

Wind company hid water contamination evidence

Drinking water near Whitelee windfarm, Scotland, is contaminated

“It’s highly unlikely that Airtnoch Farm is the only supply in Scotland that has been contaminated. There may be hundreds of rural water supplies unknowingly affected by wind farm development.” (quote from The Times’ article below)

Wind turbines can leak oil, like do other engines. Each turbine contains hundreds of litres of oil to lubricate the huge gearbox.



Oil leak along a wind turbine tower in the Sierra de El Perdón (courtesy of Gurelur - the Navarrian association of real ecologists)

Cleaning liquids are another source of contamination. These are used to wash the towers from leaked oil, and the blades from dead insects, which form a paste that reduces performance.



Washing a wind turbine at Altamont Pass, California

Add to this **sedimentation**, from all the earth moving that takes place during construction.

Let's hope the famous Scotch whisky, which depends on pure water, isn't contaminated.

THE  **TIMES** September 21, 2013
by Marcello Mega

Power company knew residents' water supply was heavily polluted



Rachel Connor, who suffered severe vomiting, is fighting ScottishPower over wind turbines near her home Times photographer Paul Rogers

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ScottishPower has been accused of contaminating a private water supply to homes in the shadow of Europe's biggest wind farm and of failing to tell the community that its drinking water could endanger health.

The company denies causing the contamination, but admits not warning anyone that drinking water, from ten homes near Airtnoch Farm, Ayrshire, was, at times, grossly contaminated.

The wind farm branch of the company, ScottishPower Renewables, insisted twice in June that its regular tests had found no contamination but refused requests to publish its results.

When they emerged, serious contamination was shown over a three-year period before, during and after construction of the second phase of Whitelee, which has 215 giant turbines.

Tests carried out between May 2010 and April this year showed a high reading for E. Coli in tapwater, and for other coliform bacteria. Normally, drinking water should contain no coliform bacteria. Over the three years, only three out of 36 samples from Airtnoch Farm met that standard.

The results were obtained by Rachel Connor, a retired clinical radiologist.

Dr Connor, from Waterside, a rural area near Kilmarnock, and others who drank the contaminated water, suffered severe vomiting and diarrhoea, which they had assumed was the result of food poisoning or a viral infection.

They are angry that they were exposed to health risks that could have been serious, especially for the very young or very old.

Dr Connor said: "Given that the developer was ordered to take samples regularly, it would be illogical to suggest it had no duty to inform anyone the water was failing all the tests.

"It's highly unlikely that Airtnoch Farm is the only supply in Scotland that has been contaminated. There may be hundreds of rural water supplies unknowingly affected by wind farm development."

In June, ScottishPower Renewable's press office said: "All sampling was found to be in compliance with recommended limits."

Previously it had claimed: "Throughout project construction [we] had no reported incidence of contamination."

Its position this week shifted, with a spokesman maintaining that as construction had not caused the contamination, it was not the company's responsibility to report it.

A spokesman said: "ScottishPower Renewables is not responsible for the day-to-day management of any private water supply."

The company has ignored requests for the results of tests on neighbouring supplies, but the spokesman added: "We will look at our processes in terms of notification, but we were monitoring for construction impacts. Where we recognise potential impacts arising from construction activity we would act immediately."

Scottish legislation states that private water supplies serving one home must be maintained by the owner, but any supply serving more than one is the responsibility of the local authority.

However, when development is involved, the developer is given responsibility to test the supply regularly.

Paul Todd, East Ayrshire Council's regulatory services manager, said: "ScottishPower has confirmed in writing that it did not advise us of any sampling or testing data in relation to private water supplies in connection with Whitelee."

The SNP has made renewable energy one of its flagship policies and Alex Salmond, the First Minister, attended the opening of Whitelee in May 2009.

A spokesman said: "The Scottish Government expects developers to take the necessary steps to ensure that they comply with all public health legislation."

Dr Connor's MSP and Labour's Justice spokesman at Holyrood, Graeme Pearson, a former senior police officer, said: "The lack of candour displayed by ScottishPower in withholding important information relating to a clear health risk is worrying.

“Its failure to report the results deserves examination to ascertain what motivated this level of secrecy and what risks were faced by the community.”

One of Scotland’s leading human rights experts, John Scott, said: “I find it shocking that any organisation would conceal information that could have serious consequences for people’s health. There should be some remedy for those affected, whether through law or human rights.”

Dr Kate Heal, of the School of GeoSciences at the University of Edinburgh, said that the creation of a wind farm involved the excavation and movement of soil, the laying of tracks and roads for machinery and sometimes, as at Whitelee, forest felling to create space for turbines.

Dr Heal said: “All these activities can affect the pathways by which rain falling on the site drains away and makes its way into rivers and lochs and can affect the ecology of those bodies of water and drinking water.”

[The Times | September 21, 2013](#)

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