

North Wales Wind Farm Connection

Response by Robin Barlow (Your reference: 10031190)

Response to Issues raised in the issue specific hearing Landscape and Visual Impact on 30 September 2015

Who really ends up paying for the Overhead Pole Line in Cefn Meiriadog ?

SP Manweb argues against undergrounding for reasons of cost. But, in Cefn Meiriadog it is the local homeowners who are paying for SP Manweb's decision through a loss in values of their properties. In fact this loss of value is about the same as the additional cost of undergrounding the last 1km through Cefn Meiriadog. So without being asked, they are being forced to bear the cost of undergrounding without having its benefits.

Many people move or retire to Cefn Meiriadog for the tranquility and recreation such as walking, riding or cycling. The OHL with its overbearing superstructure crosses the popular walk, cycling and riding route around the "Bryn", that also uses the old track from Plas Hafod to Trebanog. The poles and end poles will now dominate a beautiful section of this loop and reduce the attraction of homes on this loop. The worst affected are the homeowners on the road past Plas Hafod kennels who will now interact with the poles on their every journey from their homes. It is bound to influence the desirability of local houses and thus their market values will fall.

Just taking into account two groups of houses within 500 metres of the poles, we have a market value of around £5 million and a probable conservative loss of value of £400,000. Enough to pay for the undergrounding of the last 1km through Cefn Meiriadog, bearing in mind that SPM is additionally taking down and undergrounding an equally long section of 33KV OHL so as to be able to overground the 132KV line through Cefn Meiriadog.

Before concluding with the list of houses and values I wish to note that undergrounding this section would remove the impact of the OHL on the heritage building Plas Newydd. To further support the view that undergrounding here would be a better solution, I would like to quote two paragraphs from the Report of the Planning Inspector into the Llandinam connection (part of the evidence to this inquiry). He recommends refusal of that OHL due to its impact on a heritage site, unless that section is undergrounded:

714. I consider for the above reasons that the proposed development is not consistent with policies relating to electricity networks infrastructure within the relevant NPSs.

718If the Secretary of State grants consent for the entire route, contrary to my recommendation, that will need to be reflected in the definition of "development" by removing the reference to points A and B.

A fuller view of his findings are to be found in paragraphs 423 - 484 and from paragraph 706 on. Also interesting for me is 475, an option that SPM has never flagged..

To conclude, here is the list (in my view) of affected houses, their value and loss of value. The affected houses in Cefn Meiriadog divide into 2 groups:

1) Those at the north end with just a slight or possible view of the terminal pole. These would also have the 2 nearest and most popular walks from their houses spoilt by the last 4 pylon pairs. (both walks use the old lane next to the terminal pole). However, the NG 440kV line runs about 100m north of all these houses and is the much more visible feature. I think it is therefore appropriate to reduce their value by only 0-10%:

Format

House Name - distance to OHL - estimated value - % value reduction - comment

- i) Tyddyn Eos -250m- £350k- 10% -smallholding with outside barns with conversion potential (refused last time)
- ii) Groesffordd Farm -250m- £300k-5%- smallholding with outside barns, conversion potential £350k
- iii) Trebanog -250m- £300k-5%- bungalow with a second bungalow in construction
- iv) Bryn Arian -250m- £300k-5%- large bungalow
- v) Graig Lwyd -250m-£300k-5%- converted cottages on sale now
- vi) Pentre Mawr Cottage -400m-£150k-0%- rental cottage, not really affected
- vii) Pentre Mawr Farm -400m-£300k-0%- not really affected
- viii) Pentre Mawr Bach -400m- £400k-5%- large bungalow with extensive gardens towards end-pole
- ix) Pentre Mawr 3 Cottages -400m-£300k-0% not really affected

2) Those near the heritage building Plas Newydd. Here there are many pole sets to be seen and all properties but one have extensive views across the Elwy to Clocaenog and thus to most of the OHL. Hence both views and local walks will be changed, essentially stepping out of the house to a full frontal view of the OHL

- i) Plas Newydd Bach - 400m- £300k-5%- bungalow opposite Plas Newydd
- ii) Plas Newydd -250m- £700k-10%- welsh heritage
- iii) Plas Hafod - 150m- £500k-20%- large house and outbuildings, but another OHL to be removed
- iv) Maes - 250m - £400k -15%- extensive house and grounds
- v) Tyn y Ffordd -350m- £300k-10%- bungalow
- vi) Ysgubor Newydd - 500m - £400k -5%-with outbuildings that are planned for conversion

In total houses of value £5.3million, value lost £410k.

How do I arrive at these values: one is for sale, so I have taken that price for similar properties and scaled up or down. Others have changed hands in the last 4 years that confirm this price, including mine 10 years ago. Plas Newydd is just a guess - its unique.