

Environment and Sustainability Committee

Inquiry into Energy Policy and Planning in Wales

EPP 168 – GALAR - Volunteers for Abergorlech Llansawel and Rhydcymerau

GALAR

Gwirfoddolwyr Abergorlech Llansawel a Rhydcymerau
Volunteers for Abergorlech Llansawel and Rhydcymerau

EPP 168

Environment and Sustainability Committee
Cardiff Bay
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22 September 2011

Dear Sirs,

We are a community volunteer group committed to the conservation and reclamation of ecology and biodiversity in Wales. We thank you for the opportunity to express our opinions on what we believe is the future for Environment and Sustainability in Wales. This is in response to your letter of the 2nd. August 2011, and while the points below are not a point by point answer to those in your letter, they are a indication of how we feel Wales needs to go to be at the centre of green technology and play our part in combating global warming far more effectively than has been achieved in the last twenty wasted years.

It is a common consensus within the group that the following points are of premier importance:-

- Establishment of fully devolved powers, in respect of Environment, Sustainability and Energy, (ES&E). While it is in Wales's interest both Environmentally and Financially that common planned policies with England are pursued, this should be on a basis of partnership, rather than master servant, which pertains at present. If we are simply a region, then we are a very poorly treated region, being the dumping ground for ill conceived ES&E policies of successive Westminster Governments. The minimum requirement of this full devolvement is total control of ES&E planning both onshore and to 12 nautical miles offshore.
- Power devolved, as described above, would require a rethink of all present strategies. This would include TAN 8, TAN15 and other TAN's impacting on ES&E. Wales is unique in its potential in all areas of ES&E, yet we have no evaluation of our country, in terms of potential, reserves and future comprehensive planning. This is most powerfully pointed out by the NEA produced by 500 environmental scientists, headed by Professor Ian Bateman, which recognises and values as one of the few areas of carbon sink in the UK, while TAN 8 values it in purely agricultural terms, as next to worthless. Because of its topography, Wales is also unique in its potential to produce energy from hydro batteries, while at the same time storing and controlling water, (we have one of the best working examples of this at Dinorwig).

We ask the Environment & Sustainability Committee appoint our elite academics, to examine and take stock of our assets in respect of ES&E, and form a comprehensive map of the countries potential. The NEA also recognises the vast amounts of damaged upland areas, despoiled by forestry and monoculture farming. These areas are at risk of going from carbon sink to carbon source, negating any impact production of green energy will have in Wales. Reversal of the industrial pollution operating on this land is a priority, the stock take of our ecological assets should also record the work required to reinstate both ecology and biodiversity.

- The Forestry Commission has consistently failed to observe good practise in its management of the Welsh land in its control, as is recognised in the NEA report. The vast areas involved make this a key factor in the sustainability and bio-diversity of the country. We ask that the Forestry Stewardship Council is installed to manage the recovery of Welsh forestry, and revenue is sought from the Westminster Government for both the management and the reparations.
- Localism of supply is at the heart of Sustainability. Wales has neither the trained labour force nor the dedicated infrastructure to undertake our part in a bi-governmental programme as envisaged in point 1 above. Restructuring, training and retraining could go hand in hand with equitable ES&E projects within the country. However, the management personnel for the future are key to maintaining localism. Therefore we ask the Environment and Sustainability Committee to strongly recommend to WAG, that free funding for post graduate studies are allowed in ES&E subjects throughout all Welsh Universities.
- DECC the Westminster quango, which unfortunately escaped the bonfire, is totally unsuitable for Wales. For example it holds the non devolved issue of the 50MW break point on Local Planning Authority or IPC. The requirement for Wales in the areas DECC holds sway, should be science, not bureaucracy led. We ask the Environment and Sustainability Committee recommends a science led Department of Environment Sustainability & Energy be established in Wales which controls all planning matters in conjunction with Local Planning Authorities so the best science and local democracy is available at the heart of our environmental policies.

We would wish the Environment and Sustainability Committee well in its deliberations on these very sensitive and emotive topics.

Yours faithfully,

James Shepherd Foster

Technical Advisor GALAR community volunteers.

By e.mail 22 September 2011