

Environment and Sustainability Committee

Inquiry into Energy Policy and Planning in Wales

EPP 193 – L R Mytton

Response to Committee paper dated 2nd August 2011

1. It would be difficult to overestimate the importance of dependable and affordable energy supplies to the economic and physical well being of any nation. It therefore seems reasonable to ask the **Environment and Sustainability Committee** to start its review by establishing what elements of energy policy and planning are devolved to WAG. If the answer is none, the question then is by what authority does the assembly aspire to have its own energy policy. By doing so it is almost certain to bring Wales into conflict with national (British) policy and create a dog's dinner of the planning system. This immediately brings into focus Technical Advice Note 8 (TAN 8), the Assembly's primary energy policy instrument that, for all practical purposes, favors only one renewable energy technology – wind farms. A technology that spectacularly fails to deliver any of the primary criteria that characterize sound energy production and distribution systems; these are
 - a. They must be reliable, i.e. capable of supplying energy when and where it is needed
 - b. Must be adequate. I.e. meet totality of demand.
 - c. Must be affordable.
2. The Welsh Government's current policies and policy instruments are based on aspirations set out in *A Low Carbon Revolution – Energy Policy Statement (2010)*.
3. This document aspires to a future based largely on natural renewable energy resources – wind, wave, solar, biomass etc. Unfortunately the majority of these energy resources fail to meet the requirements of either 1a or 1b, or both. As a consequence they all require alternative, more reliable support systems that make it is entirely predictable that they will prove to be increasingly costly. An unaffordable energy system will damage the economy and drive growing numbers of people into fuel poverty. Why would politicians choose to do this? The answer is of course climate change.

4. The UK. Population 66 million produces around 2% of the world's climate change gases (CCG). Wales, population, 3 million produces a tiny fraction of this 2%. I'm not against Wales doing its bit on climate change, but it should be proportionate, especially as Wales is the poorest of the UK's nations. We should not be driven into increasing poverty through ill-founded political aspirations. Furthermore, the focus of climate change policy should be reducing CCGs, not increasing the deployment of unaffordable renewable energy technologies. Why, for example, do politicians choose to force consumers to subsidise multinational companies and wealthy landowners to encourage the building of onshore wind farms? Why not subsidise ordinary people to reduce their demand for energy?

5. The political obsession with wind energy is difficult to understand. It's variable and unpredictable, so neither adequate nor dependable; it's wrecking the landscape; threatening wildlife, degrading biodiversity, damaging tourism and trashing homes that people have spent a lifetime paying for. Is a technology developed in the dark ages and long ago abandoned by industry, really likely to make a major contribution to dependable, adequate and affordable energy supply in the 21st century? New developments in clean fusion technology <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-14842720> and low energy nuclear reaction technology <http://eandt.theiet.org/news/2011/aug/rossi-reactor.cfm> look set to deliver abundant clean energy in the near future. WAG has already back the wrong horse. It now needs to take a far more pragmatic view on what energy production, and distribution systems are needed to sustain the Welsh economy and the Welsh people in an increasingly difficult economic climate.