

What a windfarm shocker we're facing

LIKE many I was dismayed to discover the true nature of the Nuon proposal for the Swinford windfarm at the 'consultation' meeting on October 18 and 19.

The scale of the development is astounding - 18 turbines each 125 metres high. That's 2.5 times the height of the electricity pylons that currently cross the site or, put another way, just eight metres less than the famous Wembley arch!

I was amazed at the visual trickery used in the 'artist' impressions. The photos were taken with close foreground distractions and the sky colour specially selected to match the turbines' paintwork. Also the connection of the turbines to the National Grid (most likely at Magna Park) were conveniently omitted from the artwork.

Don't be fooled into thinking you won't be negatively impacted in Lutterworth, Gilmorton, North Kilworth, Stanford and even Rugby. The site is the highest point in south Leicestershire and the existing pylons on the site can be clearly seen from three counties.

I, like many others, was disappointed to find that none of those representing the development appeared to be employees of Nuon - there were PR men, engineers and environmental 'consultants' - but no executives or management decision-makers from Nuon. I wonder why? The contempt this shows for the affected communities

appalls me.

I was equally shocked to find that the planning application is expected first quarter 2008 but as yet no actual wind measurements have taken place on the site! Nuon's own predictions are that the site is 'marginal' but 'viable' - what they did not say was that this viability is based on the high level of subsidy and 'premium rate' charging currently available from the Government (at other UK windfarms this represents 60 per cent of revenue).

The indecent haste in rushing this application through may well be driven by Nuon's fear that such incentives may soon be reduced. Unfortunately such commercial considerations cannot be taken into account by our planning regulators.

Unless we unite and oppose this development we will quickly discover that we have a huge white elephant in our midst, contributing little to the reduction in global warming (each turbine saving roughly the equivalent of one HGV's CO2 emissions). It will add nothing positive to the local economy, but the vandalism to our countryside and negative impact on our lives will be irreversible.

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