

Huw Irranca-Davies AS/MS  
Y Dirprwy Brif Weinidog ac Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros  
Newid Hinsawdd a Materion Gwledig  
Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate  
Change and Rural Affairs



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1459  
Ein cyf/Our ref HIDCC/10173/24

Carolyn Thomas MS  
Chair - Petitions committee

02 October 2024

Dear Carolyn,

Thank you for your letter dated the 6 September regarding petition P-06-1459: 'Wind farm developments are akin to the drowning of Welsh valleys and old slate industry. Stop them.'

The Welsh Government has statutory commitments to reach net zero, and in a climate and nature emergency we recognise the need to support the development of a renewables-based energy system for current and future generations. We are keen to emphasise the importance these renewable energy projects will have not only in combatting the climate emergency, but in bringing economic and nature benefits to Wales. I want to make it clear we understand that in order to reach our target to meet the equivalent of 100% of our annual electricity consumption from renewable sources by 2035, we will need a range of renewable technologies of different types and scales. As wind energy is one of the most mature and cost-effective technologies, it is likely to make the most significant contribution to our energy mix in the short to medium term.

Similarly, the UK Government has now lifted the ban on wind farm developments in England and is now working with stakeholders to consider how best to encourage renewed investment into onshore wind farms in England.

I cannot comment on plans for individual projects such as Gaerwen Wind Farm as this may compromise the decision-making process around them. However policies 17 and 18 of Future Wales: the national plan 2040 set out the Welsh Government's position on large scale onshore renewable and low carbon energy development.

Policy 17 identifies 10 'Pre-Assessed Areas' (PAAs) within which the principle of accommodating windfarm developments in terms of landscape impact has been found to be acceptable. Within PAAs there is a presumption in favour of windfarm development. However, any planning applications that come forward within these areas remain subject to the assessment criteria set out in policy 18 and any other material planning considerations that apply.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

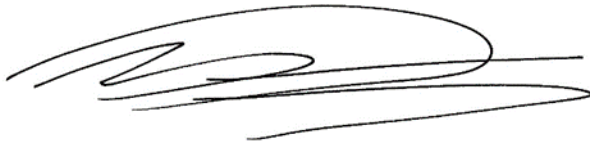
We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Policy 18 criteria ensures that planning applications for Developments of National Significance are rigorously assessed so that communities, designated areas and landscapes, and protected habitats and species are protected from unacceptable adverse impacts. When assessing new development proposals Policy 18 also requires consideration be given to the cumulative impact of existing and consented schemes.

The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 ensure that public bodies must maintain and enhance biodiversity and promote the resilience of ecosystems (section 6), and in doing so protect habitats of principal importance (section 7). Habitats which are considered irreplaceable (including peatlands) are afforded additional protection as part of the Environment Act's step wise approach.

I hope this letter addresses the issues raised in the petition, and I look forward to hearing the Petitions Committee's views on this subject.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Huw Irranca-Davies', with a large, sweeping flourish underneath.

**Huw Irranca-Davies AS/MS**

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