

Environment and Sustainability Committee

Inquiry into Energy Policy and Planning in Wales
EPP 40 – Cambrian Mountains Society

Russell George A.M.
c.c.Committee Clerk, Environment and Sustainability Committee,

Dear Mr George,

I was pleased to note that you had called for a public review of TAN 8. I hope that the Committee on which you are the Shadow Minister will look at the issues dispassionately and have not already decided that no meaningful review is possible.

Many of us cannot understand why the Welsh Government is not protecting the glorious landscapes and beauty of Wales, but is dancing to tunes of others. TAN 8 is at present being prayed in aid by all the developers of windfarms. In spite of the First Minister telling us that major decisions are the UK government imposing on Wales, TAN 8 is the Welsh Government policy designating areas for windfarms. The developers have written stating that argument cannot be made on the basis of landscape because the Welsh Government have already stated that land in an SSA can be used for windfarms and have therefore dealt with the question of landscape value. TAN 8 is a material consideration in any application and the argument put to me and The Cambrian Mountains Society (of which I am Secretary) and others in a standard letter by developers is that the Welsh Government have already determined that the landscape is suitable for windfarms.

I would prefer that TAN 8 is repealed, but at the very least the Welsh Government needs to re-examine this policy and make it clear that an SSA zone does not mean that the Welsh Government have looked at the landscape and declared it a landscape not worth protecting. Have they seen the beauty of some of the sites around Pumlumon? Have they considered the infrastructure blight on tracts of mid Wales? Welsh men and women prepared to desecrate their heritage again. Water, then coal, then forestry and now wind. At least the Welsh Government should try to place as level a playing field as possible for any applications and ensure that within any of the SSA zones the developers need to present their arguments for turbines in that particular place. This could be done by the Welsh Government declaring that landscape as well remains a material consideration. I recognise of course that planning policy statements in many ways favour the grant of permission -- but at least the Welsh Government would not be adding to this bias in favour of wind energy by allowing developers to claim that the Welsh Government have decided that the landscape is expendable. The First Minister could then more correctly state that the decisions were taken by others.

The Committee may be interested in a study that the Cambrian Mountains Society have done in relation to TAN 8. All the letters and e-mails of the consultation before its acceptance have been read and analysed under Freedom of Information and the Society will shortly be publishing its findings. They will be ready soon after the deadline date for consultation by the Committee and I would hope that the Committee will be prepared to consider this important evidence. It will inform any decision to review the evidence.

Please also treat this as evidence to the Committee.

Yours sincerely,

T.R.Earis.

Professor T.R.Earis

Secretary to the Cambrian Mountains Society.