The beauty of wind farms

Off the coast of British Columbia, Canada, is an island called Quadra, where I have a cabin that is as close to my heart as you can imagine. From my porch on a good day you can see clear across the waters of The Georgia Strait to the snowy peaks of the rugged Coast Mountains. It is one of the most beautiful views I have seen. And I would gladly share it with a wind farm.

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| *If a ground or terrain has a broken, rocky, and uneven surface, it is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.* | *A small simple house made of wood is called a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.* |
| *A covered area adjoining an entrance to a building is called a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.* | *One of Canada‘s 13 provinces and territories: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_* |

But sometimes it seems like I’m in the minority. All across Europe and North America, environmenta­lists, who supported wind energy in the beginning, are now locking horns with the wind industry over the location of wind farms. In Alberta, one group is opposing a planned wind farm near Cypress Hills Provincial Park, claiming it would destroy views of the park and disturb some of the last remaining native prairieland in the province.

In the UK more than 100 national and local groups, led by some of the country’s most prominent environmentalists, have argued that wind power is inefficient, destroys the ambience of the countryside, and makes little difference to carbon emissions. And in the US, the Cape Wind Project, which would site 130 wind turbines off the coast of affluent Cape Cod, Massachusetts, has even come under fire from famous liberals.

It is time for some perspective. With the growing urgency of climate change, we cannot have it both ways. We cannot shout from the rooftops about the dangers of global warming and then turn around and shout even louder about the ´dangers´ of windmills. Climate change is one of the greatest challenges humanity will face this century. It cannot be solved through good intentions. It will take a radical change in the way we produce and consume energy – another industrial revolution, this time for clean energy, conservation and efficiency.

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|  | *environmentalist* |
| *mit jdm. im Streit liegen* |  |
|  | *to oppose sth.* |
| *Grassteppe* |  |
| *unwirtschaftlich, unrentabel sein* |  |
|  | *to destroy the ambience* |
| *CO2-Ausstoß* |  |
| *den Standort für Windkraftanlagen bestimmen* |  |
| *wohlhabend - [Überflussgesellschaft]* | *- [an ~ society]* |
|  | *to come under fire* |
|  | *We can’t have it both ways.* |
| *etw. lautstark verkünden* |  |
|  | *to face great challenges* |

We have undergone such transformations before and we can do it again. But first we must accept that all forms of energy have associated costs. Fossil fuels are limited in quantity and create vast amounts of pollution; large-scale hydroelectric power floods valleys and destroys animal habitat; nuclear power is incredibly expensive and creates radioactive waste.

Wind power also has its downsides. It is highly visible and can kill birds. The fact is, though, that any man-made structure can kill birds – houses, radio towers, skyscrapers. In Toronto alone, it is estimated that 10,000 birds collide with the city’s tallest buildings every year. Compared with this, the risk to birds from well-sited wind farms is very low. Even at Altamont Pass in California, where 7,000 turbines were erected on a migratory route, only 0.2 birds per turbine per year have been killed.

Indeed the real risk to birds does not come from windmills but from a changing climate, which threatens the very existence of bird species and their habitats. This is not to say that wind farms should be allowed to spring up anywhere. They should always be subject to environmental impact assessments. But a blanket ´not in my backyard´ approach is hypocritical and counterproductive

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|  | *large-scale hydroelectric power* |
| *natürlicher Lebensraum von Tieren* |  |
|  | *to threaten the very existence* |
|  | *bird species* |
| *Auswirkung auf die Umwelt* |  |
| *abhängig von einer Bewertung sein* |  |
|  | *to be hypocritical* |

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Pursuing wind power as part of our move towards clean energy makes sense. It is one of the fastest growing sources of energy in the world. Also the cost of wind-generated power has dropped dramatically over the past two decades because of larger windmills and greater knowledge of how to build, install and operate turbines more effectively.

Are windmills ugly? I remember when Mostafa Tolba, a former executive director of the UN Environmental Programme, told me how when he was growing up in Egypt, smokestacks belching out smoke were considered signs of progress. Even as an adult concerned about pollution, it took him a long time to get over the instinctive pride he felt when he saw a tower pouring out clouds of smoke.

We see beauty through filters shaped by our values and beliefs. Some people think wind turbines are ugly.   
I think smokestacks, smog, acid rain, coal-fired power plants and climate change are ugly. I think windmills are beautiful. They harness the power of the wind to supply us with heat and light and they provide local jobs. What they do not do is pollute our air or speed up climatic changes.

If one day I look out from my cabin porch and see a row of windmills spinning in the distance, I won’t curse them. I will praise them. It will mean we are finally getting somewhere. .

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| *Schornstein* |  |
| *Rauch(wolken) ausstoßen* | *a)*  *b)* |
| *sich etwas zunutze machen* |  |
|  | *to be hypocritical* |

Multiple choice questions on “The beauty of wind farms”

1. In the first paragraph the author
   1. is in favour of a wind farm on his native island Quadra in Canada.
   2. claims that Quadra is not a suitable place for a wind farm.
   3. describes the beauty of the area in which he lives.
   4. wonders how long the beauty of his home can be preserved
2. In the second paragraph the author
   1. doubts that environmentalists will ever be in favour of wind farms.
   2. wonders why environmentalists now find wind farms completely unacceptable.
   3. doesn’t agree with the locals and therefore has given up.
   4. doesn’t agree with the wind farm companies as to where to put the windmills.
3. Reflecting on environmentalists’ attitude towards wind farms, the author
   1. considers their attitude hypocritical.
   2. agrees with their warnings about the dangers of wind farms.
   3. thinks that fighting climate change by using windmills is naïve.
   4. is ad odds with the environmentalists who pester consumers.
4. In the author’s view, fossil fuels, nuclear energy and renewable energy
   1. cannot be compared.
   2. all have drawbacks.
   3. are all unreliable.
   4. are all exhaustible.
5. The author believes that wind farms should be built
   1. wherever there is space for them..
   2. where they will do little harm
   3. in the vicinity of migratory routes.
   4. if energy prices go up again.
6. The author’s attitude towards wind farms can be described as
   1. biased.
   2. unclear.
   3. disapproving.
   4. balanced.

Working with words: Match the verbs (1-9) to the endings (a-i) to make idioms from the text:

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| 1. to make 2. to have 3. to come 4. to undergo 5. to consume 6. to harness 7. to take 8. to make 9. to shout | 1. under fire 2. the power of the wind 3. little difference 4. energy 5. something from the rooftops 6. transformations 7. sense 8. it both ways 9. a radical change |

Vocabulary development - phrasal verbs:

Complete the second sentence of each pair with a phrasal verb from the word bank. Don’t change the meaning of the sentence. In some cases, you will need to change the form of the verb.

*to fall through to cut down on to show up to take up to figure out to carry out to end up to work out to make up*

1. We will have to reduce CO2 emissions soon.

We \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ CO2 emissions soon.

1. Only 50 villagers came to the meeting.

Only 50 villagers \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ at the meeting.

1. The planned wind farm near Hull eventually wasn’t built because the company didn’t get the funding required.

The planned wind farm near Hull \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ because the company didn’t get the funding required.

1. Environmentalists did some tests around the proposed construction site.

Environmentalists \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ some tests around the proposed construction site.

1. The villagers soon understood that the construction of a wind farm near their village was being planned.

The villagers soon \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ that the construction of a wind farm near their village was being planned.

1. In the end mankind will have to use renewable energy sources.

In the end mankind \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ using renewable energy sources.

1. The village started producing solar energy.

The village \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ producing.

1. The family tried to calculate how they could save on energy.

The family tried to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ how they could save on energy.

1. Many have invented stories about producing inexhaustible sources of energy.

Many \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ stories about producing inexhaustible sources of energy.

Which word or expression in the text means …

1. the opposite of “majority”? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. the same as “conservationist”? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. the opposite of “to support (an idea/plan)”? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
4. the same as “to maintain, to argue”? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
5. the opposite of “poor”? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
6. the same as “disadvantages”? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
7. the same as “outrageous costs”? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
8. the same as “guessed”? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
9. the same as “endangers”? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_