

Windpower and the historic landscape

Jonathan Lovie and John Clark, GHS Conservation Officers

The Government has provided powerful incentives to businesses seeking to become involved in renewable energy schemes. 'Alternative energy' looks set to develop into a highly lucrative industry both through a generous grant regime & changes to planning policy.

It is not surprising, therefore, that The Garden History Society has seen a steady increase in the number of applications for the development of wind farms, and for smaller-scale individual turbine projects. Clearly the potential impact of turbines standing often 100m or more high in elevated landscapes is enormous; and it is not only the potential visual impact of the structures which has to be considered, but also impacts from noise, shadow flicker and reflectivity.

English Heritage guidance in *Wind Farms & the Historic Environment* states that 'the effect of wind farm developments on the setting and visual amenity of historic buildings, monuments or areas should be fully evaluated in determining planning applications.' This is also a view upheld by the Planning Inspectorate in several decision notices.

Experience has shown that applications for wind farms (whether at pre-application or application stage) are often documented in a less than clear manner, with the impact on the historic environment in general, and registered landscapes in particular, played down. Schemes frequently abut or even straddle planning authority boundaries, making a coordinated approach difficult if not impossible, especially where the respective authorities have different attitudes to the proposed development. In one case, that of the **Reeves Hill Energy Scheme** in Herefordshire, members may recall that the application was very close to the Welsh border and affected a Grade I registered site, **Stanage Park** in Wales, as well as **Brampton Bryan** and potentially other registered sites in England. The cynical might conclude that some promoters of wind farms have adopted a principle of 'divide and rule' when planning their schemes.

John Clark has recently handled applications for three separate wind farm developments on the Isle of Wight. Here he describes two of these cases. His assessment points both to the way in which applications for this kind of development

tend to 'cluster' in concentrated areas, and also to the high level of cumulative impact these schemes could have in an area such as the Isle of Wight. He also reports on a much smaller-scale, but never the less potentially harmful 'micro-generation' scheme in Devon. JL

Cheverton Down

Earlier this year the Isle of Wight Gardens Trust alerted The Society to an application for wind turbines at **Cheverton Down**, which would be 125m high and 1000ft above sea level. Although the Isle of Wight Council regularly consult the GHS, unfortunately they failed to carry out their statutory duties in this case, so I wrote to the Head of Planning Services to remind him that the GHS should be consulted on planning applications which affect all grades of registered landscapes, including their setting. In my letter I said that the Society is extremely concerned about the potential adverse visual impact of these proposed 125m high wind turbines on the setting of five registered historic designed landscapes and urged the Council to refuse consent.

The wind turbines would be visible on distant views from **Swainston**, the Worsley Monument at **Appuldurcombe Park** and the blades would be visible from **Westover Park**. The most seriously affected would be **Northcourt**, just 1 mile away from the application site.

Northcourt is one of the earliest manor houses on the Isle of Wight. It was bought by Richard Bull in 1795 and his daughter Elizabeth made the most significant contribution to the landscape, in the late C18 and early C19. Horace Walpole was a friend of Richard Bull, and had a great influence on the design of the Northcourt landscape. Walpole introduced Bull's daughter to the ideas of William Kent and these are thought to be her likely inspiration for the re-landscaping of Northcourt. The landscape works extended to the distant owned views as an essential part of the overall designed landscape.

The 125m high turbines would be on top of the ridge above Northcourt and so would be visible from more than half of registered landscape, and 40% of the views. The proposed wind turbines would

Christmas & New Year 2009/10

The Society's offices in London and Edinburgh will be closed from Friday 18 December, reopening on Tuesday 5 January 2010.

dominate the landscape to the northwest of Northcourt. In view of the close proximity of Northcourt, I expressed surprise and disappointment that the applicants only carried out a desktop 'zone of visual impact assessment'. As we considered that the impact of the proposed 125m high wind turbines has not been fully evaluated, we suggested that balloons are flown for all three Turbines so that their impact on the historic landscapes can be fully assessed.

Span Farm, Ventnor

In July the Isle of Wight Gardens Trust alerted The Society to another application for proposed turbines which will also affect Appledurcombe. Again we expressed concern about the adverse visual impact of the proposed wind turbines on the setting of the registered historic designed landscapes and suggest that the application should be refused.

Bicton, Devon

As a Grade I registered site, Bicton is in the top 10% and is of international importance. The designed landscape at Bicton Arena had been severely damaged since the 1950's and we worked closely with the local planning authority, English Heritage and Clinton Devon Estates to secure a comprehensive scheme for new offices for the applicant which included substantial conservation benefits. Clinton Devon Estates applied for planning permission for one wind turbine to provide power for their new offices. We considered that the applicant had not taken in the impact of the turbine on the historic landscape and advised that the application be refused. Planning permission was granted but, interestingly, Clinton Devon Estates did not proceed with the wind turbine because the cost benefits simply did not stack up. JC

'Going green', but at what cost?

The South and South West are by no means alone in facing development pressure for wind energy schemes. In Northamptonshire we have two schemes under consideration

at present, one of which would be close to the as yet-unregistered (but clearly registerable) landscape at **Kelmarsh Hall** with its associations with Norah Lindsay, Geoffrey Jellicoe and Nancy Lancaster; and the other which would affect two Grade I landscapes at **Boughton** and **Drayton**, and the Grade II **Wicksteed Park**. Another scheme in Leicestershire would affect **Stanford Hall** (Grade II), and further proposals in Bedfordshire have the potential to affect some twenty-five registered sites. This is the tip of the iceberg, and gives a mere hint of the scale of problem we face in assessing applications for this type of development.

'Going green' and supporting renewable energy generation is fine; but if such potentially damaging schemes are to be given a preferential status within the planning system (and unfortunately the draft *PPS15* lends itself to this interpretation), the Government ought to balance this by an acknowledgement of the positive benefits 'green spaces', including historic designed landscapes, can make to mitigating the effects of climate change and global warming. JL

GHS Winter Lectures

February & March 2010

We are delighted to announce our London Winter Lecture Series for 2010, with our Eighth GHS Annual Lecture at the RHS, to be given by international garden archaeologist **Brian Dix**.

For full details see the enclosed leaflet/booking form. **For members only:** please note the considerable discount offered if you book your ticket(s) in advance, non-members full price.

**The Trentham Estate:
A Contemporary Revival**
Michael Walker

6.30pm, Wednesday 3 February

**Paradise of Exiles:
The Anglo-Florentine Garden**
Katie Campbell

6.30pm, Wednesday 10 February

**The Temptations of Using Archaeology
in Historic Gardens**
Brian Dix

6.30pm, Wednesday 17 February

**Affliction Brightened by Hope:
The Evolution of the
English Cemetery Landscape**
Jonathan Lovie

6.30pm, Wednesday 3 March

Discovering Gilbert White's Garden David Standing

6.30pm, Wednesday 10 March

GHS Events

Spring & Summer 2010

Study Day at Chiswick House Saturday 20 March, 2010

Just before it re-opens its gardens to the public after closure for restoration, we meet in Chiswick House to hear talks by **Richard Hewlings**, **David Jacques**, **Jonathan Lovie**, **Tim Richardson** and head gardener, **Fiona Crumley**, followed by a guided tour of the garden after lunch. Price: £39, students: £30, includes lunch & other refreshments. Please note that numbers will be restricted by reason of the limited capacity of the house so early booking with the enclosed form is recommended.

Reputations

The GHS at the Garden Museum
6.30 for 7pm on Wednesday 8 April

The Museum's retrospective of Christopher Lloyd will be the backdrop for a debate about the reputations of great gardeners and garden designers after their death. In comparison to artists and architects the reputations of gardeners and garden designers have a uniquely short and uncertain 'half-life' in posterity. Why does Gertude Jekyll cast such a shadow over the present but Valerie Finnis and Cedric Morris have been all but forgotten? Will future generations do justice to Rosemary Verey? How does this ephemeral status impact upon the conservation of designed landscapes, particularly in changing urban environments or in gardens characterized by their planting. **Penelope Hobhouse**, **Dominic Cole**, GHS Chairman, and **Christopher Woodward**, the Museum's Director, will discuss the notion of heroes and heroines in the world of gardening. Price: £10 for GHS/GM members; non-members: £15. Paying Bar. Contact: Jessica Turtle at the Garden Museum: 02071418865 ext *822 or send your cheque (with SAE) to her at: Events and Hire Venue Manager, Garden Museum, London SE1 7LB

GHS Study Tour: Gardens of Persia
Friday 23 April to Thursday 6 May, 2010
as described in *NEWS* 84

There are still places available on the Iran Study Tour. To take part in this wonderful experience, please contact Daniel Moore of Distant Horizons: 0151 625 3425 or info@distanthorizons.co.uk

Study Tour to The Gardens of the Channel Islands

Friday 4 to Thursday 10 June, 2010

This 6-day tour explores the gardening and horticultural heritage of the Channel Islands, an archipelago blessed with wonderful natural scenery, fine gardens and a favourable climate, enabling an extraordinary range of plant materials to grow. Starting in Jersey, the 'Floral Island', the tour continues to Guernsey, from where we'll take excursions to the nearby islands of Sark and Herm. As well as seeing a large and varied selection of public and private gardens, including **Sausmarez Manor** and the walled garden at **La Seigneurie** on Sark, we'll also visit the wildflower meadow at **Le Noir Pré**, which should be at its best in early June, and enjoy a tour of the **Eric Young Orchid Foundation**, where unique varieties are still bred. A feature of this tour is the large number of specially arranged visits to private gardens that rarely open to the general public, where participants will have the chance to meet and talk with garden owners, some of whom are among the Channel Islands' most well known gardening personalities.

The tour is limited to 22 participants and will be led by Jeff Sainsbury, who organised this year's GHS Study Tour to Brazil. Cost: £1415. This includes: return flights from Southampton (local airport departures are available at a supplement); Jersey to Guernsey flight; entrance to gardens; coach transportation on Jersey and Guernsey; ferry excursions to Sark and Herm; and accommodation in well-located four-star hotels based on double occupancy (sea view rooms are available at a supplement), with all breakfasts and six other meals. The single supplement is £180. For a booking form and further details, including the itinerary and information on flight options from local airports, please contact Jeff Sainsbury, the tour operator, on info@jeffsainsburytours.com

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