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From:
Sent: 28 July 2014 18:47
To: DPD
Subject: Landscape Sensitivity Assessment SPD
Attachments: mjet.vcf

Thank you for your letter notifying me of the publication of this document, which certainly provides a lengthy, detailed and no doubt costly evaluation of the issues involved.

Its use as a decision support tool, (or rather the use of the SPD which it is intended to develop from it), may be limited since, at least in my view, there is an irreconcilable conflict between the need on the one hand to develop on-shore renewable energy sources, and on the other to preserve the quality and character of the largely rural Mid-Devon landscape. Using existing technologies, the former is always going to degrade the latter. Similar considerations apply to the large-scale use of agricultural polythene, it has economic benefits but it disfigures the countryside.

If economics permitted, a conservative approach might be to encourage smaller photovoltaic developments, maybe arranged linearly along field headlands, or other sites where the visual impact and the wholesale use of productive agricultural land is at least to some extent mitigated.

I am not proposing to weight the argument one way or the other, since I do not have all the necessary facts, or indeed the expertise, to do any meaningful cost-benefit analysis. Planning Authorities, including MDDC, have a most difficult challenge in making case-by-case judgements here especially in the knowledge that an Inspector may subsequently take a different view, with unwelcome cost implications.

One area which does not seem to receive sufficient attention is the question of de-commissioning. Were we considering nuclear or coal-fired installations that would be a very prominent factor, and indeed one which could frequently make or break the business case for proceeding.

One saving grace of both wind and solar is that the impairment they cause need not be permanent. At some future time, less visually intrusive means of power generation may be devised. At the planning stage, both the engineering plan and the funding model for the ultimate restoration of the target site should perhaps receive critical scrutiny if protocols for this are not already well developed.

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