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Private politics in the garden of England: An atypical case of anti-wind farm contention

Abstract

This article analyses an atypical case of anti-wind farm contention at Marden in south-east England. Anti-wind farm campaigns have typically sought to resist developments through planning institutions. Though focusing on planning, the Marden case successfully pursued a 'private politics' strategy, pressuring businesses (e.g. developer, investors and landowner) to withdraw their support and commitment. Drawing on 10 semi-structured interviews with stakeholders, and extensive documentary analysis, this article describes and explains this atypical case. It argues that Marden's private politics involved strategic framing that aligned with businesses' claims to corporate social and environmental responsibility. Though directly persuading companies on these terms failed, when the campaign 'went public', economic actors withdrew support. Marden's trajectory and outcome are explained via resources and context particular to the case, and the potential reputational damage associated with its framing strategy. The article ends by noting interesting relationships and parallels between private politics and state focused local contention.

Keywords: corporate social and environmental responsibility, frame alignment, local campaigns, outcomes, strategy, wind energy.

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This article explores a case of wind farm siting contention situated around the picturesque village of Marden in the county of Kent, (the garden of) England. Though analysis of wind energy siting conflict is not new (e.g. Gipe 1995: chapter 8), the Marden case is of particular interest as it demonstrates the practice and impact of 'private politics' (Baron 2003),[i] in an area of socio-political contention that typically revolves around, and gets resolved through, formal political institutions, in particular, planning systems (Szarka and Blühdorn 2006). The use of private politics at Marden involved a successful campaign that focused on persuading and pressuring businesses (e.g. the developer, landowner and investors) associated with a proposed development to withdraw their support. This strategic approach is atypical of anti-windfarm campaigns, and the case therefore advances our understanding of this arena of contention.

Conflict over siting wind energy developments can be subsumed within the broader category of contentious politics. Contentious politics involves mobilisation by 'ordinary people – often in alliance with more influential citizens…in confrontation with elites, authorities and opponents' (Tarrow 2011: 31). It is a broad concept that captures various forms of *non-institutional* politics, including revolutions, social movements, and individual campaigns. Contentious politics involves efforts to affect or resist change outside formal political processes (e.g. elections) via 'alternative' means (from petitioning to demonstrations to political violence), though demands are often directed towards formal political institutions (i.e. the state) in efforts to realize aims. Contentious politics takes place at various levels, including, the transnational, national, regional, and local (Rootes 1999).

Non-institutional efforts to resist the siting of wind-energy developments by ordinary citizens within their communities is one example of local contentious politics, which typically, though not exclusively (see Carter 2007: 155-60), involves geographically contained and temporally limited campaigns on narrowly defined issues, from housing provision (Markham 2005: 670) to the perceived threats of asylum seekers (Hubbard 2005) to a wide variety of specific local environmental concerns (e.g. unwanted waste or fracking infrastructure). Local mobilization can be usefully

compared to national oriented social movements, which tend to involve generalized aims (women's liberation, racial equality etc.), geographically diffuse networks that are sustained over relatively long periods of time, and which alternate between periods of relative quiet and intense activity commonly characterized in terms of waves or cycles (Koopmans 2007). Though revolutions and social movements are the most salient forms of non-institutional politics, local conflict makes up a significant proportion of all political contention (Rootes 1999: 290). It is therefore notable that this area '[has] been relatively neglected in the scientific literature' (Rootes 2007: 723), which has tended to focus on the analysis of national social movements (Snow et al. 2007). Given this 'relative neglect', the following case also contributes to the broader literature on local contention.

This article questions whether the Marden campaign represents an atypical example of anti-wind farm contention, and seeks to explain this case: Is Marden atypical, and if so, in what ways? How can we explain the development of this campaign? And what can the case tell us about community resistance to wind farms and local contention more generally? In addressing these questions, the article is based on in-depth analysis of a single case using predominantly qualitative data.[ii] The data draws on 10 semi-structured interviews with stakeholders (activist, landowner, developer and local authority), extensive use of campaign archives (digital and hard copy), and other documentary sources (e.g. government and developer websites and publications). Interviewees were purposively selected, and interviews were conducted while the campaign was ongoing,[iii] with the exception of two follow-up interviews with two key actors (the campaign group leader and landowner), which were carried out after the case was resolved.[iv] To ensure the robustness of findings, the triangulation of data sources (particularly between interviews and documentary sources) has featured strongly in the following analysis. Before empirical analysis can begin however, it is first necessary to conceptually and empirically situate the article. We turn first therefore to a discussion of private politics, before selectively considering research into local wind energy conflict. The article then moves on to a descriptive overview of the case, before demonstrating and explaining its

distinctiveness against the backdrop of typical anti-windfarm strategy. The article ends by making some connections between private political and state oriented contention.

Private Politics

Private politics is a form of contentious political action in which actors seek to redress grievances without looking to the state (Baron 2012; Büthe 2010). As Baron writes:

'Private politics includes direct action by one party against another without recourse to public institutions…The term private means that the parties do not rely on the law or public order; i.e., on law making or law enforcement, although both may be available. The term politics refers to individual and collective action in situations in which people attempt to further their interests by imposing their will on others' (2003: 33 and 63).

As a form of political action that seeks to further interests outside of and without recourse to the state, private politics has taken, and continues to take place in various '[a]renas of civil society…[including] medicine, religion, education, science, the workplace, and labour unions' (Armstrong and Bernstein 2008: 78).[v] Involving choices over the target of action, as well as tactics and timing (Ganz 2004), decisions over whether to adopt private or public (state-oriented) politics are ultimately strategic (Baron 2003: 34). However, the strategic adoption of private politics need not take place to the exclusion of state oriented contention or vice versa. Indeed, private politics can occur alongside mobilization that seeks redress via the state, as many of the post-1960s 'new social movements' such as lesbian/gay, women's and environmental movements attest (Armstrong and Bernstein 2008: 78).

Over the last few decades or so there has been an increasing academic focus on private politics as a form of contentious political action (de Bakker et al. 2013), as scholars have sought to move beyond the purportedly narrow state-centric focus of the dominant 'political process' paradigm (Snow 2004; Armstrong and Bernstein 2008). Of the different expressions of private politics, mobilizations against

corporations has become an increasingly salient dimension, and will be the predominant focus from here on in. Though 'corporate campaigning is not new…it has been a growing phenomenon in various forms for at least the last thirty years' (Ricketts: 2013: 6).[vi] The rise in corporate campaigning has been linked to the increasing 'prominence and ubiquity of corporations in social life…in recent decades, making their interaction with movements and civil society groups even more critical for societal wellbeing' (de Bakker et al. 2013: 577). In effect, corporations have become 'dominant governance institutions [which] has necessitated a shift…that has seen social movements increasingly focus their attention on private sector power holders' (Ricketts: 2013: 6).

The tactics adopted by actors targeting corporations are manifold, ranging from lobbying to boycotts to (non-violent) direct action. The central 'logic' of such tactics is to threaten or inflict negative economic consequences as a means of leverage; the 'logic of damage' (della Porta and Diani 2006), not least via reputational harm and encouraging investors and consumers to withdraw their support (Vasi and King 2012). Interestingly, '[m]any firms attempt to avoid private politics by proactively adopting policies that reduce the likelihood that they will become a target' (Baron 2003: 36). This can involve establishing corporate social and environmental responsibility practices that have the potential to militate against conflict stimulating negative externalities. It is also worth noting that such policies might also be instituted to give a company the veneer of ethical respectability without much substance beneath the rhetoric, for instance, through the practice of 'greenwashing' (Rowell 1996: 101-6). In either case, claims to be ethically responsible leaves corporations open to being held to account, and can lead to campaigners deploying arguments that mobilize businesses' ethical discourse against them (Ricketts 2013). Such 'frame alignment' strategies (Snow et al. 1986) are clearly evident in the Marden case under scrutiny in this article (see below).

Beyond firms proactively avoiding conflict through the adoption of ethical policies, scholars have sought to understand the outcomes of observed instances of private politics. Notwithstanding the numerous ways of conceptualizing such outcomes and consequences in the social movement

literature (e.g. cultural, biographical, inter-movement, see Snow et al. 2007), the majority of studies have been concerned to understand the observed intended political impacts of mobilization (de Bakker 2013: 581). Though the range of such impacts can still be quite broad, including raising public awareness, the recognition of marginalized identities, policy gains, and institutional and structural change, the key question is whether or not movements or campaigns have achieved stated objectives. This will be the criterion for measuring outcomes in the case study considered below.

Research into the intended outcomes of private politics campaigns highlights a mixed record, with perhaps failures outweighing successes (Baron 2003). Though highlighting that we tend to remember successful corporate campaigns, such as mobilization against apparel and footwear, Baron argues that '[i]f data were available on all attempts at private politics…most would probably be found to be failures' (2003: 36). In addition, Ricketts (2013: 21) suggests that we tend to know more about corporate campaigning at the national and multinational level than at the local level. Clearly these are notable conclusions, as the current article seeks to analyse a *local* campaign that ended in an unqualified *success* through the deployment of *corporate focused private politics*. This current piece of research therefore provides the opportunity to analyse a successful instance of private politics at the local level. On these criteria alone the case study analysed might be considered atypical. However, to fully grasp the atypical nature of the campaign explored in this article, we need to turn to a consideration of research into the socio-politics of wind energy. Indeed, it is primarily in relation to this body of knowledge that the claim that Marden is atypical is made and substantiated.

Anti-wind farm contention

Social scientific analysis into the socio-politics of wind energy has, broadly speaking, generated two bodies of research (Jobert 2007): studies seeking to explain public *attitudes* towards (proposed) wind farms (Devine-Wright 2008; Hall et al. 2013) and analysis of *outcomes* over the siting of specific projects (Toke 2005; Ogilvie and Rootes 2015), or over the deployment of wind energy more generally within and across states (Toke et al. 2008). Both areas of research have significantly

contributed to our understanding of the development of wind energy, and research continues to date.

In the UK (and elsewhere), local contention over wind farms has typically revolved around planning regimes, as supporters and opponents of developments have sought to influence the decisions of local and national level decision-makers over the siting of specific projects (Toke 2005; Szarka and Blühdorn 2006). The focus on planning by local objectors is partially conditioned by the open nature of planning systems in Britain to public input (Cowell and Owens 2006; note Rootes 2009 on waste incinerators), and the centrality of planning in decision-making processes. Seeing planning as the most realistic means of resisting developments, local opponents are willing to channel significant resources into oppositional campaigns. With a focus on influencing state institutions at the local level, anti-wind farm campaigns have typically been oriented towards *public* political contention. The following ideal-typical account of anti-wind farm strategy illustrates this.

Strategically, local opponents of wind farms have adopted similar means in addressing grievances through planning regimes, particularly at the local authority level.[vii] Here, groups seek to directly *persuade* decision-makers of the inappropriateness of planned developments, while at the same time applying political *pressure* to locally elected decision-makers via the mobilization of local constituents (Toke, 2005; Ogilvie 2013; Ogilvie and Rootes, 2015). In relation to the former, campaigners present their arguments through various means including phone calls, emails, letters, and 'rebuttal documents',[viii] as well as communicating concerns through the local media (e.g. press and radio). In relation to the latter, local residents and organizations (e.g. parish councils, local businesses) are encouraged to sign petitions and/or write letters to councils objecting to proposals. Such mobilization involves the provision of information via public meetings, leafletting communities, sending emails, and updating digital media (e.g. websites/Facebook), alongside efforts to raise the necessary finances to fund campaigns. Importantly, pre-existing and emergent networks between local campaign organisations facilitate the sharing of strategic information (Ogilvie 2013). Alongside

the centrality and openness of local planning structures, such networks help explain strategic similarities across campaigns.

Clearly this is an ideal-typical account of strategic developments of local mobilization against planned wind energy schemes, and clearly it marginalises many factors in the emergence, development and outcomes of anti-wind energy campaigns we might have discussed, both in terms of similarities and differences (see Ogilvie 2013 for a 5 case comparison). However, the purpose of this brief account is to provide an analytical backdrop against which the atypical nature of the Marden campaign can be emphasised and scrutinised. The key message here is that anti-wind farm campaigns typically focus on resisting developments through the planning system, and thus adopt a strategic orientation towards those particular state institutions.

As will become clear below, the Marden case does mirror, to an extent, the strategic characteristics just outlined. However, what sets this campaign apart is an accompanying robust and persistent orientation toward 'private politics', a strategic approach that ultimately led to the success of the campaign. Before turning to explain the success of private politics in this case, it is first necessary to provide a descriptive overview of the Marden case.

Overview of the Marden campaign

Marden is a small village situated on the Low Weald in Kent, south of Maidstone and east of Tunbridge Wells. It is located in a rural area of rolling hills, irregular fields, abundant hedges and woods, and scattered farmsteads, with numerous small villages in the surrounding area. The campaign at Marden began when selected local residents were informed by Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) of an application for an anemometer mast in May 2007.[ix] Though a local farmer had been looking into the viability of siting a single 127m turbine on his land with the development company Wind Direct for six months, this was the first time members of the local community became aware of the plans. As news spread of the application, a number of local residents wrote to the council to object, as did members of the local parish council at Goudhurst. However, in spite of

these efforts, the plans for the mast were approved by MBC in November 2007. With these plans approved, Wind Direct submitted an application for a single wind turbine the following month.

Amongst the initial objectors to these plans was James Smith, a retired chartered accountant and investment banker who lived in Marden and who had a direct and clear view of the proposed development site from his back garden. Along with a number of concerned residents who also felt threatened by the proposal, Smith set up the Kentish Weald Action Group (KWAG) as a vehicle for campaigning against the wind turbine application. The group was officially launched at a residents' meeting in December 2007.

KWAG began by gathering information on windfarms and meeting regularly to discuss concerns and strategy. They then started informing residents within the local community primarily as a means of raising awareness and developing a membership base. As part of this process they leafleted surrounding villages, put up posters, lobbied local parish councils and also flew a blimp to communicate the height of the turbine. The blimp was borrowed from Stop Cambridge Wind Farm, a local group from Cambridge that also gave KWAG strategic advice.[x] In addition, KWAG set up and regularly updated a website and established relationships with two local newspapers (the Kent Messenger and the Kent and Sussex Courier) that consistently reported on the case. These early mobilisation efforts led to an established support base of 215 local families, who, in addition to being encouraged to write letters of objection to the local council, were kept up to date with events via regular emails.

In mid-December, KWAG were contacted by Linton Park Plc., a food commodity company that sought to protect the value of a large property it owned in the area which it thought the wind turbine would threaten. After some discussion with Smith, the company decided to work with KWAG by commissioning and funding a planning rebuttal document to undermine the applicant's case. To this end it hired the environmental consultants Waterman CPM Ltd. The planning rebuttal was eventually submitted to MBC in July 2008. Wind Direct made no attempt to engage with and inform

the local community about the project beyond statutory consultation, though they did set up information stalls in two nearby towns – Maidstone and Ashford – as a means of raising awareness of, and canvassing public opinion over, renewable energy.

In the meantime, and with the rebuttal document taken care of, KWAG focused its attention elsewhere as a means of resisting the development. For the most part here, and after the initial mobilisation efforts of the core group, the campaign increasingly began to be coordinated and executed by Smith. Here, private politics now became central to the campaign.

In late-December 2007, Smith began writing to executives within Sainsbury's, including the company's CEO Justin King, to inform them that one of his suppliers – the landowner – was planning to site a wind turbine that they believed threatened the health of local residents due to its proximity to their homes. Though executives did engage in correspondence with KWAG, including King, and expressed some sympathy with the group's concerns, communication yielded no substantive results in terms of outcomes.

In addition, KWAG attempted to bring to the attention of Wind Direct and HG Capital, a private equity company whose direct investment (of £19 million) was funding the project, their belief that the development was socially irresponsible. The main thrust of KWAG's argument was that, based upon their own measurements, the proposed turbine was too close to the nearest dwelling and therefore contravened industry best practice guidelines, Wind Direct's own policies, and notions of corporate social responsibility that HG Capital purportedly adhered to.[xi] During these early exchanges of letters and emails, HG Capital and Wind Direct claimed their measurements were correct and that it was for local planners to decide on the application. However, KWAG continued to insist that it was their measurements that were correct and as a result threatened to inform the California State Teachers Retirement System (CalSTRS), a US investor in HG Capital, of poor corporate social responsibility practices relating to the proximity issue. Smith also threatened to

report HG Capital to the Institute of Chartered Accountants in respect of what he believed to be inaccurate audits relating to their investment in a wind turbine at Workington.

While this exchange was going on, KWAG began corresponding with central government over what it believed to be a dubious decision by the Secretary of State relating to the development. With the submission of the application, Wind Direct had argued that an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) was not necessary for a single turbine with limited environmental consequences. However, after seeking advice from Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and Kent Wildlife Trust, and carrying out its own scoping report,[xii] MBC insisted on an EIA, highlighting the potential for negative environmental externalities and evoking the precautionary principle. This decision led to Wind Direct appealing to the Secretary of State, who, after deliberation, backed Wind Direct's claim that an EIA was not necessary.

The Secretary of State's decision led to sustained correspondence between KWAG and national government, where the former sought reasons for this ruling. After a piecemeal and reluctant release of information, prompted by KWAG making use of the Freedom of Information Act, it became apparent that there were inconsistencies in information on the planning application submitted to MBC, and the information that Wind Direct had given to the Secretary of State relating to proximity to nearest dwellings and noise. KWAG informed both MBC and Wind Direct of the errors, which led to the latter attempting to submit amendments to the Council. However, MBC refused to accept these amendments and gave Wind Direct two options: first, submit an EIA under the current application as it stood; or second, withdraw the current application and submit a new application with the necessary amendments. Wind Direct subsequently withdrew the application pending resubmission. They also wrote to KWAG acknowledging their mistake. This process began in December 2007 and ended with the application's withdrawal in October 2008.

Given that Wind Direct was intending to resubmit its application, Smith made good on his threat to inform CalSTRS of KWAG's concerns, first by writing to the company's chief investment officer and

then to its chairman. Having received no response from either, he contacted journalists from the Sacramento Bee, a well-known Californian newspaper. After reviewing KWAG's claims and contacting CalSTRS, the Sacramento Bee published an article in August 2009 giving voice to KWAG's concerns (Sacremento Bee 2009 – see below). Two weeks later, Wind Direct wrote to MBC informing them that it would not be resubmitting its application. Beyond citing 'commercial reasons', the company was not willing to expand on motivations for withdrawal when interviewed.

Despite Wind Direct's withdrawal, the landowner set up a page on his website informing of his intention to find another developer, not least because of the suitable wind speeds in the area. In response, KWAG organised a petition amongst group members and other local residents threatened by the proposal asking him to reconsider. This petition was ignored and so the group set up an additional page on its website directly attacking the landowner and associated family businesses, in particular their claim to being intimately tied to and caring for the local area. At this point the landowner became very concerned about the negative publicity that the campaign would have on the family businesses as well as its 'personal nature'. Here, after some correspondence with KWAG through an intermediary, he decided to scrap all attempts at siting a turbine on his land as long as KWAG ended their campaign. With this assurance the KWAG website closed and the campaign ended. In June 2011, the landowner was considering the possibility of photovoltaics as an alternative to wind generated electricity.

Private Politics and the Marden Campaign

'Movements may be able to shop around for the most vulnerable targets…or rapidly switch targets according to perceived chances for success…however defined by activists. Targeting multiple institutions, while difficult, may increase chances for social change' (Armstrong and Bernstein 2008: 87)

Armstrong and Bernstein here draw attention to the potential efficacy of a strategic approach that targets multiple institutions, particularly given that some might be more vulnerable than others to

campaign pressure. Clearly such an approach is evident in the Marden case, where not only did the campaign make use of both public (state focused) and private political strategies, but also targeted different institutions and actors within each of these arenas. Ultimately, this multi-strategic orientation sought to 'increase the chances for social change', that is to say, campaign success.

The Marden campaign did manage to identify and exploit vulnerabilities in a number of targets, which eventually led to a successful outcome through the use of private politics. However, in what ways can the campaign be said to have deployed private politics? How can we explain the adoption and success of private politics in this case? Was private politics a sufficient condition of campaign success? And what are the implications of this atypical case for understanding local mobilization (against wind farms)?

In a number of ways, the Marden case was typical of anti-wind farm activism. The campaign was a direct response within a community to a planned wind energy development, which led to efforts by a core group of residents to mobilise others against the project.[xiii] Residents established an identity through KWAG, which served as a locus and vehicle for the campaign. Initial strategic efforts concentrated on the local planning system, where KWAG followed the two-fold strategic approach identified above: persuasion and political pressure, which is unsurprising given advice from StopCWF and information from the Country Guardian. In terms of persuasion, KWAG directly lobbied MDC, and via its alliances with Linton Park PLC, submitted a professionally informed rebuttal document. In terms of political pressure, KWAG successfully mobilised a significant number of local constituents. In the course of the campaign MDC received some 300 letters of objection and saw 6 parish councils formally object.[xiv]

In addition to these typical features, KWAG focused its state oriented gaze at the national level. Here the group made use of freedom of information law to ascertain why the Secretary of State had overridden MDC's insistence on an EIA. During a lengthy letter writing exchange it came to light there were informational problems with the planning application, which led to the application's

withdrawal by Wind Direct, who fully intended to amend and resubmit it. This was arguably a turning point in the campaign, which shall be returned to below.

KWAG's use of private politics that accompanied these state oriented efforts began with attempts to directly persuade economic actors with varying interests in the development that the project contravened commitments to ethical business practices. The following examples of KWAG correspondence illustrate this point:

'The fact that [the development site] has been proposed by the landowner and selected by Wind Direct demonstrates *the lack of interest those two parties have in being socially responsible*…The fact that Wind Direct feel that they can proceed with this site…demonstrates that you, as financial backers, *have not imposed your own broader criteria which you would be quite entitled to do as a socially responsible financial institution*' (Letter to Tom Murley, Head of Investments/Renewable Energy, HgCapital, October 2007 – emphasis added).

'Mr King claims that "…*social, environment and ethical concerns should remain at the core of how we do things*." These words are presumably more than just a public relations exercise and, if they have any substance, one would expect that it is precisely in a situation such as the one at present that those responsible for Corporate Responsibility at Sainsbury's would step up to the plate and not ignore the evidence presented to them' (Letter to Anna Ford, Chair, Corporate Responsibility Committee, Sainsbury's, March 2009 – original emphasis).

'Reading the CalSTRS "*Statement of Investment Responsibility*" it is clear to me that you would expect the managers of funds in which you invest to make sure that investment criteria are set which match *your own philosophy in respect of social obligations*. My belief, in this particular case is that *your standards in respect of "Social injury" are not being met*…If your conclusion is that I am correct in believing that such an investment proposal would not meet your criteria perhaps you could encourage [HG Capital] to adopt investment criteria which are more aligned to your expectations. I strongly believe that, if this were to be done, it would result in the site in question

being deselected and the alleviation of a considerable amount of trauma' (Letter to Roger Kozberg, Chair – CalSTRS Investment Committee, April 2008 – emphasis added).

As can be seen here, KWAG aimed to persuade economic actors of the inappropriateness of the development by deploying frames that sought to align with commitments to social and environmentally responsible business practices. Here the message was consistent: the project is socially/environmentally damaging, and your interest in the development contravenes your commitment to being an ethical business. However, as acknowledged earlier, such direct appeals failed to achieve their aims. Though Sainsbury's and HG Capital did engage with KWAG, none were persuaded by their arguments. And representatives from CalSTRS failed to respond to correspondence.

Indeed, evidence suggests that it was only at the point that KWAG's ethical arguments served to potentially harm the business interests of certain actors, not least through reputational damage, that they managed to achieve some leverage. Here coverage of the story in the Sacramento Bee and the direct public attack on the landowner were (likely) central. Coverage in the former read:

'As if a $42 billion loss on its investments in the past fiscal year wasn't enough, now CalSTRS is getting blowback for its stake in a proposed 420-foot-tall wind turbine in the English countryside. Hoping to block the project, activists in the county of Kent are *appealing to the West Sacramento-based pension fund's policies against socially irresponsible investments*. [Smith], a former investment banker who heads the Kentish Wealde Action Group, says the California State Teachers' Retirement System ought to *demand that wind projects supported by its investment dollars meet certain environmental standards*…"*We'd expect, with all CalSTRS says about social injury, that they'd be applying the responsible end of the standard*," [Smith] said' (Sacramento Bee 2009 – emphasis added).

The extent to which coverage in the Sacramento Bee impacted on the outcome at Marden is inconclusive. By the time the article had been published, Wind Direct had withdrawn its application

due to measurement inconsistencies over proximity to dwellings pending resubmission, and during interview the company would only give 'commercial reasons' as their motivation for withdrawing. Nevertheless, the timing of the announcement that the developer would not be resubmitting their application closely followed the coverage in the Sacramento Bee. CalSTRS may well have pressured HgCapital to withdraw.

In addition to publicly attacking the reputation of CalSTRS, KWAG's adoption of this strategy towards the landowner ultimately led to his withdrawal from the scheme. After Wind Direct pulled out of the project, the landowner publicly declared he would be seeking to work with an alternative wind energy developer. After a failed attempt to petition the landowner, KWAG dedicated a page on its website to publically attacking his reputation. Central to this page was the following:

'The [landowner's] website proudly proclaims: '"*Three Generations*" *Caring for the Garden of England for more than a century…As responsible landowners and committed conservationists we feel beholden to act positively within the wider community…This is a move that exactly fits both the personal philosophy of the owner and overall philosophy of the business*'. Some might justifiably argue that the stated intention of the [company's] directors to open up their corner of the Garden of England to industrial wind turbine development for the sake of a few thousand pounds a year, is *a break with that caring tradition*…HgCapital and Wind Direct have pulled the plug on the original application. This gives the [landowner] an opportunity to withdraw gracefully…We hope this webpage will encourage [him] to reflect carefully on the consequences of [his] actions…and that [he] will decide to confirm once and for all that…the blight [is]…removed' (KWAG website, March 2010 – emphasis added).

KWAG's public attack on the reputation of the landowner put the final nail in the coffin of the proposed development at Marden. Concerned for the impact of KWAG's article on the family business, the landowner dropped his plans to site a wind energy development on his land. The

contention over the Marden wind farm had ended. KWAG's public politics strategy had ultimately prevailed. How can we explain this trajectory and success?

The peculiar trajectory of the Marden campaign can be explained by a conjunction of the contingent nature of the local context and the specific resources at the disposal of KWAG, and particularly the group's leader. These factors affected the campaign in two ways: Firstly, in terms of context, 18 months into the campaign KWAG was contacted by a Linton Park PLC, which was keen to protect the value of its property. The resulting alliance led to the company commissioning and funding a rebuttal document that was submitted to MBC in an effort to undermine the applicant's case. This was a significant development. Prior research has highlighted that commissioning rebuttal documents has featured in other instances of activism against wind farms, and that activists can dedicate considerable time and energy raising the funds to pay for the contribution of planning specialists as well as hiring other experts to help fight cases (e.g. barristers at public inquiries) (Ogilvie 2013; Ogilvie and Rootes 2015). That a local business had agreed to take care of this aspect of the campaign meant that Smith could concentrate more squarely on a strategy oriented towards private politics. Here then, a contingent aspect of the local context contributed to providing Smith with the space to make the most of his time, skills and experience in pursuing economic actors. That political opportunity structures are central in understanding the development and outcomes of contentious politics is generally accepted within the literature (Kriesi 2007). That contingent opportunities are influential in understanding the trajectory and outcomes of contention is also acknowledged (Rootes 1997). Such opportunities were certainly influential in the development and outcomes at Marden.

If local context served to influence developments, so too did resources, not least the fact that Smith was retired and had enjoyed a career in finance and accounting. Retirement gave Smith a considerable amount of time to dedicate to the campaign and certainly influenced his ability to lead KWAG and steer the group in his desired direction. In addition, his past career and understanding of the business world influenced his adoption of a corporate focused strategy, grounded in the belief

that such a strategy would yield the desired results. In effect, the cultural resources garnered from a corporate career gave Smith a considerable 'feel for the game', which ultimately proved successful in achieving KWAG's aims. On this point, Armstrong and Bernstein write:

'Challenges are more likely to succeed if activists have a "feel for the game." Challengers are often…individuals structurally linked to the institution in question. True outsiders lack the knowledge needed to identify the vulnerabilities of particular institutions. Insiders are thus expected to play a role in challenges, either through initiating challenges or providing resources and information to external challengers. Those with the best "feel for the game" should be able to navigate the arena successfully…Thus, it is not surprising that some researchers have found that change is often initiated by those who are simultaneously insiders and outsiders' (2008: 85).

Smith clearly occupied this insider-outsider status, and his 'feel for the game' not only influenced his commitment towards private politics, but also his strategic orientation within this arena. Here KWAG targeted multiple institutions and actors in its search for vulnerabilities and leverage. Central to this approach was a framing strategy that sought 'frame alignment' with companies' commitments towards social and environmental responsibility. The main task of frame alignment 'is for movement leaders to develop and articulate collective action frame[s] and align [them] with the belief system[s] of those whom they wish to mobilize' (Morris 2004: 239). Companies' claims to ethical business practice clearly offered a 'discursive opportunity', that is, 'ideas in the broader political culture believed to be "sensible," "realistic," and "legitimate" and whose presence would thus facilitate reception of specific forms of collective action framing' (McCammon 2013). Understanding their potential for leverage, Smith sought to align KWAG's frames with a cultural context diffuse with businesses' ethical claims, first by making direct appeals to the companies, and then going public with the potential for reputational damage. Interestingly, Ricketts notes that direct ethical appeals can be effective in corporate campaigning. However, when such appeals fail, it is the potential for economic harm can that be decisive in understanding the impact of strategic framing (Ricketts 2013:

6-9). This was certainly the case at Marden. When ethical persuasion failed, KWAG 'went public' with their concerns. The potential reputational damage and related economic consequences served to (likely in the case of CalSTRS) leverage the desired outcome. Smith's 'feel for the game', derived from his cultural resources, was clearly decisive here.

Judged against the ideal-typical backdrop of anti-windfarm activism then, with a predominant focus on persuading and pressuring local authorities to refuse permission for planned projects, the extent and success of private politics at Marden sets this case apart. However, though these two strategic orientations have been largely separated in this article for reasons of analytical exposition in relation to particular questions, there are potentially important interactions and parallels to note. Firstly, Wind Direct withdrew its planning application as a result of KWAG exposing measurement problems via a state focused strategy (freedom of information requests etc.). Did this withdrawal make the development more vulnerable to the impact of private politics? Might Wind Direct have been more recalcitrant had the application been more secure? Was the application's withdrawal a necessary condition of success in this case? These questions are difficult to answer given the company's reluctance to divulge information. But they do raise intriguing questions as to the potential interaction between public and private politics. Understanding the relationship between these two strategic approaches when they appear together in a particular instance of contention is certainly an avenue to pursue in future research.

In addition, there is an interesting parallel to draw between these two strategic orientations and outcomes. This relates to the ideal-typical two-fold strategy associated with securing planning refusal noted earlier. What is interesting here is that this two-fold approach is reflected in the business focused campaign at Marden, where strategic framing efforts involved first persuasion and then pressure. Moreover, the fact that the potential reputational damage of public facing discourse was more significant in influencing outcomes at Marden than direct discursive engagement to an extent reflects research into the variable impact of these strategies on planning decisions. In relation

to that research, Ogilvie (2013) has pointed out that mobilization of local constituents is likely the most effective strategy in influencing locally elected decision-makers. Faced with the potential fall-out of approving locally unpopular developments, 'political logic' dictates that elected planning committee members will at times be inclined to reject proposals. Similarly, when businesses are faced with the potential consequences of reputationally damaging campaign frames, 'economic logic' dictates more favourable outcomes for activists. In both cases, interests trump the power of argumentation.

Conclusion

This article has described and explained an atypical case of anti-wind farm activism in England. It has argued that the centrality, extent and success of private politics in the Marden campaign serves to differentiate it from others. This campaign trajectory has been explained in terms of a combination of context and resources that led to the targeting of multiple corporate actors via frames that sought to align with businesses' claims to social and environmental responsibility. When direct appeals to economic actors on this basis failed, KWAG managed to secure success by 'going public' with their frames. The key means of leverage here was the potential economic consequences of reputational damage to businesses.

Demonstrating the use and impact of private politics at the local level, the Marden case offers something new to our understanding of anti-windfarm activism, community contention more generally, and private politics, where research has tended to focus on national and transnational activism. Local anti-windfarm (and other anti-infrastructure) campaigns are typically fought through planning systems, but the KWAG campaign demonstrates an alternative route to resist unwanted developments at the local level.

Private politics is part of 'a new paradigm for understanding social movements' (Armstrong and Bernstein 2008: 91) and contentious politics more generally. Yet as a distinct means of contention, 'the importance of private politics [still] remains to be established' (Baron 2003: 64), particularly

given suspicions that the majority of such campaigns fail. Clearly far more research needs to be done in what is an area of increasing interest to scholars of contentious politics. Analysing an example of successful private politics at the local level, the Marden case offers an interesting contribution to this developing body of work.

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[i] Private politics involves efforts to resolve conflict without recourse to state power (see below).
[ii] Occasionally quantitative data are given, e.g. level of campaign support and number of objection to the local authority, but these are simply to aid the description of the case.
[iii] The research design in no way involved participant observation however.
[iv] Interviewees referred to by name have been anonymised.

[v] Armstrong and Bernstein use the term 'multi-institutional politics', which is a broader concept than private politics that incorporates state and non-state oriented challenges. The above quote comes from a discussion of non-state oriented conflict and thus squares with the idea of private politics.
[vi] Perhaps the best-known example of such activism in the environmental protest literature is Greenpeace's successful campaign against Shell's intention to dispose of the Brent Spar at sea in the mid-1990s. Beyond the environment, anti-sweatshop activism, not least against the well-known sports brand Nike, is another notable example.
[vii] Refusals by local authorities to grant planning permission can lead to an appeal by a developer and a public inquiry, which is facilitated by a nationally based planning inspector. Here campaign strategy focuses on persuasion as planning inspectors are not subject to local political pressures.
[viii] A rebuttal document is a direct response to a developer's planning application and environmental statement. It sets out the case why an application should not be approved.
[ix] Anemometer masts measure wind speeds.
[x] KWAG also garnered information for the Country Guardian, a national organization that supports local anti-wind farm campaigners.
[xi] KWAG argued the distance was less than 560 meters. Wind Direct claimed it was 650m. Wind Direct's policies and industry guidelines suggest that the nearest dwelling to a turbine should be 750m.
[xii] A scoping report is intended to ascertain the necessity, content and extent of an environmental impact assessment.
[xiii] The KWAG campaign was also broadly similar to other campaigns against wind farms in terms of organizational structure (a core group with a clear leader), size of core group and membership, and number of objections raised with the local authority (see Ogilvie 2013: 119-20). It is interesting to note that this roughly equivalent level of mobilization developed in response to a single turbine. Other cases have typically involved larger multi-turbine projects.
[xiv] Parish Council opinions are often taken as proxy indicators of community discontent by local authorities (Toke 2005).