

Article from Berwickshire News (my emphasis).

Subject: Wind farms a 'serious concern' for council, Berwickshire News, 29 Dec 15

Wind farms a 'serious concern' for council

Attempts by council planners to safeguard the region from "inappropriate" wind farm developments have fallen on deaf ears at Holyrood.

Borders councillors have reacted angrily to having their carefully-considered policies on the siting of future turbines sacrificed on the altar of Scottish Government renewable energy targets.

The protection of the region's landscape and environment was enshrined in SBC's local development plan (LDP) – the land-use blueprint which will inform all planning decisions at Newtown over the next five years.

But despite that document having gone out to two rounds of public consultation, a team of three reporters from the Scottish Government's department of planning and environmental appeals (DPEA) has decided to re-write 90% of the policies relating to renewable energy developments in the region.

At its last meeting of 2015, the council heard that any challenge to these findings was unlikely to succeed and would only delay implementation of the LDP.

The reporters, having examined the plan's details for over a year, have told the council to draw up new supplementary planning guidance for renewables and declared that planning applications for such developments should be approved "provided there are no significant adverse impacts".

However, they make clear this guidance must "accord" with national planning policy and they stress the role of local authorities in meeting Scottish renewable energy targets, namely that 30% of overall energy demand must be met by renewables by 2020.

A critical assessment of the reporters' conclusions was given by SBC's planning policy manager Martin Wanless.

"What is recommended is a generic policy which could be applied to any planning authority in Scotland," reported Mr Wanless. "It has no affinity with the Borders, nor is it customised to respond to local issues. It provides no guidance beyond that already available within Scottish Government planning policy."

Mr Wanless claimed the LDP had fairly and accurately acknowledged the need to balance wind farm developments with safeguarding the landscape and the environment.

"However, much of this text has been removed or diluted [by the reporters] and replaced by alternative text which appears to be slanted towards the promotion of renewable energy," he said.

Council Simon Mountford said the reporters had "ridden roughshod" over the views of many of local people. The council has agreed to express its "serious concerns" in letters to the Scottish Government.

