often 'NIMBY' public, and I would like to ask for your help and support with this.*

*We have a planning application being submitted to Herefordshire Council on 19th May for a four turbine wind farm at Reeves Hill (the site straddles the borders of Herefordshire & Powys), you can find more details at [www.reeveshillwindfarm.co.uk](http://www.reeveshillwindfarm.co.uk). I would be grateful if you could show your assent of wind power by writing a letter of support to Herefordshire Council; a*

*posted letter would be preferable, but communication via email is accepted by the Council as long as it comes from a personal email address and contains both your name and private address.*

*I'm sure you already have plenty to say about the benefits of wind power, but I thought I would include a few comments in case anyone is short of inspiration! If you do decide to use any of the points below, please edit slightly so as not to repeat phrases/fonts/etc – we want your letter to stand out...*

Miss Woodgate then gives 11 reasons to support the proposal, the application number and deadline date and the name and address of the planning officer to whom letters should be sent. Then she finishes her letter as follows:

*We would love to create a 'ripple effect' to show that not everyone is against wind power, **please please forward this onto anyone who you think may be interested in writing a letter of support for this cause - friends, business contacts, family, people in your organisation, the man you sit next to on the bus every morning!***

*In anticipation and summary; thank you so much for your valuable input, help and support.*

*Kind Regards,*

*Amy Woodgate,  
Bolsterstone Plc*

12.3.11 This section has shown that Bolsterstone is prepared to trample on the opinions of the people who will be most affected by approval of this application, the local residents, by seeking support from those whose only interest in the project might be a concern for climate change or energy supply. With this in mind, however, people in Holsworthy market were not being told that the Dunslund Cross Wind Farm will only supply the equivalent of just over **15 hours** worth of electricity generation **per year** (compared to Didcot A power station which will be kept spinning in reserve anyway) or that this 'green' electricity will add £956,600 to people's electricity bills every single year for 25 years. Nor were they told that more carbon dioxide could be saved from entering the atmosphere by taking **1 single jumbo jet** out of service for **11 days** than can be saved by running this wind farm for a whole year. (See sections 3.1, 3.2 and Appendix C for justification of these claims).

## 12.4 The Community Newsletter

12.4.1 In October, 2008, Bolsterstone released its community newsletter to 1,938 homes in Dunslund Cross, Brandis Corner and the much wider area beyond. It repeated selected snippets from the website, most of which have been shown to be misleading, inaccurate or untrue in this document. It also included two of the unacceptable photomontages (see Section 3: Misleading Claims).

12.4.2 Of particular interest in the newsletter was this note:

*There are copious constraints governing the siting of a windfarm. It is unlikely to be granted planning permission if any of the following constraints are present:*

- *Predicted impact on wildlife habitats*
- *Excessive visual impact'*

Both of these have been shown to be significant in this document (see Section 4: Impact on Wildlife, Ecology and Biodiversity and Section 3: Misleading Claims). Thus, by Bolsterstone's own acknowledgement, this application should not be granted planning permission.

12.4.3 This section of the newsletter was reproduced on a display board at the public exhibition **with one very important extra criterion left in by mistake: 'close proximity of dwellings'**. This is explained further in paragraph 12.5.5 to 12.5.7 below.

12.4.4 Also of interest was Bolsterstone's promotion of its intended community benefit fund. This would provide £4,000 per turbine for each of the 25 years of the project. This is down from the £5,000 per turbine on offer in the earlier Newlands Wind farm proposal but more than the £3,500 per turbine on offer in its latest project to go live: the Fewcott Wind Farm. What Bolsterstone failed to say is that this community offering will be just 1.67% of what it intends

taking from the taxpayer **each year** in terms of the 19,132 Renewables Obligation Certificates it hopes to claim, worth approximately £50 each (the subsidy payment driving this application).

12.4.5 Goodwill payments such as the proposed community benefit fund have recently been the subject of analysis. In the December 2008 edition of '*Fieldwork*', the publication of the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England, it is pointed out that goodwill payments only seem to arise in relation to planned wind energy development. They are not addressed through the Section 106 process as benefits would be with most, if not all, other forms of new development. The recommendation is that these payments, promised outside the planning system, should be outlawed. Energy companies should be required to work through the planning process in the same way as any other developer.

#### **12.4.6 Recommendation: CONDITION**

**The proposed community benefit fund should be made the subject of a Section 106 agreement so that it is fully transparent and open to full public involvement.**

### **12.5 The Public Exhibition and the Paper Survey**

12.5.1 Notice of the two 4-hour sessions for the public exhibition on 24th and 25th October, 2008 were given on the website, in the community newsletter, in a press release and advert in the local newspapers and on small posters placed on noticeboards in the area.

12.5.2 DTOG was present for the duration of both sessions. In paragraph 14 of the Statement of Community Involvement, Bolsterstone estimates that 100 people attended the exhibition over the two sessions. This is inaccurate. Approximately 160 - 180 people attended in total, the uncertainty in the number being caused by people returning a second or third time to challenge claims made to them in their earlier visit. The questioning of visitors on exit suggested that many more people opposed to the wind farm attended than did those who supported the proposal. The main support seemed to come from the family and close friends of the landowner.

12.5.3 A much shorter version of the website questionnaire was available on paper to complete at the exhibition. Question 1 from the website questionnaire, criticised in paragraph 12.2.12 above, had been split into two separate questions in this version. Not many people were seen to be completing this paper questionnaire. They may have been put off by the request to supply their names and addresses in Question 9.

12.5.4 DTOG reiterates the point made in paragraph 12.2.17 above. No result has been given for this questionnaire. Either the opinions expressed were overwhelmingly against the wind farm proposal or there were so few response forms completed that the sample number was too small to be conclusive. DTOG does not think the latter explanation can cover for the lack of support for this project. True supporters would have gone out of their way to complete a response form or would have been encouraged to do so by the staff on hand at the event.

12.5.5 As stated in paragraph 12.4.3 above, on a display board at the exhibition reasons, under the headline, 'Why Here?' was an additional statement:

*'There are copious constraints governing the siting of a windfarm. It is unlikely to be granted planning permission if any of the following constraints are present:*

- **Close proximity of dwellings**

12.5.6 This prompted a lively debate between Robin Stockman of Bolsterstone and a DTOG researcher, who asked why Bolsterstone's 600 metres minimum distance rule, promoted as good practice in its Reeves Hill application, was not being applied at Dunsland Cross. No satisfactory answer was given.

12.5.7 That the '*close proximity of dwellings*' criterion appeared on the display boards at the exhibition was a breakdown in communications between Bolsterstone or Arcus and Consense. Consense had already been told to remove this criterion from the community newsletter for Dunsland Cross and it had obediently done so. In Bolsterstone's Reeves Hill application, where it is trumpeting the fact that the minimum distance between any turbine and any dwelling is 600 metres, the '*close proximity of dwellings*' criterion remained in the list in the community newsletter. Because Bolsterstone wished to conceal the fact that the Dunsland Cross turbines will be too close to dwellings it had to have this criterion withheld from local residents. Pictures of the two newsletters concerned can be seen in Section 2, paragraph 2.4.9 of this report.

12.5.8 Representatives from Torridge District Council's Community Development Committee attended the exhibition as did Geoffrey Cox, Q.C., M.P. DTOG notes that no personnel from Consense were present at the exhibition.

## 12.6 The Public Meeting

12.6.1 A frequent question at the exhibition was, 'When is the Public Meeting?' The reply that there was not going to be any Public Meeting came as a great surprise to many. It was a response not acceptable to Torridge District Councillor Mrs. Gaye Tabor who engaged Mr. Corker of Bolsterstone in a long discussion about it.

12.6.2 The outcome of that discussion was that Mr. Corker said he would be prepared to agree to a Public Meeting providing it was chaired properly and the questions were sent to him in advance so that he could bring experts to the meeting to answer them. He made it clear that he thought such a meeting was unnecessary and that in his opinion he had done as much as was statutorily required in the way of public consultation for this application.

12.6.3 Cllr. Tabor then set about making preparations for a public meeting. Geoffrey Cox was willing to make time in his busy schedule to chair the meeting. DTOG notes that he attended the Public Meeting for the Wheeler's Cross Wind Farm proposal in Sutcombe Village Hall on 29th June, 2007.



Geoffrey Cox attends the Wheeler's Cross Wind farm Public Meeting at Sutcombe Village Hall. Also in the photo are (left to right) Mr. Vickram Mirchandani of Coronation Power, Mrs. Margaret Coles (Chair), Devon County Councillor Des Shadrick and Torridge District Councillor Bob Hicks.

12.6.4 The fact that Coronation Power was quite prepared to hold a Public Meeting and Bolsterstone was not says something about the different approach adopted by these two companies to public consultation.

**12.6.5 In a final demonstration of its contempt for local public opinion Bolsterstone submitted its application for the Dunsland Cross Wind Farm on Friday, 12th December, 2008. It did so in the hope that much of the 21-day public response period would be lost in the Christmas and New Year holiday break, and before arrangements for the Public Meeting were finalised. Thus the door on any final opportunity for the public to make its feelings known to the company was closed. Planning for the Public Meeting was, therefore, eventually abandoned.**

12.6.6 In paragraph 2 of the Statement of Community Involvement is the comment:

*'The views of interested parties have been important to the project in the development of the scheme and detailed consultations with local residents, key agencies and opinion formers in the development of a windfarm at Dunsland Cross have informed the formulation of the Dunsland Cross Wind Energy Scheme planning application. Given that the Developer has implemented a detailed consultation strategy on the proposed scheme in line with best practice it is felt that this merits reporting to the Council as part of the planning application.'*

From the point of view of local residents whose lives will be adversely affected by this development, the obvious delusions of the applicant merely add insult to injury.

#### **12.6.7 Recommendation: REFUSAL**

**Bolsterstone's willingness to engage the local population in meaningful and productive dialogue has fallen short of best practice requirements as stated in PPS22. For this reason Torridge District Council should take note of this disregard for local opinion and reject the application.**

#### Summary of this section:

Bolsterstone's public consultation has not reflected industry best practice nor the recommendations in PPS22.

The proposed community benefit fund should be made the subject of a Section 106 condition.