

Environment and Sustainability Committee

Inquiry into Energy Policy and Planning in Wales

EPP 142 - Professor L Birke and Dr C Rivera

We wish to make the following points regarding the development of windfarms in Wales:

1. While we recognise the need for Wales to meet carbon reduction targets, and to develop renewables, we do not believe that extensive windfarm developments are appropriate. There is now evidence that they are not particularly efficient, and consume a great deal of energy - not only in their manufacture and transport, but also in keeping them going during “down time”. Windfarms are not efficient producers of clean energy, and are hugely unpopular because of the potential for environmental damage.
2. There must be greater consideration of microgeneration within plans considered by the Welsh Assembly. Microgeneration should be a part of any overall programme for renewable energy generation within the U.K.
3. The two petitions under consideration by the Committee have been widely supported by people in Wales and adjacent parts of England; petitioners have made it clear that local people do not want windfarms, for many reasons. These include: massive disruption of roads and infrastructure; noise disturbance; destruction of visual amenities (sometimes in areas of outstanding natural beauty); destruction of habitats, including vulnerable peatlands; damage to tourism; danger to countryside users (e.g. walkers, horse riders).
4. Transport and infrastructure proposals for these developments are unacceptable, and there has been inadequate consultation with local communities likely to be affected. Transport infrastructure in this area is simply not going to cope with such large-scale development, and tourism will be adversely affected for many years to come.
5. There are a number of inconsistencies in policies and strategies, between the U.K’s central government, the Welsh Assembly, and local councils, which make a mockery of debates about localism and devolution. Local communities should have significant input into policy-making.
6. Given the widespread public opposition to windfarm developments throughout mid-Wales (and associated opposition to pylons in the Marches), and the problems noted above, we believe that TAN 8 must be urgently revised.