

Wind Turbine Spotting from the Barrow-Carlisle Railway

Heading North from Barrow to Carlisle

Barrow has become an offshore wind energy hub, with the 90MW Barrow Offshore wind project already operational. It is not visible from the railway but its 30 turbines are just visible off the south end of Walney Island Nature Reserve. (50,000 homes). The Ormonde project is an innovative combined gas and wind project consented February 2007 combining 30 wind turbines and a gas platform. In total it will power 155,000 homes, 60,000 of them from the wind energy.

Harlock Hill Not technically visible from the railway but worthy of a mention and a bike ride. Britain's first co-operatively owned wind power project at Harlock Hill is situated near Ulverston. It is a 2.5 MW wind farm and consists five turbines, each rated at 500kW, and produces enough clean electricity each year to meet the average needs of 1,300 typical homes.

Haverigg Just after leaving Barrow station, Haverigg wind farm becomes visible briefly. It is visible intermittently on the shore in front off the headland until Millom with good views on the left just after Millom station. There are now eight turbines – four 600kW built 1998, one owned by the Baywind Cooperative, and four 850kW built 2005, replacing five 225kW turbines built 1992. This was the first wind farm built in Cumbria, only the second commercial one in the UK and gained very positive press coverage. It provides enough electricity to power 3,000 houses.

Askam The seven turbines of the Far Old Park Farm at Askam become visible on left in front of the hills 4 minutes after leaving Barrow station, and then on the right on approach to Askam station, above the village. It powers 2,500 houses.

Kirkby Moor Six of the twelve turbines are first visible from the approach to Askam station on the right hand side. The tops of 4 turbines visible on right 3 minutes after Askam station on approach to Kirkby station, but the best views are looking back across the Duddon estuary on leaving Foxfield station, with ten of the turbines visible. These turbines were built in 1993 on a Site of Special Scientific Interest and were therefore not supported by Friends of the Earth, however there has been no significant damage to the site. At 400kW they are the smallest remaining turbines in Cumbria, but still manage to supply 2,600 houses.

No more wind turbines to be seen for an hour! However you do pass the Drigg nuclear waste dump and the Sellafield nuclear waste processing site. Friends of the Earth does not believe that nuclear power is the answer to climate change. Wind energy is a cleaner and better alternative.

Notice the small freestanding domestic turbine at the last bungalow on the beach one minute before Nethertown station.

Lowca Stunningly situated on the cliff above the railway, the seven 660kW turbines are glimpsed on the left on leaving Whitehaven station, and then on the right immediately after Parton station, then become visible 5 minutes later as train rounds the headland on the right. They provide electricity for 2500 homes. Siddick and Oldside are visible in the distance on the left at this time.

Robin Rigg A consented off-shore project in the construction phase, the sixty 3MW turbines should become operational in early 2009, and on days of good visibility distant views will be seen from long stretches of the railway line. It will provide electricity for half the homes in Cumbria.

Workington has become one of the greenest towns in the country in terms of energy generation. It is surrounded by wind farms already producing enough clean energy for over 10,000 average homes. This corresponds almost exactly with the number of homes in Workington. It means that you have to be on your toes to see all the wind turbines, as they come up thick and fast in this section of the journey.

Oldside & Siddick

The nine 600kW turbines become visible to the left 2 minutes after Harrington station on approach to Workington station and again close to railway on leaving the station. They were built in 1996 at the same time as the seven Siddick turbines visible on the right between the railway and the road. The two developments were separate but linked and together provide sufficient for 5,300 homes. Siddick is on the right immediately after leaving the station alongside the railway track (between railway and road).

Winscales The tops of the turbines are just visible on the right above houses at same time as the Oldside ones above but are more clearly visible on leaving Workington station, looking back and right above the trees. Three 660kW turbines were built in 1999, and then eight more 850kW machines were added in 2005. These two developments provide electricity for 4,900 households and planning consent has been granted for seven more turbines.

Eastman has two large and stately 2MW turbines visible behind the Siddick turbines in the factory grounds beyond road. This chemicals company is clearly doing its bit to reduce both costs and carbon footprint.

Wharrels Hill is the biggest and newest development on the route. The turbines were still being erected as we did the research for this leaflet (June 2007). The eight 1.3MW machines are visible on skyline on right 9 minutes after Maryport on approach to Aspatria station – to the right of a microwave array on the skyline, providing enough energy for over 5,800 homes.

High Pow These three 1.3 MW turbines never break the skyline and form the smallest wind farm on the route. They are in front of the first transmitter mast (Sandale) first visible 5 minutes after Aspatria station on the right. They became operational in March 2007, and provide energy for 2,000 households.

To provide a historical perspective note the disused windmill at Wigton station. It was one of several cornmills in the area, testament to the wind resource. There are two more similar mills in surrounding villages. Now there are no sails to be seen and it is used by a local joiner's shop.

Great Orton In good visibility the turbines can be glimpsed 2 minutes north of Wigton station on the left before becoming clearly visible on the skyline in the distance. In the summer they are partly masked by trees in leaf. The original 10 two-bladed 300kW machines were an early prototype for low wind speed areas. They were built in

1992 on RAF Great Orton airfield, and replaced by the current six 660kW machines in 2000. They were seen all over the world as the area was made infamous as the foot and mouth burial site, now Watchtree nature reserve. They provide electricity for 2,000 houses.

Pirelli The tyre company has planning consent for a single 3 MW turbine on its land in Carlisle, which will produce nearly a quarter of the electricity needed on the site. It is understood that plans to develop the turbine are well advanced, and the turbine will be visible on the left on the approach to Carlisle station.

For further information about West Cumbria Friends of the Earth
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