

Environment and Sustainability Committee

Inquiry into Energy Policy and Planning in Wales
EPP 136 – Peter Ashcroft

The problems of energy transmission come directly from the policy of producing the energy far from the user. This results in situations where producers are paid NOT to produce, as recently in Scotland. This policy also leads to inappropriate sizing of power plant and transmission lines with unnecessary losses.

In respect of windfarm installations: I have seen no reference to the fact that these are relatively short lived installations. By their very nature (developing technology) the certainty is that any individual installation will be:

- technically obsolete within 10 years;
- have a design / operating life of 20 to 25 years; and
- installed in areas which experience extreme weather.

Given the above why are they not treated as such by planning regulation. There should be a presumption that they will need to be dismantled and removed prior to reinstatement of the land and / or installation of replacements. It is already clear (Llandinam windfarm structures are considerably smaller than the current generation of applications) that any installations of larger towers will require substantially bigger platforms. In addition I have seen for myself that up to 10% of installations can be inoperative at any one time.

It is also likely that the companies actually taking responsibility for these developments will be created for the purpose. As such they will have had short existences and will be dependent on subsidies to survive.

If the above is a reasonable summary of the situation is it not incumbent on the planning system to ensure that adequate guarantees are in place with suitable financial security to cover the cost of the work to be carried out at the end of the working life. This to include removal of platforms and generator units. The cost of which is likely to be more than the installation cost - where are these costs in the economic justification for the windfarms?

It is bad enough that so many areas of natural beauty are to be despoiled we cannot allow them to become a graveyard for redundant technology within little more than a single generation.

While it may be reasonable for the U.K. Government to propose an energy strategy for the U.K. as a whole; it cannot be right for London to dictate the destruction of areas of the U.K. without the negotiated agreement of the communities involved. The same strictures should also define the procedures initiated by WAG!

A GREEN policy must be beneficial to ALL & the planet. Not just a few investors who will take the subsidies regardless of the capacity to provide useful energy, in this case.

TAN 8 clearly needs to be updated but even as it currently stands the Planning system seems unable to manage windfarm development sensibly.

TAN 8 clearly states, and I quote (page 63, 8.4, second paragraph):

“In the rest of Wales outside the SSAs, the implicit objective is to maintain the landscape character i.e. no significant change in landscape character from wind turbine development”

What price planning controls when they allow destruction of the landscape for a power generation system unable to provide energy when we need it and the temperature is -20C? (i.e. during the most recent 2 Winters)

I can only hope that this committee will properly assess the lunacy of Government proposals (U.K. & Wales) and stand up for the communities currently being ignored!
Peter Ashcroft