

IMPACTS AND POLLUTION

Activity IP05

Theme

Class activity (CA). A role play debate on a proposal to build a wind farm in the local area.

Objectives

Encouraging a balanced discussion on issues surrounding energy and the impacts of producing it. Looking at a complex issue from different points of view.

Curricular Strands

SESE, Science and Geography–
Environmental awareness and care

SPHE–Developing citizenship

Drama–Drama to explore feelings, knowledge and ideas, leading to understanding

Skills

Analysing, empathising,
communicating, recording

Time

40 minutes

Gale force

A ROLE PLAY ABOUT WIND FARMS

WHAT YOU NEED

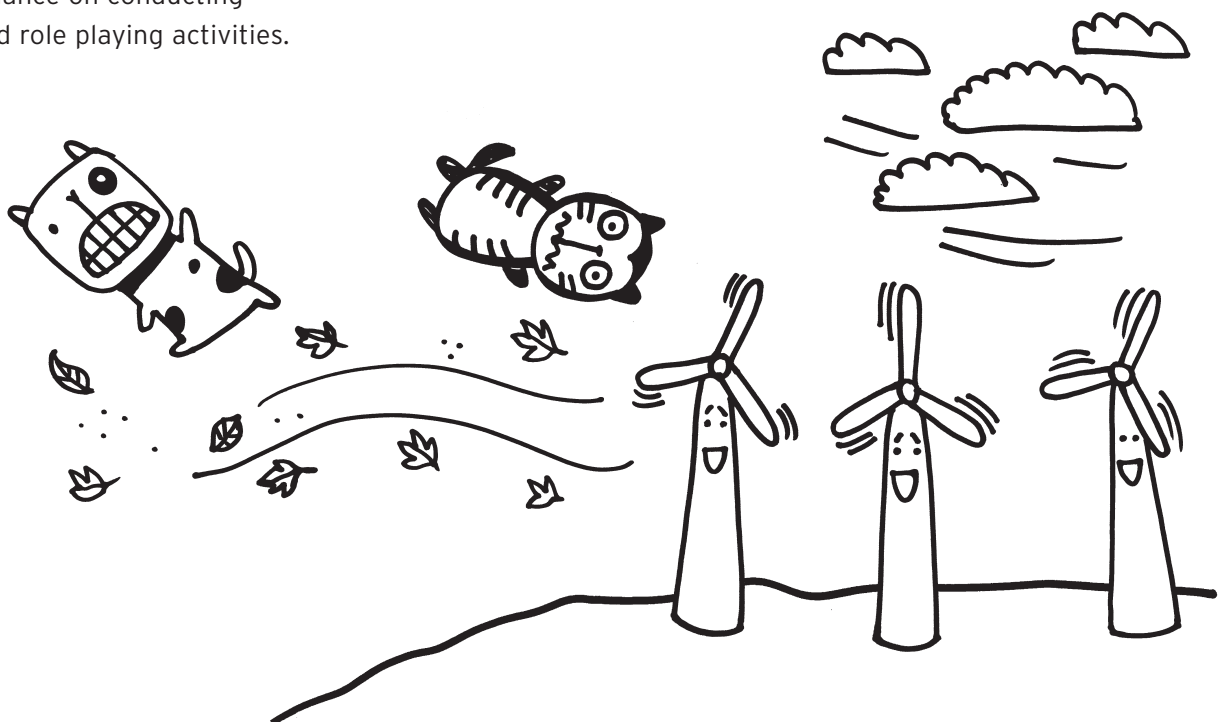
- Slips of paper describing roles and arguments cut from the suggestion sheet for this exercise or made in class by the students
- A big board to write on and markers or chalk

Note: The History Curriculum Teachers' Guidelines, p. 109, gives good guidance on conducting drama and role playing activities.

WHAT YOU DO

- 1 Have any students seen a wind farm? Do they know what windmills (now usually called wind turbines) look like? When students hear the word 'windmill' do they think of the old-fashioned 'Dutch' windmill or of modern, metal ones now being built?

- 2 Introduce the role play: a company is planning to build a wind farm in the local area. The wind farm would be made up of a number of wind turbines on a hill on a local farm. People in the area are holding a meeting to discuss what they think about the plan.



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- 3 Give a different slip of paper to each student or group of students. Ask the students to think about the kind of person who might hold this point of view and why they would hold it. If the students are in a group see if each one can think of their own separate reason. They should keep this information inside their heads. Students should act as the people holding these views.
- 4 Tell the students that a meeting is to be called in the local community centre to discuss what should be written in a letter to the Minister of the Environment about the wind farm planned for a local area.
- 5 After 10 minutes ask the students to set their chairs in a semicircle as though for a public meeting. The blackboard or whiteboard should be in front of them all. Introduce the meeting (the teacher can act as the chair, or may choose a student for this task). Ask each person in turn to give their opinion on the topic and to tell the class why they hold that opinion. Put all the opinions up on the board.
- 6 Ask the students if anyone has anything further to add—this is our last chance to put forward our questions or fears about wind farms.
- 7 Make a list of any new opinions and questions.
- 8 What about recommendations? Have we any thing we would like the minister to look into or any advice to give him or her?
- 9 Thank the participants for their attendance at the meeting and assure them that a letter to the minister will be written to take in all their points.
- 10 After the role play, once students are out of their characters and back as themselves, they may wish to discuss what occurred.

Go further

- 1 Think of a place in Ireland that you like. Why do you like it? How do the people who live there use energy? Where does the energy come from? Use colours and shapes in a picture or 3D art work to represent the place and its energy usage.
- 2 As individuals, in groups or as a class write your follow-up letter to the minister.
- 3 Students may wish to do further research for the debate or as follow-up. Here are some good sources of information on this debate:

A UK site giving the position against wind farms is

[www.davidbellamyconservation.org.uk/advice/wind farms.htm](http://www.davidbellamyconservation.org.uk/advice/wind%20farms.htm)

For arguments in favour of wind farms see the UK site

www.yes2wind.com

and the Irish site

www.sei.ie/content/content.asp?section_id=1036

Students could also be asked to discuss the way in which the arguments are presented on these sites and to choose which ones they find most persuasive.

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GALE FORCE

Suggestions for discussion (you may prefer to use or add your own ideas)

- A** I heard a wind farm caused a big landslide in Ireland recently. There's lots of quarrying and cementing goes on with them. They're huge. They're bound to affect the ground wherever you put them.
- B** I'm worried about by global warming, which is caused by gas, coal and oil. We have to stop burning these fuels. The wind is a clean kind of energy.
- C** Tourists come to see our lovely countryside. Nobody wants to look at a whole sky full of windmills.
- D** Wind farms bring construction jobs when they're getting built and I need all the work I can get.
- E** What about the wildlife? Birds and bats get killed in those big blades.
- F** I like the way windmills look. They're interesting. If we got used to electricity pylons we'll get used to the windmills—they're a lot more attractive to look at.
- G** What about the noise? I hear people in other countries had a terrible time with that.
- H** They're talking about giving us some of the money they make from the electricity—or maybe cheaper electricity. We'd save money or maybe make some!
- I** It couldn't be any good as a form of energy. The wind doesn't blow all the time!
- J** We need to get more power in this country. We can't keep burning up the bogs!
- K** They already have windmills all over the world and they're supposed to be very safe for people—no radiation or anything.
- L** Why don't we just save more energy? People should have to insulate their houses and there must be other ways. Why keep making more energy?
- M** Once the wind farm is up that's the end of the disruption—no big trucks of fuel driving about. It's much more suitable than a power plant for an area with small roads.