

Environment and Sustainability Committee

Inquiry into Energy Policy and Planning in Wales

EPP 154 – Robin and Helen Cox

22nd Sept 2011

Dear Sirs,

Environment and Sustainability Committee – Energy Policy Review

We write in response to the above to formally state our objections in the strongest terms and express our grave concerns for Montgomeryshire and Mid Wales as a whole were the current energy policy to go ahead without amendment. We hope particularly that as a result of your deliberations, you will see the inequality and sheer devastation likely for Mid Wales as a direct consequence of the flawed planning policy document known as TAN 8. We fervently ask that you resolve to review it's content and stop all planning cases going through whilst this is being done.

We went to Cardiff in protest, at the Mid Wales Connection project, in May this year. We have never done such a thing before, but we will do so again and again – and we are not the only ones. We are proud to say we are a few of thousands; here in Mid Wales and throughout the Country, and in Scotland, and England and Germany, and Holland. We are against the proliferation of industrial scale windfarms which destroy the natural environment (amongst many other things) and necessitate dreadful, unhealthy metal pylons through our beautiful countryside. Our position is this;

We do not want a Substation siting at Cefn Coch and we do not want a Substation siting at Abermule.

The long term local devastation wrought by building a Substation such as that suggested is phenomenal. Neither site can cope with a 20 acre crater in it's midst, 1000's of tonnes of cement and an infrastructure which will be seen for miles and miles around , blighting what is a beautiful and sought after landscape.

Each site has a local incumbent population which will be adversely affected in so so many ways – affects of EMF on their health, increased risk from flooding due to massive, cumulative loss of peat bog, soil and thus essential drainage, constant noise from construction and from the buzzing of the lines.

The size/capacity of the proposed Substation is far higher than necessary – and makes us wonder what National Grid/WAG are not yet telling us about yet more proposals in the future!

The effects on the roads in getting to and building these Substations is more than they can bear or are capable of taking (weight-wise). We hear NG plan to build a new road especially if the chosen site is Cefn Coch – That tells you it is not an ideal site.

The traffic congestion, caused daily for months on end will surely take it's toll and further ex-communicate our communities.

Further it is an open landscape, not easily "screened off" as you would call it.....and how do you screen off the pylons coming into the Substation and then even bigger ones going out again!! There will be lots of them if all the proposed windfarms, currently awaiting planning permission, get the go ahead and the cumulative effects of this (for that is how it must be considered, not singly as one entity) are appalling and a visual "turn-off" for this beautiful County and for the hundreds of thousands of tourists who visit us regularly.

Finally, we have one last point, we believe originally in the search for potential sites for the Substation, there were at least 6 sites in the list. No opportunity has been given for us to comment on their suitability as they were discounted – by whom and on what grounds we do not know (neither have we been given the chance to take issue with the reasons for their withdrawal) - and removed from the website. Could it be however, that they were all further away from the grid Connection and thus would cost more to connect?

All of the route corridors from Cefn Coch are unsuitable. This is a visually stunning area of natural beauty, indeed in the past it was put forward as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). PCC - It would be a dereliction of your duty to conserve and preserve the beauty of Wales if this were to go through. You are a custodian for our County. The Vyrnwy valley is very narrow and the infrastructure will be unacceptably close to local populations, schools, scheduled ancient monuments, burial grounds, a Listed church and a vibrant local ecosystem all along the route corridors.

The major business in the area is farming but the major revenue earner is tourism. These communities, this whole County relies heavily on the economic input from tourism. It supports us, nurtures us, employs many of us. The cumulative impact of more large scale windfarms, the Substation and the miles of pylons needed in order to get to the Grid will turn our stunning green valleys into a visual mess of metal and wires, a complete "turn off" for the hundreds of thousands of repeat tourists from the West Midlands, Staffordshire, Shropshire and the North West.

The route corridor has a dozen or so caravan parks with statics, log cabins and touring pitches – already they are struggling to sell new pitches as word gets out about these proposals. It is surely impossible, no downright ludicrous, to think that these businesses will not lose serious business as caravan owners seek better, uncluttered views elsewhere.

The consequences of this are far reaching as loss of the tourist pound will affect our local communities but also visits to our coastline and key resorts of Aberystwyth, Aberdovey, Tawyn, Fairbourne and Barmouth. Jobs will be lost and the economic fall out from this is very dire indeed for an area not endowed with industry and immediate replacement jobs.

This will ruin our landscape and our livelihoods.

Farming will not come out of this unscathed either as farmers are forced to allow pylons on their land and then suffer the consequences – which no amount of money can assuage- of lower yields from crops and livestock.

Animals, birds, insects, woodlands, fish and flora and fauna will also be greatly affected by EMF, Noise pollution and the disruption caused by long-term construction, all along the routes. We have a wide and vibrant ecosystem with ancient woodland sites, many nesting sites and protected species (bats, curlew, peregrine, otters, red kite to name just a few) that cannot stay and will be displaced during the years of disruption from the build and construction phase not just along the routes but by every windfarm upland that receives planning permission. Will they be lost to the County altogether? Where will they go? Does anyone care?

We have only one 'A' road along the proposed route corridors, it is not good enough and cannot bear the weight of the constant, daily impact of the wide loads carried by the heavy lorries. It will very soon break down, subside and require remodelling – causing further delays and disruption to NG and other road users. Houses are very close to this road all along the route, many of them too will be hit by the lorries, break down, subside and require remodelling. The owners will seek compensation and the funds to make good from NG, WAG – for allowing this to go ahead in the face of such opposition - and possibly PCC. Law firms are currently circling, enticing us with their claims of help- not just to claim for this, but also if our property value falls, if our property floods and so on.

Due to our only having one main road, the unacceptable traffic chaos which will ensue will affect all local road users but also the tourists trying to get to the local caravan sites, or maybe to the coastal resorts – either way, they will not sit in these traffic jams for long and will vote to go elsewhere resulting in an enormous economic loss for all.

We have saved the best reason why we believe not to do this until last.... Large areas of the route corridors are designated flood plains. Dykes are in place throughout the village of Meifod. Last year we had the worst flooding in over 25 years. The cumulative effect of passing the hundreds of wind turbines for development in upland Powys, with their swimming pool sized bases filled with tonnes of cement to anchor the turbines, together with their linking tracks from turbine to turbine, the bases for ancillary buildings, a 20acre Substation and over 80 miles of pylons and their corresponding linking tracks and associated road infrastructure, WILL irrevocably change the hydrology of the whole area, losing tonnes of peat bog (itself vital in

carbon storage and an important habitat), dark soils and thus essential drainage. The resulting increased run off during periods of rainfall, to an already high water table WILL be increased and regular flooding all along the valley and into Shropshire affecting Shrewsbury , then via the River Severn, Tewkesbury and Gloucester etc.

We live in one of the houses which WILL get flooded if this route were to be chosen and these developments go ahead. We will seek compensation each and every time it happens from those we believe have wilfully caused this due to disregarding or underestimating the consequences of cumulative developments such as these proposed.

LISTEN to the people of Montgomeryshire and to our many supporters all over Wales and the UK **who do not want this.**

Read and review all the very many articles and editorials written in the national press since March 2011.

Eminent writers (from ALL the national papers now), authors and politicians (G. Monbiot, Lord Lawson, Glyn Davies, Liam Fox etc) are with us in our fight and constantly extol the poor value for money, poor green energy credential (due to the need for back-up) of the current national Energy Policy. Surely you must realise what folly and downright economic mis-management it is to continue with the policy unchanged. The country is in an economic mess which, despite our Governments efforts, could get infinitely worse (and probably will) down to problems in Europe and indeed globally. The cat is out of the bag as far as where the subsidies to fund wind-turbines, ROC's come from. The populace will not stand for paying out even more than we are doing already FOR SOMETHING WHICH DOESN'T WORK EFFICIENTLY.

AM's of the WAG, Hear us, make a principled stand to protect our Country, do your duty as "Custodians of our land" and rethink how we can achieve our green energy targets;

1. Get us to Use less electricity in the first place. National, long-term publicity campaign.
2. Be bold - Give our vast financial subsidies (through existing energy bills) to the populace in the form of eco-grants to properly insulate our homes, "...a third of energy generated is wasted through poor insulation" Darren Johnson (Green Party) March 2010.
3. Give incentives to encourage micro generation via installing solar thermal, solar voltaic etc
4. All new build properties to be of the highest possible energy efficiency.

Read the above and hear it's message. Do not think we have come too far down this road now.

Now is the time to STOP and THINK AGAIN.

Is not the cumulative effect of all the above too high a price for Montgomeryshire to pay? I say "Yes it is and we should think again"

Robin and Helen Cox