

Environment and Sustainability Committee

Inquiry into Energy Policy and Planning in Wales

EPP 211 – One Voice Wales

Introduction/Background Information:

One Voice Wales is recognised by the Welsh Assembly Government as the national representative body for community and town councils in Wales. It represents the sector on the Local Government Partnership Council and over 70% of the 735 community and town councils are in membership. As well as our representative role, we also provide support and advice to councils on an individual basis and have previously launched, with Welsh Government support, a modular training programme for councillors. We believe strongly that community councils are well-placed to develop the economic, social and environmental well-being of the areas they serve and, as such, are active and proactive in debating key issues such as energy policies, environmental issues and strategic planning.

Energy policy & planning in Wales - Response Form

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1. What are the 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 implications would be that a confused and potentially frustrating framework of consultation and decision making would result. This would be both as a consequence to the split between larger and smaller developments and also as a result of different rules and systems operating across the devolved nations.

2. How does this affect achievement of the Welsh Government's aspirations for various forms of renewable and low carbon energy as set out in the Energy Policy Statement?

Inevitably, by not having control over the entire range of planning and development in this sphere, the achievements will always be subject to certain difficulties and results may not be as successful as hoped for.

3. How does this affect delivery of the Welsh Government's target for a 3 per cent reduction in Green House Gas emissions per annum from 2011?

Such a target can still remain as a viable aspiration, and there will be a number of actions that can be taken in order to move towards this target. However, the removal of these difficulties would enable wholesale planning and a more integrated development profile to become quickly established.

4. What will be the impact if consenting decisions on major infrastructure projects and associated development are not all taken in accordance with Welsh planning policy?

The arguments listed above would become more acute and any longer-term aspirations would be frustrated by the situation of decoupled planning, not least because of the tensions due to the “incomplete” process of devolution of the relevant decision making powers.