

Environment and Sustainability Committee

Inquiry into Energy Policy and Planning in Wales
EPP 146 – Miss ML Fanders and Mr BS Crawford

Committee Clerk
Environment & Sustainability Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
CARDIFF
CF991NA

Sent by e-mail to: E&S.comm@wales.gov.uk

22nd September 2011

Dear Sir

ENQUIRY INTO ENERGY POLICY & PLANNING IN WALES

Further to the Chair's letter of 2nd August 2011, would you please ensure that our following comments are taken into account by the above Enquiry, and in particular during the consideration of the two petitions about Welsh Government planning guidance as it relates to onshore wind energy and the impact on local communities and infrastructure (P-03-273 *Transport of Wind Turbines in Mid Wales* and P-04-324 *Say No to Tan 8 – Windfarms & High Voltage Power Lines Spoiling our Community*).

1. Implications for Wales if responsibility for consenting major onshore and offshore energy infrastructure projects remains a matter that is reserved by the UK Government

The UK Government could force Wales to accept the construction of massive and numerous windfarm sites, the required associated constructions to connect their output to the National Grid and the necessary road-widenings and increased traffic volumes, with no reference to the adverse affects this would have on the people, economy, flora and fauna of Wales. We could end up being forced to turn the whole of Wales into an industrial site, making life intolerable for residents, without having any say in the matter. **This would be totally unacceptable.**

2. Transport of wind turbines in Mid Wales

This is a massive issue and not limited to just wind turbine components. The transport of all building materials, the movement of all construction traffic and personnel for wind turbine sites, and for the related constructions and works required for connection into the National Grid, must also be taken into account when considering the total impact of traffic movement through Wales and the adjoining English counties. **A full survey of the total social and economic impact and costs to Wales must be carried out and quantified before the full impact can be identified and any decisions made.**

2.1 The transportation of abnormal loads and the great increase in the volume of general traffic will adversely affect all road-users - the daily movement of the people in Wales, both residents and businesses, and also visitors to Wales, and deliveries to/from businesses. What financial compensation for delays and loss of business will be paid?

- 2.2 What procedures will be put in place to carry out regular structural surveys of buildings along the transport routes, and what financial compensation will be paid for any damage the abnormal loads and increase in traffic volume may cause to these buildings?
- 2.3 What procedures will be put in place to ensure that no local properties are devalued by the required highways works and the increase in traffic volumes? We understand that if any highways works carried out by the County Council result in the devaluation of the value of a property, compensation can be claimed, but what is the position if any such works are carried out by private companies rather than the County Council or the Highways Authority?
- 2.4 It is vital that a full strategic health, mental as well as physical, survey be carried out. What will be the effect of the increased air pollution by emissions from the traffic and the increased volume of noise and vibration on the people of Wales?
- 2.5 What will be the effect of the increased air pollution and the increased volume of noise and vibration on the local flora and fauna?
- 2.6 What will be the effect on the emergency services if roads are closed during the transportation of the abnormal loads, or hold-ups are caused by the increased volume of general traffic? A full investigation is required to ascertain exactly how the emergency services – police, fire and ambulance – will cope.
- 2.7 We understand that the initial costs of all highways work required for the transportation of the abnormal loads will be met by the construction companies, but who will bear the cost of maintaining the increased size of these roads in the future? It would be totally unacceptable if local residents had to pay this cost through increased Council Taxes.
- 2.8 What surveys, if any, have been carried out to ascertain the increase in traffic volume which will be necessitated by the felling and removal of the large number of trees which will be required to accommodate the turbines and the National Grid sub-station, pylons and overhead cables?
- 2.9 What surveys, if any, have been carried out to quantify the effect of the increased carbon emissions caused by the additional traffic and also by all the required highways works, and how will these be balanced by the increase in ‘green’ energy expected from the wind turbines?
- 3. Say No to TAN 8 – Windfarms and High Voltage Power Lines Spoiling our Countryside**
TAN 8 is a Technical Advice Note and not planning law. When TAN 8 was drawn up, it took no account of the following, therefore it should be fully reviewed and updated before any decision on additional wind turbine sites, National Grid connections, etc are made.
- 3.1 The turbines now proposed are far taller, the blades much longer, and the potential output capacity far higher, than were originally envisaged in TAN 8 and it is essential that these increases are taken into account.
- 3.2 An up-to-date survey of the possible detrimental effect on the health of local residents from noise, flicker, and especially infra-sound (low-frequency noise/vibration), caused by turbines much larger than those envisaged in TAN 8 is an essential requirement.
- 3.3 We understand that a House of Lords decision is that the minimum distance that turbines should be sited from residential buildings depends on the height of the turbines. As the turbines currently proposed are far taller than envisaged in TAN 8, it is vital that the boundaries of the SSAs be re-drawn to take this into account.

3.4 No environmental study has been carried out on the implications of TAN 8. Enormous swathes of forest will have to be felled to accommodate the turbines. What effect will the loss of all these trees have on the air quality? What effect will the additional traffic movement required to transport these trees off-site have on carbon emissions?

3.5 TAN 8 takes no account of the massive construction works required to connect the output of the turbines into the National Grid. A full survey of the social, economic and health effect of this, is required.

3.6 What effect will construction works have on water supplies, particularly private ones from springs or bore holes where the water comes from hills lying within the construction sites? How will local residents ensure that they continue to have an adequate and unpolluted water supply?

Finally, we would like to point out that when we purchased our home four years ago, the fact of it being sited in a TAN 8 SSA, with the consequential property blight this would cause, did not show up in the legal Searches carried out for our purchase, yet only a few weeks after moving in, we discovered that our property lies completely within Strategic Search Area C and since then three planning applications have been submitted for the construction of wind turbine sites in our immediate vicinity (in fact, the proposed boundary of one site actually adjoins our garden) and a fourth planning application is currently being worked up ready for submission to Powys CC. We have now had our property up for sale for over two years but have been totally unable to sell it, having had viewers who were interested in buying it but who then rejected it because of the wind farm planning applications. Our property has not been devalued – it has been made totally unsellable and we now face the prospect of an extremely bleak future living completely surrounded by wind turbine sites with the almost-certain adverse affect on our mental and physical health, as well as the complete loss of amenity should we end up living in what will be a virtual industrial estate rather than the beautiful, peaceful and unspoilt countryside which we had thought we were buying for our retirement.

We must therefore state categorically that:

The National Assembly for Wales must:

- **Do all it can to ensure that responsibility for consenting major onshore and offshore infrastructure projects is devolved to them rather than remaining with the UK Government**
- **Ensure that a proper and full public review of all transport issues is undertaken before any decision on wind farm and national Grid connection planning applications are made**
- **Carry out a full and public review of TAN 8 and update it and any other associated Technical Advice Notes**

Yours faithfully

MISS M L FLANDERS and MR B S CRAWFORD

Copy to: Russell George AM/AC