

18/2/24 QUESTION

TOURISM

RES have claimed that the Blair Hill Windfarm will not affect the local tourist industry. We do not believe this is true. We asked the following Question, it has yet to be answered.

Can RES issue an invitation to BIGGAR Economics to send someone to the next CLG meeting to speak as an expert on the effects of wind farms on tourism?

When the Blair Hill project pops up as a topic of conversation in and around Newton Stewart, the subject of tourism always crops up. Most people think that the project will damage the Cree Valley landscape and make the area less appealing to tourists. The attraction of the area was well summed up in a recent trip advisor comment. "Beautiful scenery and woodlands, small lochs and plentiful wildlife. Of course, if you are there at night you may get a chance to see the wonderful stars. Popular place for cyclists but plenty of space for walkers."

There is genuine concern in the local community that, if it is ever built, the Blair Hill Wind Farm will shatter the above perception and cause serious damage to the local tourism industry. A simple tick sheet survey drawn up by DTBHP was placed in a few shops in Newton Stewart on 10th of February. It asked visitors to the area whether a large wind farm would make them; more likely, less likely, or make no difference to the likelihood of them revisiting Newton Stewart in the future. Of the 37 completed questionnaires collected in by 19th February 17 said no difference, and 20 said less likely. Our survey was far from scientific and cannot be relied on. However, it does prove that the local community are justified in being concerned about the effect of the Blair Hill Project on tourism.

In the December project update RES stated with confidence that "It has been consistently found that wind farms do not impact tourism. The BIGGAR Economics Report Wind Farms and Tourism Trends in Scotland (2021) found that while the capacity of wind farms had more than quadrupled over the study period, employment in tourism related sectors had increased by more than 20%. It found no relationship between tourism employment and wind farm development, at the level of the Scottish economy, across local authorities nor in the locality of wind farm sites."

RES has cited the BIGGAR Economics Report, as being "consistent proof" that tourism is not affected by wind farms. DTBHP consider that consistent proof requires reference to be made to several named and qualified attributable sources of evidence rather than one unidentified author working at BIGGAR Economics.

On close inspection the figures produced in the BIGGAR Economics Report for the Wind Farms near to Newton Stewart appear to be inconsistent with each other and completely wrong. DTBHP find it incredible that the BIGGAR Economics Report can suggest that over 2000 people work in tourism in the area around the Arecleoch Windfarm at Barrhill. While, suggesting that only 230 people work in tourism at the Mark Hill Wind Farm, which is literally next door, on the other side of Barrhill. The figures contained in the Biggar Economics Report do not appear to be credible.

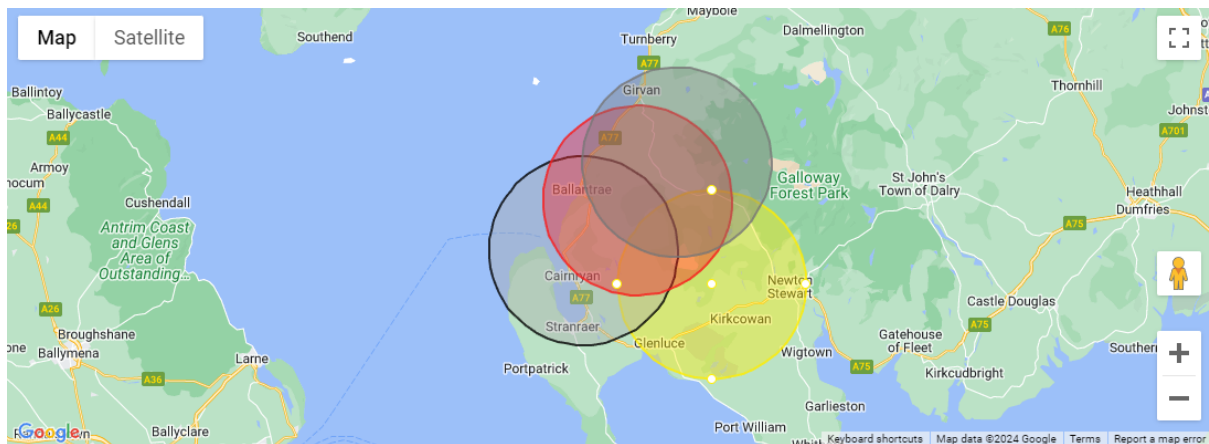
In order to shed some light on this DTBHP asked a local student to analyse the BIGGAR Economics Report. These are his findings.

Wind Farms & Tourism Trends in Scotland: Evidence from 44 Wind Farms

From Biggar Economics Published: 2021

On the first page in the final paragraph, it states that "study areas were based on a 15km radius". This implies to me that in a 15km radius around each wind farm area is where the tourism employment data was collected from.

In tables 5-1 and 6-1 on pages 17 and 22 respectively there are 4 pertinent rows in the tables which are important to this information. In table 5-1 these rows are Airies Farm and Glen App and for table 6-1 these rows are Mark Hill and Arecleoch. The 15km radiuses of these windfarms are show below



- Black circle – Glen App
- Red circle – Arecleoch
- Gray circle – Mark hill
- Yellow circle – Airies Farm

In this study the information shows that in the surrounding area of each of these wind farms the tourism employment is as follows:

Wind Farm Area	Tourism Employment 2015	Tourism Employment 2019	Change from 2015-2019
Glen App	670	655	-2.2%
Airies Farm	375	405	8.0%
Mark Hill	110	230	109.1%
Arecleoch	2525	2125	-15.8%

From this data we can see that for both in 2015 and 2019 the sum of the tourism employment in Glen App, Airies Farm and Mark Hill is less than that of Arecleoch.

The study states the sum of Glen App, Airies Farm and Mark Hill for 2015 is 1155 and the sum for 2019 is 1290.

These figures are collectively both less than the 2525 and 2125 stated for Arecleoch. This is where we run into an issue as can be seen from the map above. Here we see that the zones for data collection for Airies Farm, Mark Hill and Glen App all overlap the zone for Arecloch. This suggests that the sum of the tourism employment in Airies Farm, Mark Hill and Glen App should be greater or equal to that of Arecloch but this isn't what we see.

This suggests that the method for data collection must have some flaws leading to these skewed numbers which could suggest that the study may be flawed all together.

DTBHP believe that it would be helpful if RES could arrange for an expert to attend the CLG to help narrow the gulf in understanding that clearly exists between many local people and RES on the potential impact of the Blair Hill wind farm proposal on local tourism.

Still waiting for someone from Biggar Economics despite agreement upon above at CLG Meeting that RES would arrange.