

THE CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

**Proposed Windfarm at Felin Wynt,
nr Llanbadarn Fynydd,
Powys**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

CPAT Report No 518

Proposed Windfarm at Felin Wynt, nr Llanbadarn Fynydd, Powys

ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

R. J. Silvester
March 2003

Report for Mr O Lewis

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CPAT Report Record

Report and status

CPAT Report Title Proposed Windfarm at Felin Wynt, nr Llanbadam Fynydd, Powys

| | |
|--|--------------------|
| CPAT Project Name at Felin Wynt Windfarm | |
| CPAT Project No 1039 | CPAT Report No 518 |
| Confidential (yes/no) Yes | draft/final Final |

Internal control

| | name | Signature | date |
|-------------|----------------|-----------|------------|
| prepared by | R.J. Silvester | | **/03/2003 |
| | | | |
| checked by | N.W. Jones | | **/03/2003 |
| approved by | R.J. Silvester | | **/03/2003 |

Revisions

| no | date | made by | checked by | approved by |
|----|------|---------|------------|-------------|
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Internal memo

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9.1 INTRODUCTION

- 9.9.1 In November 2002 the Contracts Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust was invited by Dulas Ltd (of Dyfi Eco Park, Machynlleth), on behalf of Mr O Lewis of Abergwenlas, Llanbadarn Fynydd, near Llandrindod Wells, to undertake an archaeological assessment of the proposed site of a small windfarm within the Windworks programme.
- 9.1.2 The purpose of this archaeological assessment was to establish the nature of the archaeological resource within the boundary of the proposed windfarm, and also to assess the impact of the proposal both on archaeological sites in its vicinity and on the historic landscape. A further purpose was to recommend mitigation measures where the proposed development was likely to have an impact, whether direct or indirect, on the archaeological resource.

9.2 GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

- 9.2.1 The proposed windfarm, comprising a group of three turbines, falls within a defined area (henceforward termed the proposal area) of 0.61 km². It is centred at SJ 105594, a little under 5km to the south-south-east of Llandrindod Wells in central Powys.
- 9.2.2 The proposal area extends over a portion of an undulating north to south ridge in the northern Radnorshire Hills between the River Ithon to the west and the River Teme to the east. This area achieves a maximum height of around 453m above sea level (OD) towards its northern end, and is a few metres lower at its southern extremity. Slightly higher ground rises to the north-east and south-east. Together, these hills form one of the frequent upland ranges that distinguish the former commons of central Powys.
- 9.2.3 Felin Wynt is now divided into a series of large rectilinear fields which bear little evident relationship to the natural landforms. Post and wire fences are the norm except where the proposal area runs down to meet older enclosures in the upper reaches of valleys where earthen boundary banks are still in evidence.
- 9.2.4 The soils on the ridge appear to fall within the Wilcocks 2 Association of seasonally waterlogged loamy upland soils, often with a peaty surface horizon (Soil Survey of England and Wales map and legend; Rudeforth *et al*, 1984, 253).

9.3 METHODOLOGY

- 9.3.1 The proposal area, and thus the area of the assessment, was initially identified by National Wind Power in conjunction with Mr O Lewis as a block of land defined by modern land boundaries, although on the north and north-west these boundaries have been modified by the landowner in the very recent past. Its extent is depicted on the accompanying plan (Fig 9.1).

- 9.3.2 The methodology adopted for the assessment consisted of an initial desk-top study of readily available, primary and secondary sources. The main basis for the study was the data held in the regional Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) which is maintained by the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust at Welshpool in Powys, and equivalent material held in the National Monument Record (NMR), a department of the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments in Wales (RCAHMW) in Aberystwyth. Information from the former was derived by a written enquiry, while the latter was searched by the writer, the RCAHMW also providing access to vertical aerial photography held by themselves and by the Central Register of Air Photography for Wales, a section of the Welsh Assembly in Cardiff. The National Library of Wales (NLW), also in Aberystwyth, was searched for relevant material, both documentary and cartographic, but particularly the latter. The material sources that proved to be relevant to the study are detailed in Section 9.10, below, as are the printed works that were consulted.
- 9.3.3 The search for information was restricted to those repositories listed above, as these were considered to be the primary sources of information likely to be relevant to the study, and the available resources did not permit a comprehensive examination of documentation in other, smaller archives which may contain potentially useful material.
- 9.3.4 A second element of the assessment was a field survey. This allowed both a review of those sites and features already known to exist, and also a record to be prepared of any new sites encountered during the walkover survey. Such was the extent of the proposal area that it was not possible to examine all of it methodically in the time available, but it was possible to assess satisfactorily that part of the proposal area where the turbines are to be sited. It was not possible, either to examine known sites of archaeological and historic landscape interest beyond the boundaries of the proposal area, and the records of these given in Appendix 1, part 2 are derived in part from the information held in the regional SMR and the NMR.
- 9.3.5 A visual search was also made for areas which might contain surface deposits that could have a palaeoenvironmental potential. It is evident that peaty soils do exist across the ridges and the saddles between them (see also para 9.2.4, above), and there are some boggy areas, particularly to the west and south-west of the former farmholding of Coventry where deeper pockets of peat may exist.
- 9.3.6 The survey was carried out on foot and consisted of an examination of the area in a systematic manner. Wherever possible, regular transects were walked, and the field pattern was such that the ground could be covered in this way in as an efficient a manner as possible. The sites of archaeological and historic landscape interest which were discovered during the survey were located with reasonable accuracy by establishing the relative positions of the sites to mapped boundaries and where necessary by the use of hand-held Global Positioning System (GPS) equipment.
- 9.3.7 All of the sites recorded by the desk-top and field survey assessments were entered into a Foxpro database and, where appropriate, mapped in relation to the proposal area using the Mapinfo software package. It should be noted that if there are any important archaeological sites identified within the proposal area these are defined by zones of archaeological sensitivity on Fig 9.1. This treatment has, however, not been extended to comparable sites outside the proposal area as it has to be assumed that there is no likelihood of any disturbance to these sites under the

current proposals. Other archaeological sites are distinguished by a single dot which gives no guide as to the overall size of the site that it denotes, while linear features, if present, are indicated by lines.

- 9.9.1 Only those archaeological sites which are within, or relatively near to, the proposal area have been shown on Fig 9.1. An extract of the information within the database is included in this report as Appendix 1: Part 1 of this appendix refers to sites within the proposal area, and Part 2 to sites around the proposal including some that fall beyond the limits of Fig 9.1 but may be useful in providing some level of context to other known sites.
- 9.9.2 A simple numbering system, based on existing Primary Record Numbers (PRNs) as used in the regional Sites and Monuments Record, has been adopted. Features, newly identified during the desk-top and fieldwork phases of this study, have been attributed new PRNs, courtesy of the curatorial section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust.
- 9.3.10 The importance attributed to each site which has been identified in the proposal area and its locality is given in Appendix 1. Sites have been graded in importance from A to E, adopting the following criteria which are based on those used in the Department of Transport's 1994 *Design Manual for Roads and Bridges* (Volume 11, Section 3, Part 2).

Category A - Sites which are statutorily designated as being of national importance under the *Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act* of 1979, or those considered by us during the current work to merit such a designation.

Category B - Sites of regional importance; these are not of sufficient importance to merit a statutory designation but are nevertheless of particular relevance to the understanding of the archaeological resource of the region.

Category C - Sites of local importance; these are considered to be of lesser merit but are nevertheless useful in understanding the archaeological resource of the local area.

Category D - Damaged or minor sites which are of interest but which, due to their condition or nature, are unlikely to provide much significant information on the archaeological resource of the area.

Category E - Sites which could not properly be evaluated from the information revealed by this assessment. Some form of further assessment may be required to ensure that these sites can be properly assessed; otherwise, specific mitigation which takes into account the uncertainty of the results of the evaluation should be considered.

9.4 RESULTS OF THE ASSESSMENT: THE ARCHAEOLOGY

- 9.4.1 The study of archaeological sites and landscapes in this area, here termed Felin Wynt, has a relatively long history. Castell-y-blaidd has been known for many years, and the settlement earthworks that shelter to the south-west of it were researched by Cyril and Aileen Fox more than fifty years as part of their classic elucidation of medieval platform sites (Fox and Fox 1949). It should thus come as no surprise that that this area is heavily populated with traces of past human activity. Ten sites had previously been registered in the regional Sites and Monuments Record and in the National Monuments Record for the proposal area, together with a significant number of others in the vicinity. Desk-top analysis and fieldwork have identified a further two features, not all of which have surviving visible traces, and others nearby.
- 9.4.2 Prehistoric sites, largely in the form of cairns and barrows of probable Bronze Age date (say third millennium, or early second millennium BC) are quite common. Two lie to the south-east of Coventry, outside the proposal area (PRNs 1960 and 4168), while a fine example (PRN 1912) is surrounded by a modern fenced enclosure on the edge of the proposal area. Others probably await discovery on adjacent hills. There is also some evidence of broadly contemporary occupation. When the field to the north-east of Castell-y-blaidd was ploughed in the 1960s, various worked flints were collected from the ploughsoil, indicative of domestic activity (PRNs 1024, 6338, 6339 and 6340). From these various sites and artefacts it is evident that there was a reasonable level of prehistoric settlement and burial in the vicinity, perhaps in the later Neolithic and certainly in the succeeding Bronze Age.
- 9.4.3 Settlement later in the prehistoric period is evidenced by Castell-y-blaidd (PRN 1098). Slightly atypical in its form, this earthwork is generally classed as a small hill-top fort of later first millennium BC (Iron Age) date, although it should be stressed that there is no independent dating evidence to confirm this attribution.
- 9.4.4 There are no visible traces of activity on Felin Wynt during the Roman era and immediately succeeding centuries, but in the medieval period the area was again frequented by farming communities, leading to the construction of several platform settlements with their associated enclosures (PRNs 3489 and 7038). Another possible platform (PRN 64224), also certainly occupied only in the summer months, was located during the fieldwork element of this study. Whether these were permanent farms, or as seems possible, were occupied on a seasonal basis is unclear, but these are typical and well-preserved examples of a kind that are relatively prevalent in the hills of Radnorshire. During the medieval centuries it is highly likely that much of Felin Wynt was open 'waste', used for hill grazing but not for cultivation and certainly not enclosed.
- 9.4.5 In the post-medieval centuries - perhaps from the 17th century but certainly during the 18th century - there was an increasing level of human activity on and around Felin Wynt. Small farmholdings and cottages were established in the valleys and sometimes at stream heads, many of them the result of encroachment and enclosure. Fields bounded by earth and stone banks, trackways edged by similar banks, and small homesteads were all imposed on what had been a previously open landscape. In the valley of a tributary of the Gwenlas Brook, to the west of the proposal area, was Hollybush (still shown on modern Ordnance Survey maps), Castle and Tyn y Cwm. Coventry (PRN 64216) too shows on modern maps even

though little of the farmhouse remains, while within the proposal area was Newhouse, later perhaps called Castle Tump (PRN 64219) but nothing of this can now be traced.

- 9.4.6 The partial enclosure of the ridge to create pasture fields occurred some time after the 1830s, but the earliest published Ordnance Survey plans suggest the process was underway if not far advanced by the early 1890s. During the 20th century or perhaps the last years of the 19th century, many of the small steadings in the valleys and on the slopes were abandoned.

9.5 RESULTS OF THE ASSESSMENT: THE HISTORIC LANDSCAPE

- 9.5.1 That there is a historic landscape at Felin Wynt cannot be doubted, but it is in fact a mixture of several different periods: Bronze Age, Iron Age, medieval, post-medieval and very recent. None of these periods can be said to be dominant, and Felin Wynt is in fact a good example of a palimpsest, where human activity at different times has resulted in 'layers' being superimposed one on another, sometimes destroying but sometimes fossilising earlier layers, right up to the present where the modern wire and post fences that divide up the ridge constitute a modern layer. Just beyond the proposal area, it is however the post-medieval activity with its farms and fields that gives substance to the historic landscape.
- 9.6.2 Palaeo-environmental analyses such as pollen analysis might provide a framework for conceptualising the landscape of Felin Wynt through the centuries, but no such analyses have yet been undertaken. Currently all we can do is suggest that from the Bronze Age onwards, the landscape may have been relatively open, but periods of activity may have been interspersed with quieter periods when scrub and even tree cover returned.

9.6. □ PREDICTED IMPACTS

- 9.6.2 A significant number of archaeological sites lie within the proposal area, and the predicted impacts range from visual intrusion on the settings of monuments to the possibility of physical impacts by elements of the site infrastructure, including the turbines themselves. In the absence of full details of the infrastructure associated with the proposed windfarm (e.g. road lines, service trenches etc), the impact on all of the archaeology cannot be fully established at this stage.
- 9.6.2 Each site and any potential impacts will be dealt with in site PRN number order, below. A limited consideration of the impact of the proposal on the historic landscape setting has also been attempted.
- 9.6.11 **PRN 1024 Trefoel Finds 1. Category E.** One turbine lies extremely close to the presumed place of discovery of these finds, and the new access will also pass through this area. However, the precise location of the discovery cannot now be determined with certainty, and not surprisingly there is now no visible surface evidence.

- 9.6.11 **PRN 1098.** *Castell y Blaidd Hillfort. Category A.* The nearest proposed turbine is some 350m to the north-east but the access route will pass directly below this site, though there should not be any physical impact on the hillfort. There will, however, be a visual impact from the turbines as well as the roadway.
- 9.6.11 **PRN 1923.** *Cwm Rhos Goch Cropmark. Category D.* In view of the current thinking about this feature, any impact, which in any case is probably unlikely, would not be significant.
- 9.6.11 **PRN 2153.** *Castle Tump Mound. Category D.* As there seems to be no substantive archaeological basis for this record, no impact is anticipated.
- 9.6.11 **PRN 3489.** *Castell y Blaidd Settlement. Category A.* This complex of features lies well to the south of the turbines and is unlikely to be physically effected directly. However, they may be a visual impact, albeit a distant one.
- 9.6.11 **PRN 6338.** *Trefoel Settlement. Category E.* The same comments apply as for PRN 1024 (see 9.6.3 above).
- 9.6.11 **PRN 6339.** *Trefoel Finds II. Category E.* The same comments apply as for PRN 1024 (see 9.6.3 above).
- 9.6.11 **PRN 6340.** *Trefoel Finds III. Category E.* The same comments apply as for PRN 1024 (see 9.6.3 above).
- 9.6.11 **PRN 7038.** *Castell Y Blaidd Hafod. Category B.* This settlement site lies well to the south-west of the turbines and is unlikely to be physically effected directly. Despite its relatively sheltered position there may, however, be a distant visual impact.
- 9.6.12 **PRN 8950.** *Castell Y Blaidd Mound. Category D.* The nearest turbine is around 300m away so there not be any direct physical impact on this feature.
- 9.6.13 **PRN 64219.** *Newhouse. Category D.* No direct physical impact is envisaged on this site which is no longer identifiable from surface features.
- 9.6.14 **PRN 64224.** *Castell Tump platform. Category E.* This feature lies well to the south-west of the turbines and is most unlikely to be effected in any way by the proposals.
- 9.6.15 The impact of the windfarm proposal on this landscape must also take account of the view both from and to monuments in the immediate environs of the proposal area, with specific emphasis being placed on any monuments that are statutorily protected through scheduling and those which are considered to be of similar national (*Category A*) or regional (*Category B*) significance even though they are not statutorily protected. In addition to those monuments that are scheduled and lie within the proposal area, there are other archaeological features of sufficient importance to be considered under this heading. The Coventry barrow (PRN 1960) is already scheduled, while the Ty'n y Ddol Hill Barrow (PRN 4168) and the Cwm Rhos Goch Barrow (PRN 1912) though not presently scheduled are considered to be of national importance. All the turbines will probably be visible from these barrows, with the visual impact being most marked on the Cwm Rhos Goch Barrow because of its proximity to the the turbines.

9.7 PROPOSED MITIGATION MEASURES

- 9.7.1 A range of mitigation measures for the significant number of sites identified in the last section is proposed to reduce or negate the impacts which have been predicted in the previous section. These range from a proposal for a watching brief to the careful control of any ground works and are dealt with in site number order, below, in the same way as the previous section. There are also impacts which are not specific to any single site, and suitable methods of mitigation for these are considered briefly in paragraph 9.7.24, after the mitigation responses for site specific impacts.
- 9.7.2 It is assumed that all turbine construction works will be limited to those areas defined in the proposal. Any subsequent alterations to the turbine positions and the determination of the infrastructure that links them will inevitably necessitate a reconsideration of the impacts and mitigations proposed here.
- 9.7.3 **PRN 1024** *Trefoel Finds I*. Nothing is known about the significance of these finds, and indeed their precise provenance is uncertain. It is likely however, that the most southerly turbine and the access track for the windfarm will be placed in their general area. In mitigation, a full archaeological watching brief must be maintained during all groundworks.
- 9.7.4 **PRN 1098**. *Castell y Blaidd Hillfort*. There is no obvious physical threat to this monument, but there will be a visual impact which can not readily be reduced without fundamental changes to the layout of the windfarm.
- 9.7.5 **PRN 1923**. *Cwm Rhos Goch Cropmark*. No mitigation is required for this feature.
- 9.7.6 **PRN 2153**. *Castle Tump Mound*. No mitigation is required for this feature.
- 9.7.7 **PRN 3489**. *Castell y Blaidd Settlement*. There is no obvious physical impact to this monument, but there will be a distant visual impact. It might be possible to reduce this by re-siting the most westerly turbine, but the others would probably still be visible.
- 9.7.8 **PRN 6338**. *Trefoel Settlement. Category E*. The same comments apply as for PRN 1024 (see 9.7.3 above).
- 9.7.9 **PRN 6339**. *Trefoel Finds II. Category E*. The same comments apply as for PRN 1024 (see 9.7.3 above).
- 9.7.10 **PRN 6340**. *Trefoel Finds III. Category E*. The same comments apply as for PRN 1024 (see 9.7.3 above).
- 9.7.11 **PRN 7038**. *Castell Y Blaidd Hafod. Category B*. No obvious physical impact to this monument is envisaged, but there will be a distant visual impact from at least one, and probably all three, of the turbines. It might be possible to reduce this but not to eliminate it entirely.

9.7.12 **PRN 8950**. *Castell Y Blaidd Mound*. No mitigation is considered to be necessary here.

9.7.13 **PRN 64219**. *Newhouse*. No mitigation is considered to be necessary here.

9.7.14 **PRN 64224**. *Castell Tump platform*. No mitigation is considered to be necessary here.

9.7.15 There is a possibility that sites which have only sub-surface traces, and are comparable with PRN 1024 and others, are present within the area of the proposal. If any such site is present, there is a potential that elements of the site might be disturbed during the initial ground works which precede construction. In order to provide some mitigation for this potential impact, a watching brief should be carried out by a properly qualified archaeologist during ground works (as per para 9.7.3), with the aim of properly recording any archaeological features which are revealed. The archaeologist carrying out the watching brief must be allowed a reasonable time to carry out any necessary archaeological recording before the recommencement of site works.

9.8 CONCLUSIONS

9.8.1 As a result of the archaeological assessment the following conclusions can be drawn:

- there are a significant number of archaeological sites and historic landscape features within the proposal area and more in the immediate vicinity;
- several sites within the proposal area and some in its vicinity are either scheduled sites or sites of equivalent importance;
- on present evidence the proposed turbines will not have a physical impact on any of the known archaeology, but will have a visual impact on many monuments, of both national and regional significance. The impacts might be marginally reduced by radical re-siting of the turbines towards the northern end of the proposal area, but are unlikely to be removed completely;
- the proposal lies in a landscape area of considerable historical interest, where there is a mix of prehistoric (Bronze Age) and post-medieval settlement and agrarian features, the latter predominating;
- not all the details of the infrastructure associated with the windfarm were available at the time that this study was undertaken, and it is therefore impossible to assess their impact on the known archaeology; and
- one archaeological response to the proposal is thus the careful design of the windfarm layout which prevents physical disturbance to any of the monuments and necessitates minimal disturbance to the existing historic landscape, coupled with a watching brief during construction works.
- due consideration must be given to the presence of scheduled monuments within and adjacent to the proposal area. Consultation with Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments at any early stage is recommended.

9.9 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

9.9.1 The writer would like to thank the staff of the following repositories for their help and assistance:

The Regional Sites and Monuments Record held by Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust at Welshpool;

The National Monument Record administered by the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments in Aberystwyth;

The National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth.

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