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LEWIS WINDFARMS.

Written submission to the Inquiry per Stornoway Gazette, July 21, 2005.

I left Lewis many years ago and now retired have contemplated moving back to the island. This is now on the back-burner as no way would I purchase any property there if the island is to be desecrated by windfarms.

REGISTERED OFFICE : Where are the registered offices of Lewis Wind Power and Beinn Mhor Power? Are they in Lewis or somewhere else? If not in Lewis, why not?

JOBS: Great play and publicity is made by AMEC on the number of jobs that will be created. However, they have not stated the actual number of jobs or specific trades. Is Lewis to be sacrificed for the sake of a hundred or so 'Grease-spanner' jobs? Multi-nationals always promise jobs when they wish to develop on a green-field site but seldom do the number of jobs promised materialise. If they are not forced to actually state the number of jobs then once they obtain planning permission they can employ as many or as few as they wish. AMEC have failed to state how many permanent jobs there will be in Lewis. AMEC must know the total number they will employ and the trade disciplines. AMEC are a multi-national who well know the labour required before they would undertake any such project.

PERMANENT LONG TERM EMPLOYMENT: AMEC publicists and fellow travellers propagate the jobs that would be created. If they are so keen on creating long term employment in Lewis why do they not re-locate their Energy/Windfarm Division to Lewis? There are hundreds of Western Isles graduates scattered around the globe and I am sure some would return home if good long term jobs were available. With the world being a global village and industry being governed by micro-chips and information technology etc, could it not be as easy to have an office in Stornoway as in Southampton? Their plant will be in Lewis so why not the office jobs?

Locating this department to Lewis would possibly result in suppliers establishing plants in the area. Amec are going to make millions of pounds in profits from Lewis therefore they owe the island permanent long term employment.

RECRUITMENT : Will recruitment for the project be done in Lewis or from Amec's offices in England? Will interviews for workers take place in Stornoway? Will they advertise for labour in local and Scottish papers? What attempt are they going to make to attract emigrant islanders back to Lewis?

TRADESMEN: What trade disciplines will they be employing? Where are they going to get these tradesmen as there will be few of them in Lewis? Will they be importing their work force from all over the U.K. and overseas? How many outside operatives are they going to employ?

UNSKILLED: How many unskilled men/women will be employed?

TRADE TESTS: Will trade tests, such as welder-testing, be carried out in Lewis or on the mainland?

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TRAINING & SAFETY: Will a training and safety facility be set-up in Lewis? If not where will it be located?

STAFF: How many white collar workers will be permanently employed in Lewis? Will the wages, planning, material, technical and other relevant departments for Lewis Windpower be based in Lewis?

SUPERVISORS, FOREMEN, SUPERINTENDENTS : Where and how are Amec going to recruit these disciplines?

SUB-CONTRACTORS: Will Amec give preference to Western Isles firms for maintenance of plant and other work?

TRANSPORT: If Amec hire cars, lorries, vans and plant, will they be hired from island garages rather than mainland contractors?

ARNISH : The promise that the manufacture of wind turbines will be the salvation of the Arnish fabrication yard I find feeble. Amec may give orders for a few turbines but what then? With the extortionate air and ferry freight charges I cannot see how Arnish can compete with European or mainland yards. Anyhow the Europeans are years ahead in the manufacturing of wind turbines.

TOURISM : If as a result of the windfarms the tourist industry collapses will Amec or the government compensate the islanders?

HEALTH : Have any studies been done regarding the adverse effect windfarms may have on people's health and quality of life quality?

HOUSE PRICES : Will house prices collapse? This could lead to depression when people learn their property has little or no value?

GRAZINGS: As the turbines are being scattered across the moor it is obvious the crofters are going to lose a substantial amount of grazing. Will the crofters be compensated?

LEWIS MUTTON: Known for its flavour and a local produce. If there are fewer sheep as a result of wind turbines on the moor then mutton will have to be imported from the Scottish mainland adding to the cost of living in Lewis. Lack of sheep could also end the well known Stornoway black pudding!!!

ENERGY COMPANY : Why has the Western Isles council failed to set-up or assist in the setting-up of an energy company for the whole Western Isles ; e wind, wave etc. All the islanders would have benefited from such a venture.

POWER COST: Because energy is produced in Lewis does this mean the Western Isles will have less to pay for electricity? Cheaper power could attract some industry to the island..

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GLOBAL WARMING: According to Government statistics, the UK is responsible for about 2% of global CO2 production and Scotland approx. 0.2%. If we went green tomorrow the impact would be of little consequence in world terms. Why should we therefore blot our landscape, possibly ruin our tourist industry and wild life for minimal CO2 reduction?

LANDSCAPE : The windfarms in Lewis will desecrate a beautiful wild and rugged landscape. The loss of a superb landscape appears to outweigh the benefits of the feeble electrical power produced. I have viewed the small scale windfarm at the Glens of Foundland between Huntly and Inverurie and the turbines are hideous and can best be described as industrial graffiti on the hill. I understand some locals are already unhappy with the noise from the turbines.

SHARES: Will the Western islanders be given any inducement to buy AMEC shares? Will they have to pay the market price?

PROFIT: How much profit does AMEC envisage making per annum from Lewis Wind power? What percentage of this profit are they giving back to Lewis?

TAX: We read about the money the crofters will receive as a result of wind power development. How much of his money will the Chancellor of the Exchequer claw back in tax? Will this money be counted as unearned income?

SITE-CLEARANCE: What provision is being made to clear the turbine sites once production has ended? Will Lewis be left with an industrial wasteland strewn with rusting wind turbines?

ECOLOGICAL DISASTER: If an ecological disaster is caused by wind turbines or their installation has any provision been made as to who will pay for the damage? Will the Council, Amec or the government be responsible for all costs?

WILDLIFE: What is going to be the effect on wildlife? Many tourists are attracted to the islands to see the wildlife, birds and plants and I am sure the last thing they will wish to see are dead birds lying on the moor.

HILL WALKERS: Will hill walkers be banned from walking in the vicinity of the turbines? If they are, this will obviously result in fewer hill walkers coming on holiday to Lewis.

GOVERNMENT AID : How much government aid, grants or subsidies will AMEC receive to proceed with the wind farms? How much aid, grants etc has the government given to Amec since 1997 to keep open their fabrication yards in N.E. England or to assist to gain export orders? Since 1997 all the Scottish fabrication yards have closed down. However, the English fabrication yards are still open.

FARE & FREIGHT CHARGES: The extortionate air and ferry charges have more or less killed off any hope of industrial companies being established in the Western Isles.

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Few companies could survive this added cost and one suspects that the recent closures of fish farms are a direct result of the freight charges.

Norway introduced R.E.T. for their vulnerable peripheral communities years ago. If the British government had any desire to help industry in the islands they would have introduced R.E.T. here. Some of the subsidies and grants awarded to multi-nationals for various reasons would go a long way in alleviating the burden of excessive fare and freight charges imposed on the islanders.

NUCLEAR WASTE DUMP: Once the wind farms cease will the Lewis moor be used as a dump for nuclear waste? After years of secrecy Nirex has been forced to admit that their preferred options for nuclear waste dumps are areas of low population and they would not consider dumps in highly populated areas. With a low population density there would be few ethnic people around to challenge Nirex and one wonders if the depopulation of the Western Isles has been furtively orchestrated by successive Westminster governments to this end. Nirex have stated that for political reasons they would never consider Northern Ireland as a location for nuclear waste.

POLLUTION: Will there be pollution as a result of the wind farms? Who will be responsible for picking-up dead or wounded birds or wild animals in the vicinity of the turbines?

FISHING INDUSTRY: If successive Westminster governments (Labour and Tory) had any interest in providing employment and sustaining the population of the Isles they would have assisted Western Isles fishermen to develop the deep waters north and west of the Hebrides. Today not one boat from the Western Isles has a quota to fish for herring or white fish in our own territorial waters. However, EU trawlers with the blessing of the British government are taking thousands of boxes a week from our fishing grounds and not creating one job in the Western Isles. Kinlochbervie, Ullapool and Lochinver are now virtually fishing ports for Spanish and French trawlers; landing sometimes 14,000 boxes a week at these ports. The British government is not interested in our only raw material, fish, creating jobs in the Western Isles, in fact one wonders if the government has abandoned the Western Isles and lost interest in the people there. In 1909 around 12,000 people in the Western Isles were employed in the fishing industry but very few today except a few scratching for prawns or working at salmon farms.

EASTERN EUROPEAN TRAWLERS: I understand that our government has now agreed with the EU that new members; Poland, Lithuania and Estonia, be given quotas to join the other EU fleets to fish our waters. We have no quotas in their waters?

EU FISHING GRANTS FOR LANDLOCKED COUNTRIES: Though not reported in British newspapers I believe the UK has agreed that the EU give grants to landlocked Hungary, Czech Republic and Slovakia to develop their fishing industries. These countries never even owned a trawler and do not even have a coast line. They will obviously be given quotas to fish our waters.

Why did the U.K. government not make any effort to get EU grants to train Western isles fishermen and financial aid to buy new boats? Around 60% of the edible fish in EU waters are in the seas around Scotland. Catching and processing this fish would create a lot more jobs than windfarms.

POPULATION DECLINE: Despite the hype, by windfarm supporters the proposed Amec development is not going to halt the depopulation of the Western Isles. How many island graduates will be employed by AMEC on a permanent basis? . We are told the south-east of England is grossly over-populated, yet the government does not make any effort to reduce the population in the area. These days administrative and office jobs could be done in Lewis just as efficiently as in London, so why does the government not transfer a couple of thousand civil service jobs to the Western Isles to sustain the population? Because they have little or no interest in the Western Isles.

WESTERN ISLES – ICELAND: A study of variation in the population of Iceland and the Western Isles shows how our population has rapidly declined over the last hundred years. In 1891 the Icelanders numbered 70,927 and the Western Isles had 44,987 inhabitants. Today the population of Iceland is over 270,000 whereas the Western Isles has declined to around 25,000. There is something far wrong when there is such a disparity in these population figures. The populations of Iceland, Norway, Faeroes and Ireland are all increasing while that of the Western Isles and Scotland is declining fast. What is the reason? Some people are now of the opinion that the Brit establishment may have a hidden agenda that to preserve the Union the population of Scotland has to be kept at a manageable level. The Clearances, heavy losses in wars, promotion of emigration and creating unemployment forcing Scots to leave the country have all resulted in the diminution of the Western Isles and Scottish population. In the last twenty years the Western Isles suffered the largest population decline since the Highland Clearances. If the government desired they could easily halt the depopulation.

NATIONAL INTEREST: Some people who have never seen a windfarm have stated that in the national interest we must have wind farms in Lewis and Scotland. I think this will ring very hollow with Lewis people who are well aware of the *'sacrifices for the national interest'*, with no reward, made by their kith and kin in the two World wars and in other wars over the last two hundred years.

When I hear politicians or others evoking the national interest to support their argument for wind farms in Lewis I am reminded of the statement by a Lewis ex-serviceman who lost many relations at sea, in the army and in the air in the two World Wars: *"Who did my relations die defending? Certainly not this place. We were used as cannon fodder to defend the financiers in the City of London. For our loyalty and heavy losses in the wars successive British governments, Labour and Tory, in peace-time have rewarded us with unemployment or emigration. In 1919 Admiralty negligence even drowned over two hundred island naval reservists coming home from World War 1, some bonus for their dauntless war service. Many of the island villages that provided the 'War Heroes' are now derelict. To add insult to injury the Westminster government has handed our fishing grounds over to the European fishing fleets.*

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Not one boat from the Western Isles has a licence to fish for white fish yet the Spaniards and French are landing thousands of boxes from our waters. The politicians in London have forgotten that it was mostly fishermen and their sons who manned the convoys in the two World Wars. Our Islands would be better off today if Hitler had won the war, at least our derelict villages would be populated though many may be German. We would certainly be a lot better off if the Western Isles were still under Norwegian jurisdiction; we would have missed being used as cannon fodder in Britain's wars and the Highland Clearances and today we would have a large and viable fishing industry."

ELECTRICITY FOR ENGLAND: I believe that Scotland produces enough electricity for our needs. If more power is required in England why not build the windfarms on the Cotswolds Hills or other open areas in the south of England such as Land's End. Not only would this mean power would be nearer the heavily populated areas in the South East but there would not be any need to cover Scotland with ugly transmission lines to take the power south.

POINTS RAISED: I do not belong to any group that is pro or anti windfarms. However, I feel the issues raised should be answered before the Isle of Lewis is eclipsed by windfarms, making millions of pounds for financial speculators and inevitably leading to the extinction of our culture, heritage and the destruction of our landscape.

Donald J. MacLeod

