

**SOCIAL**

**IMPACT**

# Assessment: and the Social Acceptance of Onshore Windfarms in England

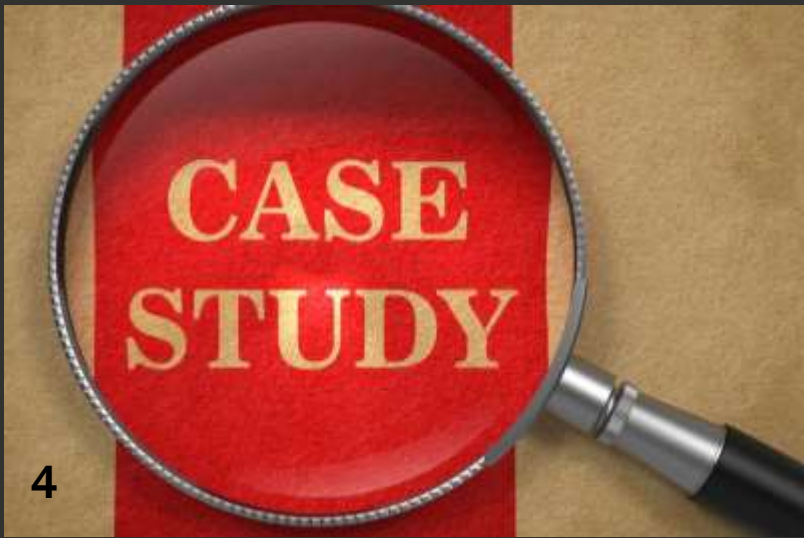
IAIA15: contention, social movements and the  
politics of impact assessment

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What if the community is  
the developer and the  
power imbalance is  
between the community  
and the State?



# Political Context

- Wind Energy Gap
- Battling Ministries
- Registration of Cooperatives

“I believe in a democracy you don’t impose things on people, you take people with you. I’ve gone out of my way to try to ensure that onshore wind (because it is the cheapest form of green energy) is deployed, but in a way where people feel they have ownership. That’s what democrats should do. But I don’t think it’s terribly democratic to listen to the loudest voices, roll over, forget that we have to invest in green technology, and actually impose costs on the rest of society.”

Ed Davey Politics Home, Mar 2015

“...the need for renewable energy does not automatically override environmental protections and the views of local communities will be listened to...I want to give particular scrutiny to planning appeals involving renewable energy developments”

Eric Pickles, The Daily Mail, Oct 2013



# Reasons for Objection



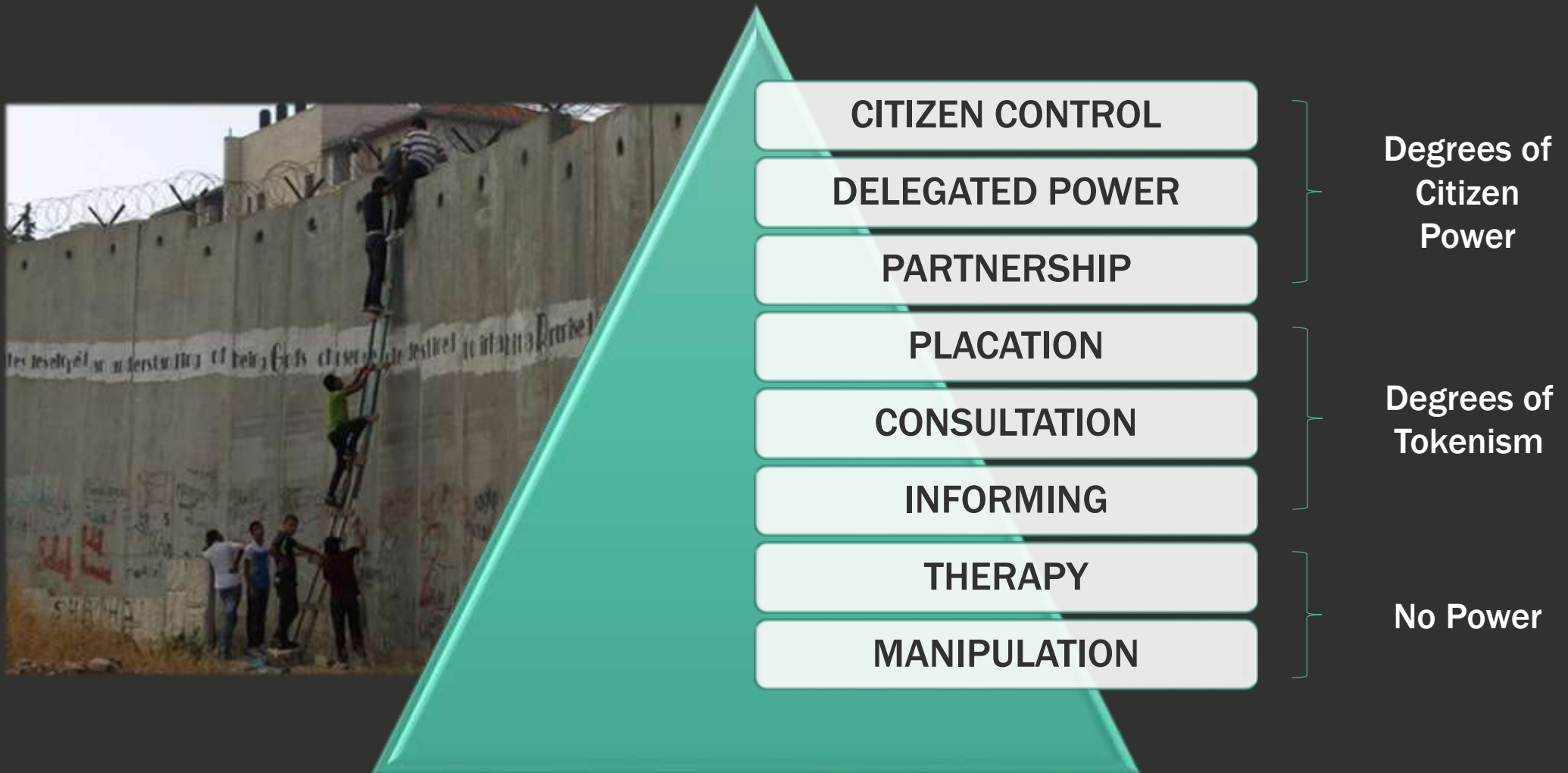
- History of Development
- NIMBY paradigm
- Discourse of Objection and Support
- Polarised media

# Participation

- Participatory processes in a neo-liberal arena
- Localism
- Compulsory pre-application consultation
- Community Benefits
- Community Renewable Energy



# Ascending Arnstein's Ladder



# Case Studies



- Developed and Operated by 2 local charities
- Community Shares
- 6 Turbines on 450 acre site
- 12MW capacity
- Serving the homes of 9000 people in Derbyshire & Nottinghamshire
- Estimated income £750,000pa
- 100% profits back to community
- Aim to be the largest community owned wind farm in England and serve as a template to inspire other communities

- Business start up
- Local improvement projects;
- Renewable energy for local homes;
- Re-training unemployed people;
- Supporting local enterprise;
- Funding university places for local children;
- Enterprise Coaching in schools and communities

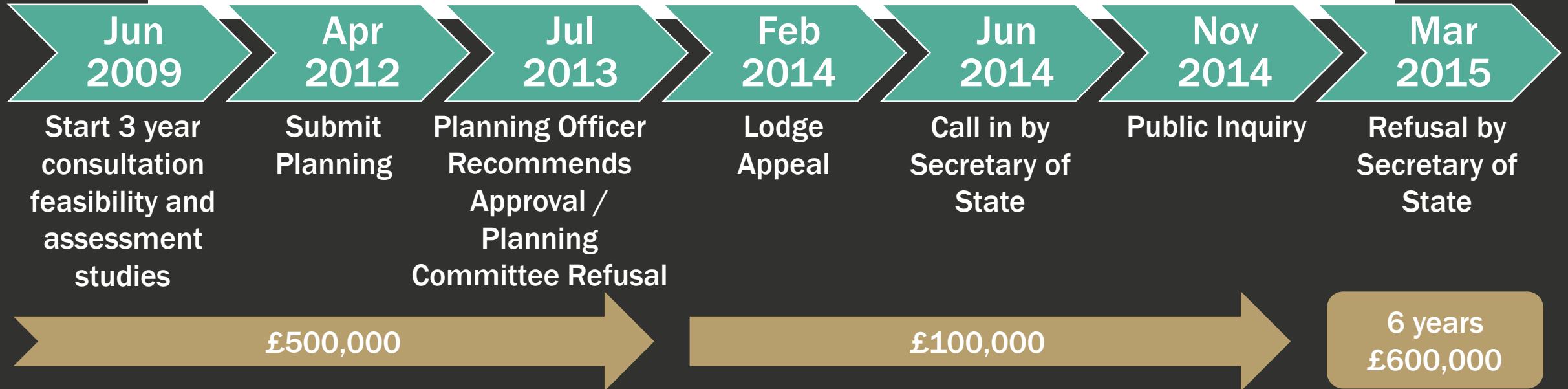
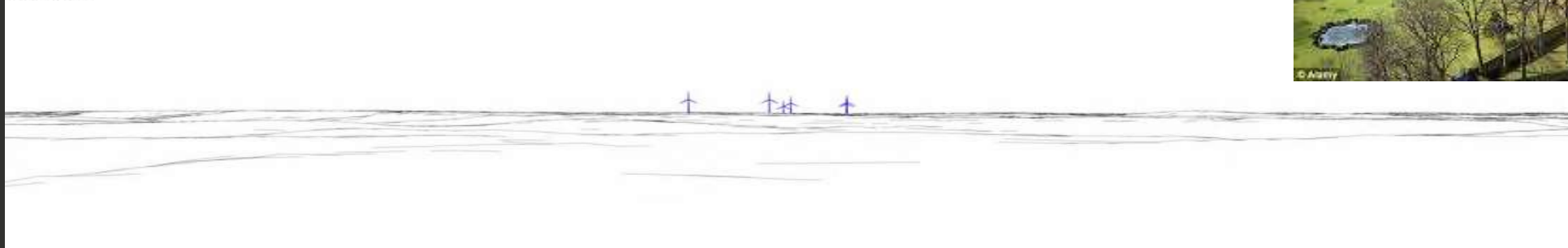




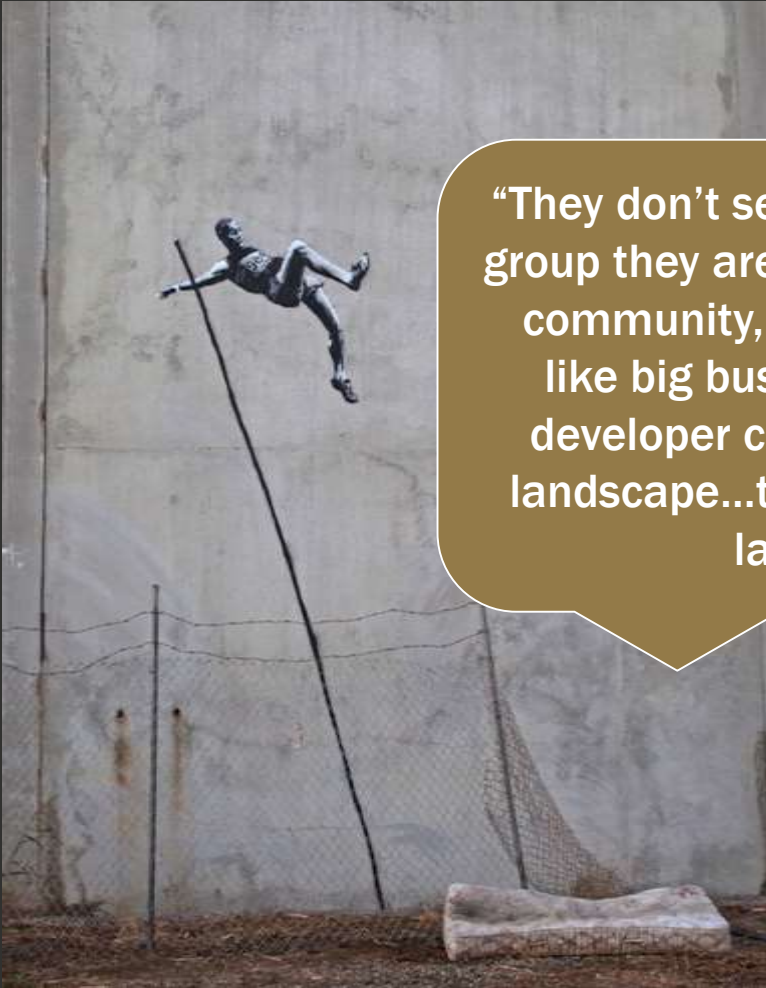
Existing view



Wireframe view



# Participation



“They don’t see us as a community group they are not treating us like a community, they are treating us like big business like the dirty developer coming in to ruin the landscape...they forget this is our landscape”

“My community work background has been voluntary, it’s not been a job, well it’s been a mixture really. I don’t have a formula for community work I’m not trained in community development. I just think that if you are enthusiastic about something then that enthusiasm can rub off. If it’s a sensible project then you can give logical and sensible reasons why it’s a good thing”

“What is the most that seven people could feasibly manage to do? What is the most that we could feasibly do in terms of climate change? That’s what we came up with. We knew it was really risky, but we decided that because it was big enough it was worth the risk of effort. It won’t be wasted we’ve been educated and have educated and we’ve made friends, it’s been really interesting. We’ve learnt a lot...”

# Social Media/ Conflict Resolution

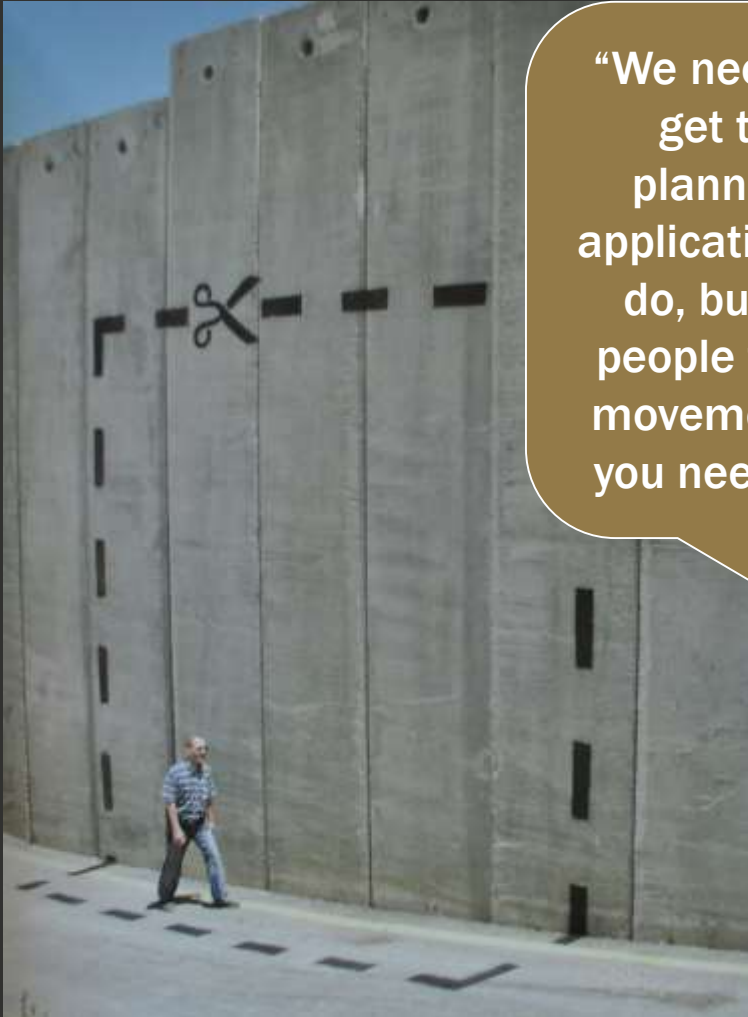


“When we got planning permission for the mast and we erected the mast on site, we then had a proper come out and within six weeks of us being public and the mast up, a story in the Examiner, our website, Facebook page and Twitter account up: people bored through the massive steel cables and toppled it. We thought ‘God we are stuffed now’”

“In fact it was in the early Facebook days where we had quite a lot of opposition. I was absolutely instrumental in addressing everything that had come up....They’ve got 211 Facebook likes and we’ve got about 1,500 and we know that they have said ‘you can get everybody to send in letters, all members of your family, no matter how old they are, send in anti-letters, even if they are 10 [years old] get them to send in letters.’”

“Do we want to spend the next few years while we still keep looking for a site whilst dealing with a lot of opposition. You know from what you’ve seen of the opposition has done in the past, how they raise spurious arguments, they never let go and actually we just didn’t have the time, we thought that wouldn’t be a good use of our time in managing our days. So maybe not quite as democratic as if we had just gone to the village and said this is what we are planning to do? Maybe more people would have supported us, we got forty supporters at the beginning, but then again what could we have done, that was our other thinking, no site again”

# Social Movements



“We needed to focus on finding a site, get the money together, get the planning permission, the planning application prepared. Its lots of stuff to do, but you don’t need hundreds of people to do it you don’t need a mass movement. You need a steering group you need a core group of enthusiasts”

“Yes it is only a minority that oppose and the people that oppose, oppose with hatred and vengeance and they are fuelled by the...they are also part of larger anti wind turbine groups. And they are also don’t believe in climate change a lot of them, there are a lot of very standard myths that are put out and are constantly put out”

“...we would have been merged with the extreme left, the Socialist Worker type. They wanted us to have meetings in town, at the Town Hall, so we could get bigger audiences and turn it into some big mass movement. But we just couldn’t be bothered, to go all the way into town we just wanted to keep it small until we were ready, we wanted to grow our supporters.”

“Yes it’s hard not to come to the conclusion that they have already decided. The planning officer and the environmental officer decided they didn’t want it and so now they are constructing the arguments to suit. That might be unfair, but that is how it feels.”

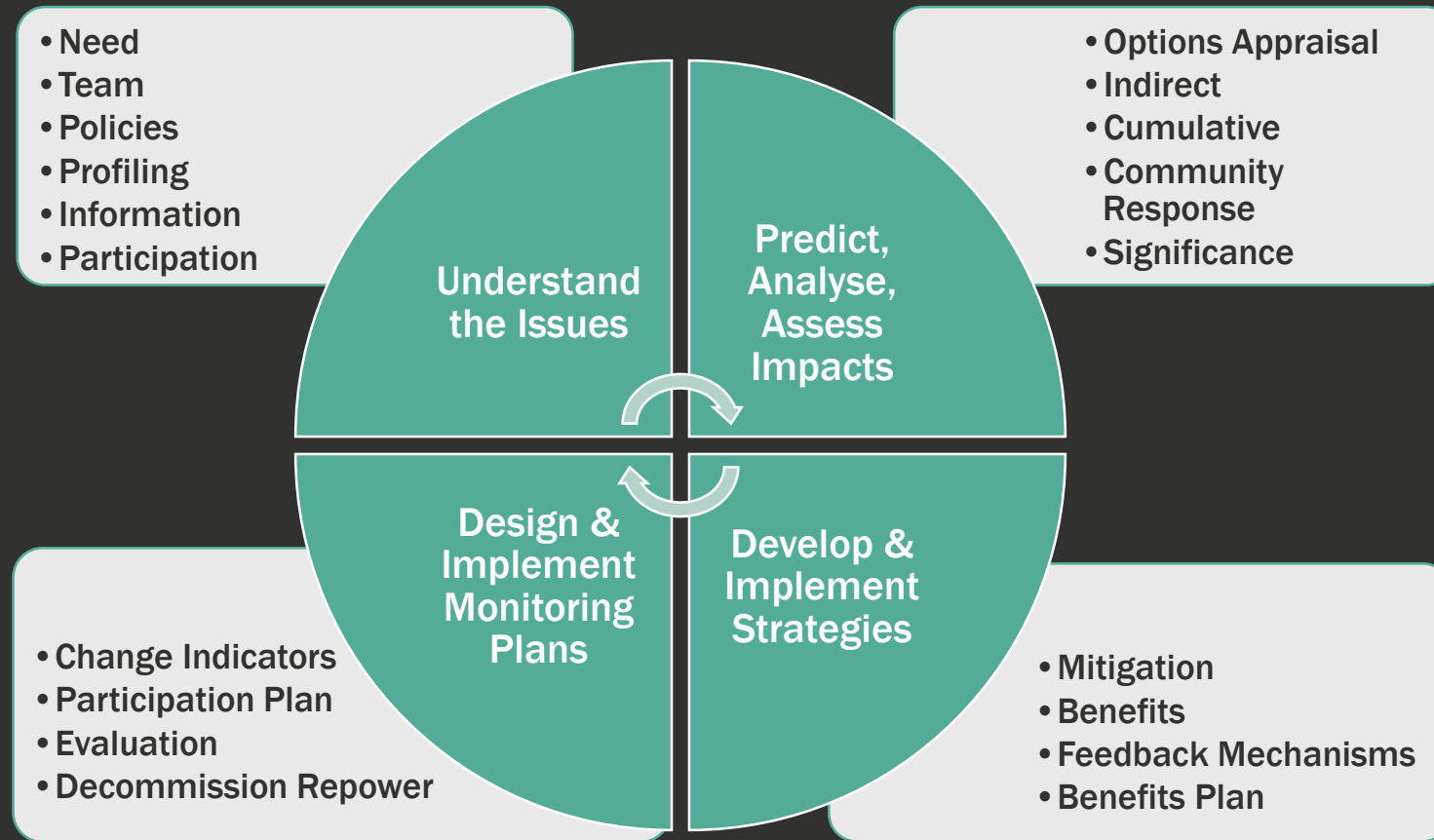
“He is not going to give it any weight, therefore his recommendation is going to be for refusal. When we had the talk with his boss, a couple of months ago when the councillors were there he said it was finely balanced so obviously that was giving some weight to it being community led and owned, I mean his boss may not know what he was talking about. Thing is you don’t know who is right; it does boil down to these fine legal interpretations of the guidance”

“That’s why the lawyers say forget this you will never change their minds, her take on it is, let it go to committee, she is actually hoping they will turn it down because basically she is saying that if they don’t it’s going to get called in by Pickles or go to judicial review. If they turn it down then we can take it to appeal, because we’ve got good grounds for appeal. I know it’s really counterintuitive, you start thinking alright let’s start back pedalling and let them do their worse. It’s just creating lots of work for consultants and lawyers. This aspect of it is very disheartening, it’s hard.”

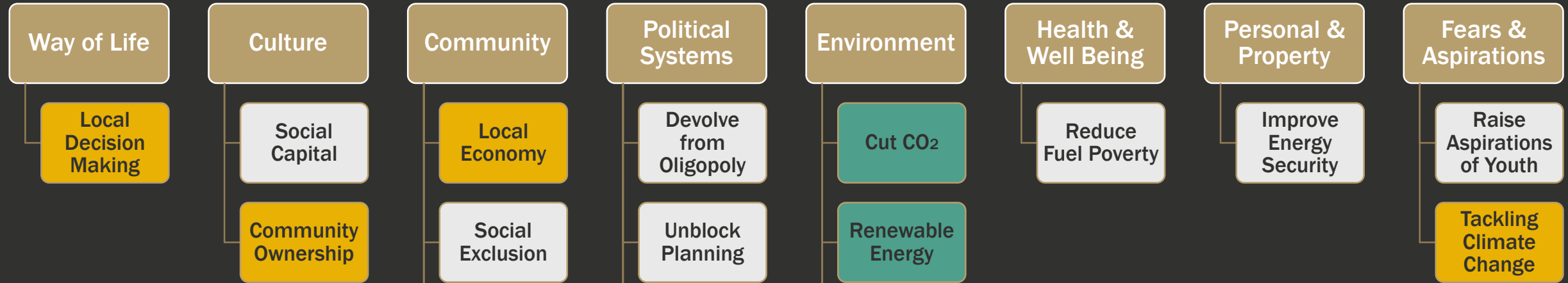
## Planning System



# Social Impact Assessment Tasks



# Social Impacts



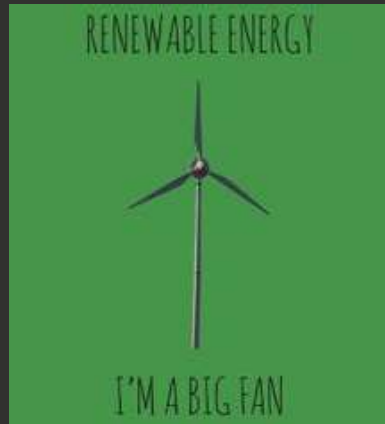
Social Impact Area
Considered
No Consideration
Given Weight



The Climate Change Act  
(2008)

Cut CO<sub>2</sub>  
Emissions

Renewable  
Energy  
Targets



ENVIRONMENT



EU Directive EIA  
Regulations (1999)

EIA

Ornithology

Heritage  
Asset

Landscape  
& Visual



Social Impact Area

Given Weight in Planning



# Conclusion

- The Wind Turbine as a symbol
- Lack of coordination between central government ministries and between central and local government
- Need for a statutory consultee that protects and enhances renewable energy
- The planning system should be offering the arena to discuss Trade Offs
- Activities of a SIA need formalising as a regulatory instrument
- Impact of no development
- Neo-liberalism – Ecological Modernisation – Energy Democracy
- Removing the ‘intrusion of power or politics’

