

Environment and Sustainability Committee

Inquiry into Energy Policy and Planning in Wales

EPP 185 – Christopher Wallbank

Dear Clerk,

In response to the notice (2 August 2011) requesting submissions of evidence to an inquiry into energy policy and planning in Wales I am submitting a response that outlines my objections to the overbearing emphasis currently given to developing wind power generation through both energy policy and planning policy in Wales.

I would support the idea that responsibility for consenting major energy infrastructure projects should be devolved to the Welsh Assembly. However, this is only providing that the Welsh Assembly revise the energy policy to make it a policy that depended on real results in terms of low carbon energy actually produced and not targets based on installed capacity. Present target driven energy policies have done little to address carbon emissions or an ensuing energy crisis. Over emphasis within the assembly on supporting a heavily subsidised wind industry has and continues to drain resources at the expense of developing real solutions and erodes the public's trust and support in the very urgent need to address climate change.

The current planning system has become unjustly bias towards wind energy; firstly through overbearing weight given to tan8 which has mistakenly been treated as policy, secondly, through the omitting of wind energy developments' carbon footprint's in environmental impact assessments, thirdly, the forbiddance of planning officers taking into account the likely, actual output of a given proposed wind farm, which based on average Uk load factors of 25% (Wales – 20%) is a diminutive fraction of the installed capacity they have to make decisions on alone. Not to mention other corruptions, such as the gagging of community councillors who oppose wind farms on scientific principal or who have attended a demonstration. In short, Welsh planning policy is failing to protect large portions of the population, especially in and surrounding the SSA's set out in tan8, big industry has taken advantage of this and in many cases of wind farms over 50mw, some by only 1 or 2mw, developers have ultimately evaded the National Assembly's jurisdiction .

Even more seriously, overemphasised support given to wind energy at the expense of furthering all other potential technologies, is certainly leading the country further towards dangerously high levels of energy insecurity and carbon emission levels that are stagnated or higher than current ones. This is because the technology of generating electricity through wind power is hugely limited, not only because of the diminutive load factors proved by existing wind farms but because of the intermittent nature of wind, meaning wind farms will never be a reliable source of energy even as part of a mix. The committee will already be aware of the problems surrounding wind power generation and the importance of maintaining a balanced grid. Further more I do not need to look far in the media to find evidence that illustrates wind powers' crippling limitations are blindingly obvious to all involved ,such as; Uk Renewables advise to the UK government back in June 2011, that 17 new gas fired plants at a cost of £10 billion will be needed to back up current proposed wind farms. On both moral and scientific grounds it is plain to anyone with a little knowledge on the subject that the

wind industry has failed to address any energy and environmental challenges with meaningful affect.

It is only the current policy of subsidising wind energy and allowing it irrational dispensation in the planning process that keeps the UK wind industry afloat. This committee has an opportunity to flag up the disproportions in Wales's energy and planning policy, which until rebalanced will continue to negate a whole cross section of society, technologies, expertise and rationale and therefore inhibits real progress towards a feasible energy solution. Only very few individuals benefit from the financial gains of being involved in the wind industry and whilst politicians may be able to walk tall for a time as their targets of installed capacity are met, on paper at least, the cost is hitting the public hard and the ultimate cost to environment and security remains unaddressed. Not only is the wind industry growing at the expense of the consumer but it is devaluing the livelihood, quality of life, existing economy and environment of the regions most affected. In Wales this is disproportionate, because Tan8 has ensured some areas carry all the burden of the densest concentration of wind energy infrastructure. These are the rights that planning policy should protect or in times when a proposal is necessary and offers the highest benefit to the country, should at least mitigate for. This has not been the case in Mid Wales, hardest hit by Tan8 and as this summer's protests testify more and more people are waking up to the realisation that Wind energy is a dangerous scam.

Yes, I want to see more energy infrastructure planning decisions made in Wales, but more importantly I want these decisions to be based on the positive and brave energy policy needed to make our energy secure and our carbon emissions low. This must happen fast and therefore, with the most efficient technology at our disposal whilst new renewables are being developed through long term research. This means the load factor and reliability of an energy infrastructure proposal (based on existing evidence) must be a major consideration in the planning process. This would of course make wind energy, rightfully, a low priority and elevate priority for technologies that will make a genuine difference to emissions and energy security, such as converting coal to cleaner gas power stations and building new nuclear. Though perhaps not as ideologically attractive as wind, emphasis on these types of power generation guarantees results. Wind energy guarantees to deliver little, yet demands atleast the same kind of sacrifices from the population as any other major energy project.

Yours Sincerely

Chris Wallbank