

Environment and Sustainability Committee

Inquiry into Energy Policy and Planning in Wales

EPP 101 – Gwynedd Council

GWYNEDD COUNCIL'S RESPONSE – 21.09.2011

Inquiry into energy policy and planning in Wales – comments about the areas that the Inquiry will address:

1. The role of different consenting agencies – the IPC has issued an advice note: “Working with public bodies in the infrastructure planning process” (2011), which includes a section that is aimed at those public bodies which have powers to grant consents etc., other than development consent, that are required for the use or operation of a nationally significant infrastructure project (NSIP). It would seem from this guidance that the process is complicated: “Certain prescribed consents etc can be consented separately or included in a DCO. s150 of the 2008 Act provides that these consents can only be included in a DCO if the relevant consenting body agrees to their inclusion.....Developers may choose to have other consents deemed by a DCO. For example, a Marine Licence may either be applied for separately from the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) or deemed by a DCO. The inclusion of such a deemed consent in a DCO does not, unlike s.150 consents, require the approval of the relevant consenting body.....The timing of decisions on consents, licences and authorisations other than the DCO may have an important impact on the examination of the application and should be considered carefully.”
2. Developers and local planning authorities can enter into planning performance agreements, where this might achieve a faster and more effective application process. Need to raise awareness and provide more/ improved guidance on their suitability, format, and the process of preparing a robust agreement. This is particularly important in Wales given that local authorities have a ‘dual’ role as a statutory consultee in relation to an application to the IPC for a DCO as well as being a decision maker in relation to associated developments.
3. Highlight the need for statutory consultees to take early and pro-active approach to their involvement in development proposals, providing advice in a timely manner at all stages of the development process.
4. Need to examine the role and relationship of infrastructure providers, e.g. National Grid, in facilitating renewable energy developments, which are required to meet set targets. Existing power lines may not have spare capacity and increasing capacity is a challenge.
5. Local planning authorities are experiencing an increasing number of applications for single turbines and clusters of them. The turbines are becoming increasingly higher. Whilst the toolkit for planners and publication of a booklet for developers are useful it is considered that TAN 8 requires review to reflect these changing circumstances. Impact on residential amenity due to noise, shadow flicker, impact on outlook require detailed assessments by the applicant, which in turn require assessment by the LPA. The capacity of nationally and locally valued landscapes to accommodate renewable energy projects also require detailed consideration. Whilst a judgment has to be made according to the specifics of each case and the local circumstances, clear guidance based on robust evidence

at a national level would be useful. More emphasis, for example, in AONB Management Plans, World Heritage Sites Management Plans, Landscape Character Assessments, on considering the impact of renewable energy projects.