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STUDY INTO THE POTENTIAL ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF WIND FARMS AND ASSOCIATED GRID INFRASTRUCTURE ON THE WELSH TOURISM INDUSTRY

In June 2012 the National Assembly for Wales Environment and Sustainability Committee published its report "*Energy Policy and Planning in Wales June 2012*" following a review of Energy policy and Planning matters. Recommendation 18 of the report stated: "*The Welsh Government should commission research to measure the economic impact of wind farms and associated grid infrastructure on the tourism industry in Wales*".

Accepting the recommendation, the Welsh Government commissioned Regeneris Consulting and The Tourism Group to undertake the study in June 2013.

The study focused on areas where wind farms have been established for a relatively long time, such as Powys, Anglesey and the South Wales Valleys and did not find any evidence of a significant impact on tourism.

While the study did find that most local tourism economies will face minimal or no threat from wind farm development, it does acknowledge that the nature of the visitor economies in some parts of Wales mean they are at greater risk of negative impacts. In these instances, the study highlights the need for developers to undertake thorough research and consultation to understand the nature and extent of any risk, and identify the actions which need to be taken.

However, the study also notes that the development of wind farms can provide opportunities for linked tourism development, for example, investment in bike trails, and highlights instances where this has been successful with existing developments.

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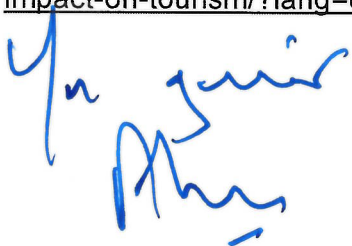
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Previous research on the impact of wind farms on tourism in Wales has also shown that for the majority of visitors, the existence of wind farms in the countryside does not significantly impact upon their decision to visit or return to Wales on holiday. The report notes that the tourist industry is influenced by a diverse range of factors, mostly unrelated to wind farm development.

Therefore the overall conclusion from the study is that there is limited evidence of impacts on tourism for Wales as a whole due to the presence of wind farms and their associated infrastructure.

You may wish to note the study is now available on the Welsh Government's website at: <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/environmentcountryside/energy/renewable/wind/economic-impact-on-tourism/?lang=en>



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