

Environment and Sustainability Committee

Inquiry into Energy Policy and Planning in Wales

EPP 222 – Gareth, Alison, Ifan and Llyr Davies

Submission to the Environment and Sustainability Committee

The UK needs an integrated energy policy that considers the whole rather than piecemeal. It is essential that policy is evidence based, currently this is not the case; indeed there is a search for evidence to support pre-determined policy. The aspirations of the Welsh Assembly to achieve global status for sustainability have not been realised because of the lack of evidence based policy.

TAN8 in 2005 has been a blight on the Assembly's record as a governmental authority and it has failed summarily to deliver and has gone some way to alienating the very communities the Assembly is here to serve. On the day Members supported it, it was evident that the infrastructure did not have the capacity and the huge errors and gaps in the exceptionally weak acknowledgement of legal compliance have left it as a lame duck being kept afloat by a few belligerent speeches.

There has been a disregard of the ability of the Welsh people to seek and develop local solutions and any attempts that have been made are hamstrung by TAN8; for example the development of windfarms takes precedence over other forms of renewable energy so perfectly viable schemes are thwarted. Indeed, the negative impacts of windfarm proposals and developments upon many of the local communities, makes positive co-operative renewable energy development even more difficult.

A group of people from Mid Wales, including the then AMs and MP jointly signed a proposal document with various suggestions of how to make TAN8 work for Wales. This was handed to the then Energy Minister, Carwyn Jones. This is attached as a separate document in this email. We are sure that it would need some work on it and it will be outdated as technology has moved on but the essence of a cooperative approach is there.

Finally we wish to point out that the negative effects of the Assembly's current policy are having on existing businesses.

Tourism in Powys is a major source of income and a major employer; however, contrary to what may be imagined, the tourism income in Montgomeryshire is higher than that of the National Park. We have numerous caravan parks and these people are a significant part of our communities and are spending here for up to 40 weeks of the year.

The reduction in the value of our house prices is not only important when we want to sell; it also affects the amount of collateral we can raise to invest into our local businesses.

There is little evidence that green jobs are the panacea the Assembly imagines, particularly in relation to wind. We attach a document considering the opportunities for green jobs in Cumbria. This has considerable relevance to the Welsh situation.

The Assembly has received two online petitions and a hand written petition with over 16000 signatures. It should be noted that although the online system may well suit the Assembly, the appalling state of internet access in Wales means that many of the people served by the Assembly are unable to use this. We suggest that this is why the largest petition is in hardcopy. You will see that these people all want TAN8 reviewed, and that the Assembly and Westminster take account of the views of those who have looked into the composition of their energy bills and discovered that (mainly) windfarms are supported through extra costs hidden within.

One of the questions asked by the Committee is how the Assembly's targets will be affected by some decisions taken in Wales and some in England:

TAN 8 is an advice note that is being used beyond its powers, it is of lower status than legislation and as Westminster is well aware, (although this seems to have passed Cardiff by) protection of the countryside through SEA legislation and protection of the nation's health through SHA legislation is paramount. It therefore is likely that decisions made in Westminster will be made through a process that has a better understanding of existing legislation and thus be less costly as there will be less likelihood of litigation.

Yours sincerely,

Gareth, Alison, Ifan and Llyr Davies