

## 1) Introduction

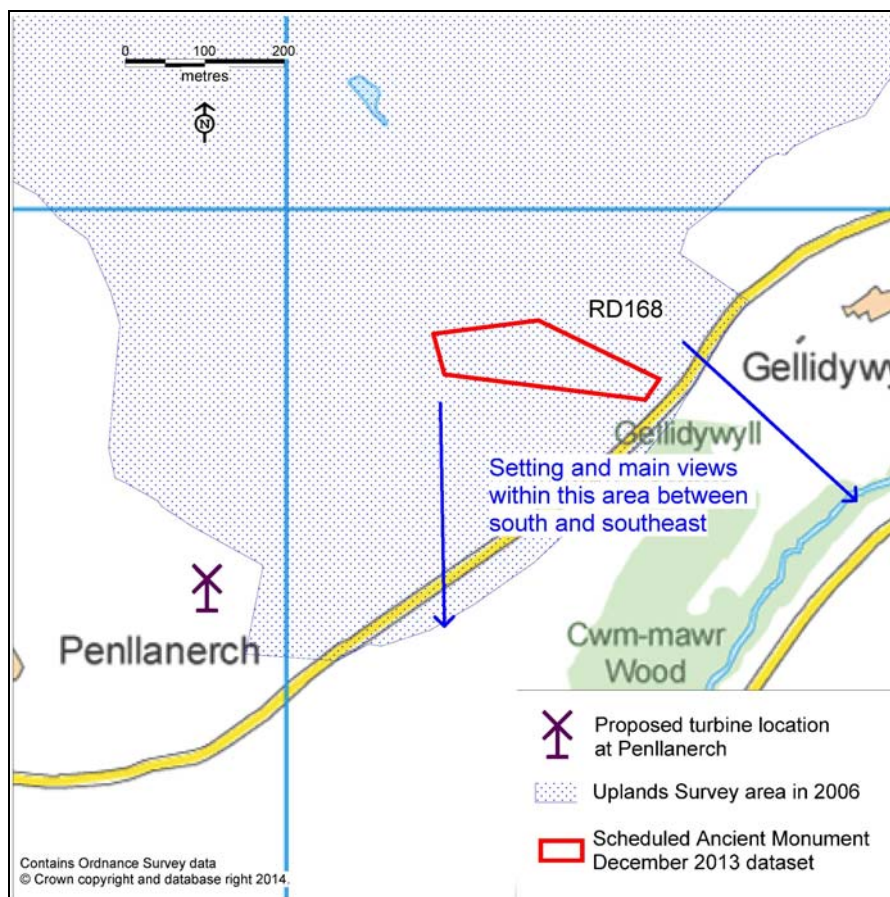
Richard Adams of Richard Adams Associates Ltd of Old Marton Hall, Ellesmere, Shropshire, SY12 9HZ on behalf of his client Clive Hammond, Penllanerch, Glascwm, Llandrindod Wells, LD1 5SE, has commissioned Trysor heritage consultants to review the indirect impact on Scheduled Ancient Monument, RD168, the Gelli Dywyll platform settlement, from a proposed turbine at Penllanerch, P/2013/1064.

## 2) Gelli Dywyll, RD 168 and Upland Survey

2.1 Trysor undertook a field survey of this Scheduled Ancient Monument as part of the Gwaunceste Uplands Survey (Hall & Sambrook, 2007), carried out as part of the Uplands Initiative Project grant-aided by the RCAHMW.

2.2 The field work was undertaken on June 18<sup>th</sup>, 2006, in good weather conditions, with excellent visibility. The ground conditions were characterised by a mixture of rough grass pasture and low bracken across the higher parts of the area, with thicker, taller bracken at lower altitudes.

2.3 The Upland Survey covered a much larger area of the Gwaunceste Hill upland block, but offered an opportunity to revisit SAM RD168 and confirm the details and co-ordinates of the various features that make up this Deserted Rural Settlement.



*Figure 1: The location of the proposed turbine and the scheduled area.*

### **3) Deserted Rural Settlements**

3.1 The monument had previously been recorded by CPAT and the RCAHMW, as well as Scheduled by Cadw. It is a cluster of earthwork platforms variously described as a Platform Settlement or a Deserted Rural Settlement. The platforms represent groups of buildings, including dwellings, which would have been constructed of timber and clay, with thatched roofs. In this case, the former building sites are now marked only by bare, earthwork platforms, which were levelled out of the slope and on which the timber and clay structures were erected.

3.2 Each platform now only survives as a gentle earthwork, cut into the slope. This produces a rectilinear level area (the platform on which the building stood). The negative end of the platform is cut into the slope, creating a platform “fan”, whilst material quarried out of the slope and pushed forward to make the platform creates a positive end or “apron”. The apron is often the most visible part of the platform as it stands out in the landscape, as it has a mound-like appearance from below. When viewed from above or from an opposite hillslope, such platforms can be virtually invisible, unless low sunlight creates a shadow effect that picks out the fan or apron. Ground vegetation compounds the problem at Gelli Dywyll, in common with many of the Radnorshire platform groups, as bracken can obscure much of the detail and only an experienced eye can usually pick out platforms or other earthwork features in the landscape.

3.3 Deserted Rural Settlements, particularly groups of earthwork platforms, are commonly found in the Radnorshire landscape, (Roberts, K, 2006, Chapter 13). Such settlement groups are generally thought to be of Medieval or Post Medieval date (i.e. the period c.AD1100 to AD1800). Rarely have upland examples been accurately dated by historic, cartographic or scientific methods. A few examples have been excavated, and dating evidence, including artefactual evidence has given some indication of their period of use. Aileen & Sir Cyril Fox excavated similar platforms on Gelligaer Common, near Caerphilly, which they ascribed to the 13<sup>th</sup> century AD, (Fox, C, 1939).

3.4 In the absence of firm dating evidence, it is still possible to suggest that the platforms at Gelli Dywyll must have been constructed at a time when ample timber was available for construction purposes in the now largely treeless Radnorshire uplands. They were also evidently abandoned and forgotten before the first Ordnance Survey maps were produced in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. No tradition about their use or date was ever recorded by 19<sup>th</sup> century antiquarians. A Medieval or early Post Medieval date can be safely assumed therefore, with abandonment before the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. Suspicion must be that the platforms would be earlier, rather than later, in the Medieval/Post Medieval time frame, however.

#### **4. Records of the Gelli Dywyll Deserted Rural Settlement**

4.1 It was found that the site was represented by 4 separate NPRNs in the RCAHMW's National Monuments Record (NPRNs 306127-306130). Each of these was for a Building Platform of possible Medieval date.

4.2 The site was also represented by 6 PRNs in CPAT's regional Historic Environment Record (PRNs 33998, 33999 & 50331-50334), each for a Platform of Post-Medieval date. CPAT also have an overall PRN for the Gelli Dywyll Deserted Rural Settlement (PRN 4146).

4.3 It was not possible to correlate any of the existing NPRNs with the evidence on the ground, in terms of their grid-references or site descriptions. The sites had been recorded in the 1990s, before accurate GPS were available to assist fieldworks in the accurate plotting of sites in upland contexts.

4.4 Trysor plotted and described 7 platforms at Gelli Dywyll, more than had been previously recorded by the RCAHMW and CPAT. These new records for the platforms were entered into the NMR as NPRNs 289362-289367 & 289080-289091. They were erroneously labelled by Trysor as Post Medieval sites in these records. They should have been dated as Medieval?;Post Medieval? to reflect the uncertainty in their period of use. Photographs of the sites can be viewed on Coflein, [www.coflein.gov.uk](http://www.coflein.gov.uk)

#### **5. The setting of the Gelli Dywyll Deserted Rural Settlement**

5.1 Four strands need to be considered in connection with the setting of this Deserted Rural Settlement;

- a) **Situation.** The platforms are likely to have been associated with seasonal, pastoral farming on the uplands in Medieval or early Post Medieval times, within the traditional Welsh *hafod* and *hendre* system. The buildings that stood here would be likely to be only occupied during the summer grazing season. As a result their location is not sheltered from the prevailing winds, which would have potentially made life difficult during the winter months. The choice of location of such platforms often seems to have been made for ease of access to the upland pastures and, possibly, for convenient access to a water supply. There are springs along the hillside, within 200 metres to the north of the platforms, including a spring that supplies water to Gelli Dywyll farm in the valley below (recorded as NPRN 32528). A third consideration was to settle on a free-draining, dry slope.
- b) **Aspect & Views.** The platforms have been cut into the hillslope at right-angles to the contours. This gives each of them a south or south-east facing setting in the modern landscape. We cannot say whether the local landscape was as open as it is today when the buildings here were in use. The platforms may have been occupied when the locality was more wooded and views more restricted, though that is speculative. The main views from the site today are

across the valley to the south and southeast, not towards the proposed turbine to the southwest.

- c) **Intervisibility.** When buildings stood on the platforms at Gelli Dywyll, the settlement may well have been easily spotted from the high ground to the south or from adjacent valley slopes, unless now any woodland blocked the views. Other settlements of similar type are known across the Gwaunceste uplands and on adjacent hills, but insufficient information is known to indicate whether such settlement groups might have been intervisible with each other when occupied. The results of the comprehensive survey undertaken of the adjacent slopes by Trysor for the Uplands Initiative show that no related features are found to the southwest of the Gelli Dywyll Deserted Rural Settlement, and therefore the proposed turbine would not interfere with any key views to or from the settlement.
  
- d) **Visibility of the monuments.** In the modern landscape, the platforms are now very difficult to spot from any adjacent hill or slope, partly due to the nature of their gentle earthworks, but also as a result of the thick carpet of bracken that has grown across most of the SAM area. The platforms are most noticeable from below, when the platform “apron” takes on the appearance of a raised mound. It is possible to walk past platforms without even noticing their presence, particularly in a bracken-obscured environment, if the “apron” mound is not seen from the correct angle. Sites such as these are difficult to find with the untrained eye or without guidance, and can in no way be considered to be visual amenity in the landscape. They are not landmark features and are best appreciated at close range, which effectively means that their setting is highly localised and would not be affected by the proposed wind turbine.

## **6. Impact on Setting from the Proposed Turbine**

6.1 The turbine will be 34.5 metres to upright blade tip and be located 400 metres away from the closest edge of the scheduled area of SAM RD168, and 620 metres from the furthest. The turbine would therefore be over 10 x the height of the turbine away from the SAM.

6.2 As outlined in 5.1 (a) the location of platforms like the Gelli Dywyll DRS is influenced by such factors as ease of access to upland pasture, water supply and free draining site. The location is not chosen on how visible it is within the landscape, nor how it is viewed from distance, and so the setting of the monument, in its historical context, is limited.

6.3 The main aspect and views of the platforms, in the modern landscape, are to the south and southeast, not to towards the proposed turbine to the southwest.

6.4 There will be varying degrees of intervisibility between the turbine and the scheduled area, but the platforms lie on a southeast facing hillslope, whereas the turbine lies on a southwest facing slope. The curve of the hill will block some views.

6.5 The platforms are very difficult to spot within the dense bracken cover. An untrained eye would not find them easily. They are not a landmark feature and they cannot be considered to be a tourism asset in that respect, although they are intrinsically very interesting and well-preserved sites, worthy of visiting. The localised nature of their setting reduces concerns regarding impacts from the proposed turbine.

6.6 In conclusion, the limited setting and views of the Gelli Dywyll settlement are to the south and southeast, not to the southwest where the turbine would be located. The 34.5m high turbine would be over 400 metres away from the scheduled area with the curve of a hillslope between them. The impact on the setting of this scheduled site is assessed as Low, within a scale of None, Very Low, Low, Moderate, High and Very High.

## **7. Bibliography**

### 7.1 Published

Fox, C, 1939, Dinas Noddfa, Gelligaer Common, Glamorgan, *Bulletin of Board of Celtic Studies* 9 pp.295-9

Roberts, K, ed, 2006, *Lost Farmsteads – Deserted Rural Settlement in Wales*,

### 7.2 Unpublished

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