

## February 2012

Last week I, along with 100 or so other Conservative MPs, signed a letter to the Prime Minister calling for the reduction in subsidies for onshore wind farms and a strengthening of the new planning laws to enable local residents to fight against proposals for wind turbines in their communities. I am not against wind energy per se but there are two important issues raised.

The first is that we pay a levy on our energy bills to fund the investment in wind turbines and other sources of renewable energy. We have limited energy supply and therefore future investment in renewable energy is important. However the levy is being invested in unreliable and inefficient technology which is mainly designed, developed and constructed by foreign companies and as yet has not proved that it can be a significant driver towards meeting our renewable energy targets. When anyone pays for something they want value for money. When a wind turbine can only operate at maximum capacity for a third of the time and often relies on back-up generation when the wind stops blowing I think most would agree that this is not a fair return for our investment.

The second issue relates to the new planning framework. The letter calls for better protections to be put in place for communities under threat from proposals to build new wind farms. This may seem irrelevant to us now but imagine if there was an application for a wind farm in the Capstone Valley. I am sure residents would want the new planning regime to ensure that local peoples' views were taken fully into account and that the system recognises the importance of the beautiful countryside and heritage assets we have. Given other potential threats to our communities, like the Thames Estuary airport, this could be a useful addition in general.

Energy policy in the UK should always be under review and I hope that by co-signing a letter on this issue we will have started a debate on behalf of every household and business about getting better value for money for our investment in renewable energy.