

Speaker #3,
Mark Dutchard

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Wind farms at beauty spots linked to slump in visitors.



Figures show a drop in tourism-related jobs at places where wind farms are sited in local landscape designations (LLDs). Picture: John Devlin

Wind farms erected in scenic landscapes could be a turn-off for tourists, according to a report.

The findings contradict previous studies which suggested the green energy schemes had no overall impact on visitors to Scotland

The latest analysis, carried out for Mountaineering Scotland, indicates there is a drop in jobs related to tourism when turbines are built in places where visitors go to experience the country's most prized natural assets.

However, the developments could have a positive impact on areas not recognised for their scenery.

Figures show a drop in tourism-related jobs at places where wind farms are sited in local landscape designations (LLDs).

Three examples are Clyde in South Lanarkshire, Glenkerie in the Borders and Kelburn in North Ayrshire.

The report compares the trend in tourism-related employment around the wind farms with the average for the local authorities in which they sit.

It shows an average drop of 7 per cent, compared with an increase of 36 per cent for 25 wind farms not in LLDs. Nationwide, there was a 15 per cent overall increase in jobs related to tourism.

The Clyde wind farm area suffered a 14 per cent drop in tourism-related employment, while South Lanarkshire as a whole had a 9 per cent fall.

Glenkerie had a 4 per cent loss, compared with a 13 per cent increase across the Scottish Borders.

Tourism jobs around the Whitelee wind farm in East Renfrewshire rose by 12 per cent, not far short of a Scotland-wide increase of 15 per cent.

Report author David Gordon, a hillwalker and former statistician, says existing research is limited and more detailed studies are needed to help guide planners when considering new projects.

David Gibson, chief executive of Mountaineering Scotland, has written to Scottish ministers to highlight the findings.

He said: "Decisions based on new evidence would then be defensible – unlike those based on research under- taken ten years ago, when there were virtually no wind farms."

Tourism agency VisitScotland said: "It is well documented that the vast majority of potential visitors would not be discouraged from visiting Scotland on account of wind farm developments."