

Summary of Oral representations by Peter Foulkes (Reg. Identification no. 10029824)

Landscape and Visual Impact

Quality of Pumlumon landscape

I read from two extracts; the first was taken from Dr Jim Perrin, *'Spirits of Place'* published in 1997. Jim Perrin is a well-known writer on natural history and landscape issues as well as *Guardian* columnist (Country Diary).

"The recurrent theme of these hills of mid-Wales is spaciousness, and Pumlumon expresses it to perfection. The quality derives from a general levelness of the mid-Wales plateau, the way it stretches away in rolling solitude, the tucked-awayness into deeply-incised valleys of human habitation, the fewness of the roads, the way soft outlines lead your eye inevitably into distances. On this fine August day, despite cloud to the east and an overall haze, I could still see the Longmynd and Brown Clee Hill in the Marches with England and Cadair Idris stretched and reclining along the horizon to the north. Nearer at hand little flashes of silver were Bugeilyn and Glaslyn, lakes of the eastern approaches to the hill around whose margin bog-oak starts from the peat. The valleys of Severn and Wye thread away along their different routes toward England; I followed mine to the dilapidated O.S. pillar and shelter cairn."

And the second from Mike Parker's book *'The Wild Rover'* published in 2011. Mike Parker is a well respected author and radio/TV presenter on landscape, maps and travel.

"The Severn Way is the path that attempts to follow the river from its source on Pumlumon, a mountain disguised as an upland sponge, squatting like a fat, dripping toad in the very middle of Wales. On any old map, from the fourteenth-century Gough Map to those derived from the Tudor splendours of Saxton and Speed, Pumlumon is shown as Snowdon's equal, despite being only the 49th-highest peak in Wales. It wasn't the physical reality of the mountain being mapped, but its reputation; a place to bewilder and disorientate invaders coursing into Wales from the east. It's likely too that such cartographic prominence was a nod to the birthplace of two great national rivers, the Severn and the Wye."

Low number of walkers recorded on site

I read out an extract of a notice (posted at gate GR SN828.868, where the Wye Valley Walk/BW48 enters the site from Hafren Forest). This notice is unwelcoming and discouraging even to experienced walkers. A photograph of the full notice is reproduced as Appendix A.

Maps and GIS on landscape quality

In previous contributions to the enquiry I have, to some degree, questioned the over-analytical dissection of our countryside by landscape architects – I don't (and I am sure the majority of visual receptors' don't) see; *visual & sensory, cultural, and geological* layers – I see the whole landscape rather like the landscape artist – with its elements arranged in a coherent composition.

But I would like to draw your attention to the GIS system of Dr. S. Carver of the Geography Dept. at the University of Leeds. His team, I think in collaboration with the John Muir Trust, created a Wild Land Map of Scotland, using data sets such as proximity to roads and closeness to large man-made structures. His maps were very influential on Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) in producing their wild land map of Scotland which

Scottish Government have built into planning legislation, to prevent further inappropriate developments in high quality landscapes.

I believe that Dr. Carver's team are working on a similar map for Wales and that NRW are cooperating – providing data sets. NRW may be able to provide you with details of this in relation to Pumlumon but I believe the map is at an early stage. But, when complete, I believe the map will describe a holistic view of the high quality landscape of Pumlumon and its attendant valleys and ridges.

Cultural Heritage

Here I referred to the Bronze Age element of the Nant y Eira mine just off-site. I suggested that mines need miners, miners live in communities and communities make landscapes. This, in my non expert opinion, was a Bronze Age landscape.

PRoWs

Here I raised the issue of a blocked footpath on the proposed development site – FP139 at GR SN834.854, blocked by a fence and a deep ploughed plantation.

Grid Connection

Here I commented to the effect that residents of east Montgomeryshire are very concerned about the Stage 3 section of the mid-Wales connection. It is causing great public concern!

Stage 1 Connection

At the ASI on 16th March 2015 I asked if we could look down the Afon Hore as I believed that the grid connection passed down this valley. I was then told by the Mynydd y Gwynt team that the grid connection did not go down this valley but would roughly follow the vehicle track we were using on the ASI. Now, on checking MyG's Environmental Statement F.1e4 (September 2014), Figure 17.10, Map 1 of 4, Option 2, it shows that the grid connection corridor does indeed pass down the Afon Hore valley. NRW have been doing a great job removing conifers along this valley, planting native broadleaved trees, trying to increase biodiversity and improve amenity value (including picnic benches) as the Wye Valley Walk runs down the valley.

Concluding comments

I love Pumlumon and despite looking like a harsh landscape it is a delicate ecosystem which cannot cope with further damaging developments. I have walked and climbed in mountain ranges across the World but I always return to Pumlumon. Why? Because it is something rare in our overcrowded islands – a quiet and wild landform. I want to read a short extract from 'A High and Lonely Place', by Jim Crumley, a well-respected Scottish writer. He wrote this in 1991 some ten years before the Cairngorms was designated as a National Park.

“Many of the worst exploitations in the Cairngorms have been justified on the basis of their piecemeal nature in relation to the vastness of the landmass. It is like trying to justify changing the eyes and mouth of the Mona Lisa to make her frown on the basis that only a tiny percentage of the canvas has been tampered with. The elements of the Cairngorms – river valleys, pine and birch woods, marshes and moors and lochs, foothills, passes, corries and plateaux – are the interwoven fragments of a landscape tapestry of many and rare distinctions. Deface one fragment and the uniqueness of the whole is also defaced. As threads are torn so the weave unravels. It sounds a simplistic conclusion to draw, but it is true and fundamentally relevant because, now as never before, a formidable array of forces are ranged against the Cairngorms landscape.”

I believe that exactly the same is true of Pumlumon and the Cambrian Mountains as we have not yet achieved protected landscape status.

Appendix A

Photograph of notice (posted at gate GR SN828.868, where Wye Valley Walk/BW48 enters the site from Hafren Forest.

