



Damned if you do; damned if you don't! Agree with wind farms, that is.

According to a report published in the Journal of Applied Ecology, the operation of wind farms does not cause significant damage to bird species, although damage can be caused during the construction phase. So a good thing, then. On the other hand, there are a lot of people who wish to see the legacy of the Bronte sisters preserved who are horrified by the prospect of a wind farm being built on Thornton Moor, near Haworth, a plan that featured in the environment news recently. Who could argue with that, you might think. Well, the developers and some members of Bradford Council, for a start.

Looking out through the window of the room I use as an 'office', the tips of a number of wind turbines are just visible over the top of the fell on the other side of the valley. They are part of a development of 26 turbines spread across a hillside, which dominates the landscape around it and is visible from the opposite side of Manchester – about 30 miles away.

It is without doubt an impressive structure. It has always, also, been controversial. To many the sight of the turbines high above Rochdale (for it is Scout Moor Wind Farm I am describing) has blighted the landscape. To others it is the wrong answer to the problem of energy production. In their eyes the answer is to use less energy and produce it on a more localised and smaller scale. Such was the vision of the Church of England when it threw in its lot with solar power; a vision shattered by the ending of the feed-in tariff (although there are enterprising solar installers in this vicinity – and probably to be found in the Environment Directory of this site – assuring potential customers from the side of their vans that solar is still a lucrative option).

I was never so categorical. Many years ago during a college vacation I spent a few weeks working at a quarry on Scout Moor. No beauty spot then, it was still a haven for wild life. Like on military ranges, the fact that periodic explosions kept the people away meant the birds and small mammals were left to themselves.

Later I resided in a flat downwind of the Ferrybridge power station and passed both that and the huge complex at Drax on a weekly basis. When the NIMBYs of the village of Edenfield waved their placards against Scout Moor I rather mean-mindedly thought they should have spent a bit of time living near a real, dirty power station. That thought did not make the environment news pages.

So there you have it: wind farms are a good idea in principal and make a lot of sense in renewable energy production. They are also intrusive and can spoil cherished landscapes. Like all these things, common sense is needed to determine their location and scale – something that is going to be sadly lacking in the near future because a ‘presumption in favour’ of development is already skewing the outcome.

Chris Stokes