

Environment and Sustainability Committee

Inquiry into Energy Policy and Planning in Wales

EPP 22 – Philip Jones

11th September 2011

Dear Sir or Madam,

My wife Jill and I discovered Montgomery in 1979 when I worked for a company in the IOM that opened a branch here in Montgomery. After my first visit I fell in love with the town and the area and the people of Powys who are friendly, unassuming and hardworking. We actually finally moved here in 2004 and have never regretted it since, what a wonderful place to live!

The reason for writing to you is to ask that you look again at what was decided back in 2004 when TAN 8 was agreed upon with apparently little consultation, by the last government, with the people of Montgomeryshire.

When I first discovered the area there was a rural development board that advertised at St Katherine's Dock in London and produced what I thought at the time was an excellent marketing brochure saying why light industry should locate to Mid Wales. They achieved a lot and brought many companies to the area, and so much needed employment for local people. Most of these companies have now long gone and have not been replaced, as recession, companies cutting costs, and with us no longer having a development office promoting Mid Wales to bring in new manufacturing jobs new businesses have not been opening up or moving here.

The expansion of windfarms in the southern hills means that insufficient infrastructure exists to get the power generated to the National Grid connection point at Shrewsbury (50 miles away!). As you will know this going to mean that one of our only remaining assets and the major reason why tourists come to the area is to be spoilt forever! We are to get up to 800 massive 415ft high turbines sited on what seems to be like every hilltop in Montgomeryshire. These to generate the 800 mw power that has been decreed from Westminster, a 19 acre connection hub at Cefn Coch or Abermule and 50 + miles of 150ft (5 x the height of a 2 storey house!) 400kv steel pylons. From were you are down in Cardiff this may not seem very important, however we are fortunate to live in what I believe is the most uniquely unspoilt rural county in England and Wales and to most people here it is very important, feelings here are running very high. The future for this area is tourism, people come to this area because of it's natural beauty, many local people are employed in this industry, If TAN 8 is allowed to go ahead in it's present guise then it will certainly make the area less attractive to tourists and cost jobs that we really cannot afford to lose.

I have no particular argument against the existing Windfarms, although the 19% efficiency given for the existing Mid Wales sites is not exactly impressive. Lack of wind in the coldest months of the year reduces efficiency just when you need it. If the wind power generated from Mid Wales wind farms was limited to just over the 200mw mark then I think I am right in saying that the 400kv 150ft high pylons would not be required, and that existing or similar pylons would do the job. Of course underground cabling would help solve the visual problems (the additional cost involved is overstated based upon costs over a lifespan of 25 years), apart from practically all of our uniquely beautiful hills still being defaced forever by massive 415ft turbines.

Can I ask that you consider revising the TAN 8 document, in so doing reducing the amount of new land based Wind Farms and relying on other ways of cutting consumption and generating clean electricity?

I have a few suggestions that I would like to put forward.

1/ We all use too much of the world's resources so why not divert money into giving really hefty grants to the people of Wales to install their own turbine when their farm/house is situated in the country, roof panels, insulation by law (roof & wall) and other energy saving measures for others. Less power required = less power needed!

2/ Villages and small towns having their own wind turbine, where this was appropriate, with excess power going back into the National Grid network (no pylons required just short underground cable runs).

3/ By utilising river outflows to run turbines for coastal village communities.

4/ There is a de-commissioned nuclear power station at Trawsfynydd in North West Wales which will have had all of the infrastructure required to get the power generated to the National Grid, why not build a new nuclear or coal fired station on the same site. Germany is now fitting filters to all coal fired stations to bring them into acceptable exhaust gas levels. Another point on this is that when Margaret Thatcher closed the coalmines oil was cheap and gas was available from the North Sea at a good price. Re-opening South Wales coalmines could now be an economic proposition, this would employ hundreds of people who otherwise have no work.

5/ The new power station in Pembrokeshire could be duplicated as gas is imported in the immediate vicinity, also creating more jobs.

6/ Any one new stand-alone nuclear, coal fired or gas fired power station could take the place of all of the Wind Farms in Wales. This would preserve for now and future generations what I, and many, people here in Montgomeryshire regard as the most beautiful and unspoilt County in England and Wales.

7/ Obviously other forms of producing electricity exist such as sea based Wind Farms (like the one off Llandudno), wave power and solar energy, perhaps TAN 8 could encompass a greater range of options than just land based wind farms in beautiful Mid Wales.

This issue is way beyond party politics, Glyn Davies may be leading the fight, if Lembit Opik was still our MP he would fight just as hard, if we had a Labour MP they would I am sure fight just as hard. You cannot live here without being willing to give your all for what is a truly special place to live in and pass on to future generations to enjoy.

If this goes ahead our already congested roads (especially through Newtown) would become unpassable for business and private motorists alike, we do not have the road structure to cope with the huge number of heavy vehicles that would be involved over several years.

I voted 'yes' for WAG to have more decisions taken affecting all of the people of Wales taken locally, and on their behalf, was I right to have voted 'yes'?

Can I ask you to make a stand on this, and stop the desecration of a major asset to the whole of Wales, and for that matter the rest of the U.K. wind Farms are not an efficient way of generating energy. However I expect that they will make some farmers and landowners (at £15,000 per sited turbine per annum) pretty well off! The trouble is it is us the consumer that will have to pay for this madness, nothing new here then!

I look forward to hearing back from you.

Yours Sincerely

Philip R Jones

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