

PRESENTATION BY RON WILLIAMS

Birmingham 9th September 2010

1. Hello I am Ron Williams and I live with my wife Jill at the northern end of the Lake District, which has been our home for 36 years.
2. I have a number of issues with regard to how the nearby Wharrels Hill development is disturbing my life, but I must limit my presentation to concentrate on how the impact of noise from these turbines has affected the quality of our lives and those of friends and relations who visit or stay at our home.
3. We live 833m (1/2mile) North of the turbines so when the wind is from the SW quarter, the resulting relentless, repetitive, swoosh, swoosh, swoosh, as each blade breaks the wind flow past a tower, three times a revolution, is extremely stressful. The frequency of the swooshes, being similar to the human pulse-rate, is one of which the individual is very conscious and involuntarily your mind constantly attempts to correlate the two and you just await the next agonising swoosh. This incessant low volume regular beat is totally unbearable – which amounts to mental torture. At night, when the ambient noise level from traffic on the nearby A595 is low, the effect is obviously worse. Being a serious claustrophobic and asthmatic, I can't sleep with the bedroom windows closed, so, in an attempt to alleviate the problem I have been prescribed sleeping tablets. Obviously, the effect of these is time-limited, therefore, should I need to get out of bed during the night, the suffering starts again. On almost a third of nights my sleep pattern is completely disrupted and I awake totally un-refreshed.
4. Importantly, one has to consider problems of possible addiction from taking this drug due to prolonged use or overuse and take into account not being able to drive a car, the dangers of operating DIY machinery, or using sharp knives etc., for some time after taking this medication. In addition, should it be necessary to undergo emergency medical or dental surgery, with the necessity for anaesthesia, serious complications could arise due to the possibility of overdose or contraindications.

5. The mental anguish caused by the assiduous, extremely low frequency beat which can last for several hours when the turbines are generally facing the prevailing wind, is a massive problem over which we have no power. In fact, our lives are being controlled by machines – how weird is that?.
6. Operators argue that turbine noise levels are within legal limits recommended in ETSU-R-97 and in some cases that may be true. Conversely there are many documented instances showing that it is not so, where overbearing noise level are quite insufferable.
7. The problem is that noise perpetrated by these ever larger structures can never be truly predicted as, with wind speed and its direction, their size, design and their location relative to each other, all have a bearing on the noise output from the site. The latter is important as often, ‘micro-siting within a 50 m radius is allowed. which could influence the wake effect of the turbulent air from one machine affecting another or others. Therefore it is only once operation begins that real problems emerge.
8. Should an ordinary industrial unit generate such noise levels, the 1990 Environmental Protection Act could be triggered but amazingly turbine owners/operators appear immune to this.
9. In 2007 Salford University concluded its ‘Survey into Noise from Wind Turbines’ which revealed comparatively few complaints I suggest that should a similar survey be repeated, a higher proportion of issues would come to light due to increased size of turbines and because of publicity surrounding the noise problems, ‘neighbours’ are more aware of what noise issues exist and how to recognise them.
10. However, it is not the volume of sound, measured by a meter, that troubles me, but its very nature. It is the constant, quiet, almost whisper level, repetitive beat from the movement of each blade of a turbine that causes so much annoyance.
11. It is interesting to note that in publicity put out by one developer, Wind Prospect, quotes “ **a well designed wind cluster ensures there will not be any noise nuisance**”. Therefore by definition, Wharrels Hill, as in the case of many other industrial wind energy sites, could not have been well designed or maybe a good old ‘Porky’ is being told!

- 12.** This type of low frequency rhythmic sound, just above silence, was, and is, allegedly, used as a form of torture. This is what I suffer: torment and despair. Each evening, even before retiring, I agonise, wondering if ‘they’ will torment me when I go to bed. This anxiety is not pleasant and is something I can do nothing about.
- 13.** When I go to bed, I lie awake for about ½ an hour anticipating the need, to yet again, ‘pop’ a pill. Could anyone in this room accept this as a proper and satisfactory way to live?
- 14.** Twelve years ago, an ambulance was delayed in arriving to attend my wife’s father. Thus I formed the first Community First Responder team in the North of England. When we moved to our present home, I subsequently formed another team. Following the commissioning of Wharrels Hill I had to retire from responding due to acute sleep deprivation. After a call-out, when one’s adrenaline was at a high anyway, plus the turbine noise, made it almost impossible to sleep using just one tablet, so it meant doubling the dose. This, I decided, was not the route down which I wanted to go. So a year ago my wife and I reluctantly withdrew our services from this life-saving project.
- 15.** In her book ‘Wind Turbine Syndrome’, Nina Pierpont, suggested certain sounds from wind turbines can cause tinnitus, headaches, nausea, lack of concentration, etc. I’m able to associate with regard to concentration, being aware that mine has been seriously affected. Prior to Wharrels Hill operating, I was a Daily Telegraph crossword addict and also compiled crosswords for local newspapers. Since the turbines came on stream I cannot now concentrate to do either.
- 16..** I keep a daily diary of the problems I suffer and for 2009 (324 nights), I was affected on 105 occasions (32%) and took some 163 tablets which is 50%. Meaning, on average last year, I had to resort to taking a sleeping tablet every other night.
- 17.** In January 2008 I wrote to the local Chief Planning and Environmental Health Officers detailing my problems. The former never acknowledged my letter even though a telephone call confirmed its receipt.

- 18.** The Environmental Health Officer, having had sight of my ‘noise diary’, asked when sound monitoring equipment could be placed at my home. When I enquired how long this gear could be left in situ, she said “48 hours”. I responded that: being worse than the BBC at weather forecasting I was not able to say when the wind would blow, be it from the right direction or with sufficient strength and that her time-scale may be rather short. It was decided I would contact her when it was thought a suitable period of weather was imminent. Obviously, with the unpredictability of Lakeland weather, I was left in an impossible position, so that monitoring never happened.
- 19.** At a similar time, I had made contact with the site operators - Wind Prospect who, eventually, sent an engineer to confer. He stated that nothing could be done about noise but maybe other problems could be addressed. In June 2009, Natural Power won the operating contract for Wharrels Hill and again an engineer (one Mr Arthur Daly), came to see me and said he would speak to the site owners about my problems. Subsequently on 12th August last, some 14 months later, a company installed sound monitoring equipment at my home. For obvious reasons I do not await the outcome with positive anticipation! How could one take seriously the suggestion that noise reduction ear-plugs be used or shutters mounted on windows, in attempt to prevent shadow flicker? Each of these is a token treatment of the symptoms not a cure of the disease.
- 20.** I have attended many public inquiries and drawn attention to the fact that an inspector, having agreed conditions and decided to allow a development, then walks away assuming his job done and conditions will be fulfilled by the developer or enforced by the local authority. However, cost restraints on both parties means that the majority of complaints are probably considered low priority and, consequently, may not be resolved.

21. The physical and mental anguish, apart from the potential financial loss caused by the blight from the presence and operation of the turbines, is a problem which is unlikely to go away – for the 25 year life of the development at least. But that figure is in doubt as the ‘push for cash’ will almost certainly ensure continued use of the expensive 1000ton concrete bases by repowering using larger generating machines, with planning permission easier to obtain for sites classified as industrial. The outcome being that, probably, even more people are going to be seriously affected - some experiencing greater distress and disturbance than I. That is assuming, in the meantime, commonsense does not prevail and on-shore turbines either be more caringly sited or the whole concept abandoned. The situation is such that attempts to enjoy life can only be expressed as totally unreal and we have become extremely despondent about a situation over which we have no control. Indeed, the wind turbine owners/operators are influencing and dominating our lives in a most intolerable and indefensible way.

22. Everyone is entitled to enjoy a certain quality of life – a quality we enjoyed for the 5 years prior to the operation of the turbines but which now we are being denied. This human rights issue urgently needs to be addressed by local Development Panels, those conducting Public Enquiries, by Westminster and even the European Parliament. In fact Government ought, immediately, to instigate a moratorium on wind turbine arrays until developers and manufacturers can prove beyond reasonable doubt that these totally unacceptable concerns can be addressed and resolved to a standard acceptable to the public at large.

23. After listening to how my life has been so disturbed and about the inadequate reparation, I doubt that anyone here could truthfully maintain that such a lifestyle is acceptable. It is an existence which should not be imposed on anyone.

With that thought, I hope sincerely, in the future, none of you become victims of inapt turbines being inappropriately sited.

I appreciate this opportunity of sharing my woes and experiences with you and I thank you for your attention.