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Welsh Government's Wind Farm Plans Stir Mixed Reactions in Rural Communities

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Plans to build a series of large-scale wind farms across Wales, including a major development in the Brechfa Forest near Abergorlech, have sparked a divided response from residents. Backed by the Welsh Government through the publicly-owned company Trydan Gwyrdd Cymru (Green Power Wales), the projects are part of broader efforts to meet Wales' 2035 target for fully renewable electricity generation. While some support the

environmental aims, others are concerned about the local impact, scale, and fairness of the proposals.

The village of Abergorlech, located in Carmarthenshire and long regarded as one of Wales' most scenic rural areas, could soon be overshadowed by towering wind turbines if the proposed Glyn Cothi wind farm is approved. Most of the turbines would be located in the government-owned woodland in the hills above the village. Though neighbouring Brechfa already hosts an existing wind farm, the Glyn Cothi project has drawn fresh scrutiny.

Trydan Gwyrdd Cymru announced in July its plans for three wind farms, including Glyn Cothi, Carreg Wen in Rhondda Cynon Taf, and another in Denbighshire/Conwy. Together, the three sites are expected to generate electricity for up to 350,000 homes, supported by a projected investment of £500 million and the creation of approximately 650 construction jobs. If all approvals are secured, construction is anticipated to begin after 2030, with energy generation commencing around 2035.

Locals in Abergorlech, including Reverend Canon Delyth Wilson, have raised concerns about the size and logistics of installing the turbines in the area's narrow country roads. Wilson supports sustainable energy but worries the developments will be too disruptive and poorly integrated into the rural infrastructure. She also criticised the lack of direct benefits for her village from the neighbouring Brechfa wind farm, noting that subsidies for electricity bills would be more practical than scattered community grants.

Her husband, Paul Wilson, offered a more moderate view, stating he wouldn't mind the turbines as long as they remained out of sight. Other residents, like Patrick Brotherton, accepted the developments as inevitable, describing them as part of "the future".

Further south in Brechfa, concerns are also centred on environmental preservation and tourism. Mari Mitchell argued the Glyn Cothi proposal contradicts the Welsh Government's National Forest plan and said the turbines would encroach on woodland she considers ancient. She raised issues over wildlife disruption and the lasting environmental cost of turbine construction, including non-recyclable components like carbon fibre blades.

In response, Trydan Gwyrdd Cymru asserted that no ancient trees exist at the proposed site and committed to undertaking thorough habitat studies, including two years of bird surveys. The company also stated that decommissioning plans will be detailed during the planning

phase, and that selective tree removal would coincide with normal timber harvesting cycles to reduce forest disruption.

Other locals expressed concern over potential impacts on tourism and outdoor activities, which are crucial to the Brechfa Forest economy. Jillie Gardiner, who moved to the area for its horse-riding appeal, fears that any loss of public access could hurt visitor numbers. Trydan Gwyrdd Cymru maintains there is no conclusive evidence linking wind farms to a decline in tourism and says access could be improved for walkers, cyclists, and horse riders as part of the project.

Sarah Eyles also voiced opposition from Llanfihangel-ar-Arth, who said large-scale wind projects—classified as Developments of National Significance residents with limited influence. She worries the Glyn Cothi turbines will overwhelm the landscape and highlighted the potential for outsourcing construction jobs. In her view, the Welsh Government should prioritise offshore wind developments instead.

Not all feedback has been negative. Mountain biker Sam Ralton, who frequents trails across Wales, including Brechfa, said that well-maintained routes would keep enthusiasts coming regardless of turbine presence. Similarly, Andrew Morgan of the Swansea Ramblers said the group's primary concern is countryside access. Provided that's protected, he believes most walkers will continue to enjoy the area.

The Welsh Government declined to comment on the project. However, the broader public sentiment towards renewables remains favourable. Data from the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero indicates that around 80% of UK residents support renewable energy. Support for onshore wind specifically stands at 73%, though only 37% would welcome a wind farm in their immediate area.

Elsewhere in Wales, Trydan Gwyrdd Cymru's plans for Carreg Wen near Maerdy and Cwmaman have also drawn contrasting views. Residents such as Ernie Travers and Gayle Griffiths raised concerns about visual impact and proximity to homes. Others, like Colin Marsh and Allan Jones, acknowledged the need for power generation and supported wind farms as long as they deliver real community benefits, particularly lower electricity costs.

Trydan Gwyrdd Cymru maintains that community benefits are central to its approach and is planning public engagement events starting in autumn 2025. According to Simon Morgan, the company's development director, the Glyn Cothi site is within a commercial timber

forest, and construction will either minimise tree loss or align with scheduled felling operations. He emphasised the company's aim to improve biodiversity and recreation access.

As the push for renewable energy intensifies across the UK, the challenge remains in balancing national energy objectives with the rights and needs of local communities. The Glyn Cothi wind farm project represents a test case for how effectively government-backed schemes can meet that challenge.